

Have you always been involved in the wine trade?

I have been working as a fine wine merchant for the past 20 years. I have also helped out in winemaking from a young age, starting with my work experience with my late grandfather, Gérard Ducourneau, and his vineyard.

Tell us more about Château Réaut.

It's located in the Côtes de Bordeaux, and it's an old estate with 21 hectares of vineyards. The *terroir* is one of the best in Bordeaux, and its slopes enjoy great sun exposition and overlook the Garonne river. That was why after intensive research and soil analysis, Champagne Roederer (whom we bought the estate from) replanted the vineyards with the best vines 10 years ago. Those plants have now reached their full potential and they will last for another 25 to 30 years.

The exceptional vintages of 2009, 2010 and 2011 can also be attributed to the excellent work of the winemaker, Philippe Moureau. Moureau is also the director of wine at Château Pichon Comtesse in Pauillac.

To aid your acquisition of Château Réaut from Champagne Roederer, you offered the estate's shares via Facebook. How did this all happen?

My close friend, Yannick Evenou, who is also vice president of Vignobles Clement Favat (a group that manages Château La Dominique, Château Clément Pichon, Château Fayat), came up with the Château Réaut project. Apart from gathering close friends from the wine trade to run Château Réaut, he also wanted to put together a pool of people who would become co-owners of the estate's vineyards by buying a share via the Groupement Foncier Agricole (GFA), a property sharing group or scheme.

This scheme was announced on Facebook to attract investors. 430 people—a third each from Bordeaux, Burgundy and overseas—signed up. Under this scheme, the co-owners will receive wine dividends, for example, a maximum of 36 bottles per year for the released vintage. They will also get to enjoy other favourable prices and perks.

What role do your non-winemaking shareholders play?

They are ambassadors of Château Réaut as they introduce the wines to their friends. During this year's harvest, more than 200 of our shareholders turned up to help, and it was a fantastic experience. My wife, Carmen, and our four boys also took part in the harvest. We had a giant barbecue lunch that finished late in the afternoon. The media crew were also interviewing our shareholders-cum-pickers, who obliged with much fun.



Château Réaut's vineyard in Côtes de Bordeaux.



Sorting the grapes by hand.



Pickers taking a break during harvest.



Château Réaut's rosé wine.

Click 'Like' to own a vineyard

Wine merchant Laurent Ducourneau has Facebook's outreach to thank for his acquisition of Château Réaut, an estate based in Bordeaux.

Do you think other vintners in Bordeaux would follow suit to use social media as a platform to draw investors?

We will see more of such schemes [online] in the future, as this is an easy way for people to co-own a vineyard, take part in a viticulture project, and have the opportunity to hand their land or property to a future generation. For the wine producer, you don't have to burden yourself with bank loans. As for expansion plans, we are looking at parcels right next to Château Réaut, which could be acquired in the same manner [via the GFA scheme]. >



LAURENT DUCOURNEAU



Shareholders helping out with the harvest.