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# Harvest and Family Meal in the Roussillon

*By Jeff Harding*

On my recent tour of southwest France, I was finally able to visit my friends Carrie and Marcel at Domaine des Enfants, in the Roussillon. The timing, however, was a blessing and a curse. My trip happened to be towards the end of September, which my wine-loving friends will recognize as harvest. So I got to see the real behind-the-scenes of winemaking in a rustic corner of the world, but there was so much going on I wasn't able to spend as much time as I wanted with my friends.

I highly recommend making friends with winemakers, because they'll still make time for you. Touring the scrubland hillside vineyards was tough going in my rental car, but seeing grey schist up close and watching pigeage a la main (manual punchdown) in demi-muid were just a few of the highlights (Carrie is a wonderful chef, and Marcel has a great cellar!).

I've always wanted to join in the harvest family meal, but schedules conflicted so I can only report and hope to return. The mostly-Spanish pickers camp out near the winery, in campers and little huts built for this purpose. The crew doesn't always eat together but they try to throw a few parties during harvest and then a big end-of-harvest feast. A typical dinner during harvest is grilled Catalan sausage, homemade aioli and grilled vegetables. Couscous, bread, Spanish beer and the domaine's wine rounds out the dinner.

But the harvest party at the end is the biggest and best. Everybody pitches in, so in addition to the grilling, the Spanish crew makes their local specialty, Fideua (similar to paella) and Marcel, being Swiss, makes a big Raclette. Oh, and beer. Lots and lots of Spanish beer.