After wine studies in Beaune, winemaker Sylvain Gauthier decided to
explore native Rhône grapes first with Michel Chapoutier and then with
Stéphane Robert, before he was ready to start his own project in the true
center of the Saint-Joseph appellation. He founded his micro-domaine in
the village of Cheminas in 2007, the name “pierres séches” inspired by
the hand-built, ancient stone walls that support vineyard terraces on the
steep slopes of the northern Rhône. Farming organically and using little
sulfur at bottling, Sylvain’s wines are vibrantly flavored and energetically
spiced—in sum, serious northern wines that have quickly become a must-
have from an up-and-coming talent.

WINERY: Domaine des Pierres Séches
WINEMAKER: Sylvain Gauthier
ESTABLISHED: 2007
REGION: FRANCE • Northern Rhône • Cheminas
APPELLATION: Saint-Joseph AOC
BLEND: 100% Marsanne
VINEYARDS: The lieu-dit ‘Aubert,’ east of the well-regarded ‘Sainte-Épine’
vineyard, is located in Saint-Jean de Muzols, one of the original three
communes selected for the Saint-Joseph appellation in 1956. Vines face
southeast, on decomposed granite and grainy, schist-rich soils. For decades,
‘Aubert’ was worked by Raymond Trollat, one of the pioneers of traditional
Saint-Joseph wines; ‘Aubert’ has been planted to vines since World War I.

AGE OF VINES: 80 years, on average; some older
WINEMAKING: Hand-harvested. Pressed full cluster; fermented in
temperature-controlled, stainless steel tanks on indigenous yeasts. Aged for
one year in older French oak barrels (three years old). Bottled unfined, with
minimal added sulfur.

TASTING IMPRESSIONS: Aromas of citrus, light tropical notes, melon,
crushed stones, some floral. Medium-bodied, fresh yet deeply flavored.

PAIRING SUGGESTIONS: Air-dried salami or other charcuterie; richer fish
dishes with herbs; grilled chicken

NOTES: Before the 2018 vintage, the wine was named ‘Sainte-Épine.’