Blaise Cayol | France | Basketry

Forgotten wicker weaving lives again

To call Tavel, France, “romantic” doesn’t begin to do justice to this lushly scenic region in the southern part of the country. For hundreds of years, the area has been synonymous with rosé, the blush-colored wine characteristic of the Rhone valley in which Tavel is situated. It is against this redolent backdrop that basket maker Blaise Cayol maintains a centuries-old practice of weaving wicker baskets—an art form that flourished for generations of craftsmen, but largely died out after the Second World War. Baskets incorporate all natural materials, gathered from locally grown plants. Their simple beauty belies the intense level of skill needed to perfect the craft, and Blaise has visited master basket makers throughout France to fine-tune his technique. It is hard to think of something more practical and useful than a basket, but that doesn’t mean this quintessentially utilitarian item can’t be crafted with exquisite care and attention to detail. Blaise’s range of baskets includes wide, open-mouthed vessels, and also smaller, more tightly woven baskets with arched handles.

He says of his work, “I have always wished to do an activity which could bring me closer to the earth, which is simple, useful, and ordinary.” It is difficult to look at Blaise’s baskets and think of the word “ordinary,” since each basket is clearly made with such care. Combining timeless visual appeal with the highest standards of craftsmanship, a Blaise Cayol basket is made to be treasured and put to use.