



# The Beautiful South - Languedoc-Roussillon

*"Why the Languedoc? Quite simply, it is without doubt the most exciting and innovative wine region of France. Everything is possible; the appellations may lay down ground rules, but the parallel vins de pays allow for unlimited experimentation, creating a host of new and exciting wines. Over the last twenty years or so this vast vineyard, which stretches from the Spanish border round to the delta of the Rhône has undergone a dramatic transformation, so that the wines have improved out of all recognition"* Rosemary George MW on [www.tastelanguedoc.blogspot.com](http://www.tastelanguedoc.blogspot.com)

*"I firmly believe that the south of France is home to some of the best wine value in the world"* Southern French gems, 3rd Jun 2010, Jancis Robinson MW & Tamlyn Currin, on [www.jancisrobinson.com](http://www.jancisrobinson.com)

These are a couple of quotes from wine writers whose opinions we value highly. Now both these Masters of Wine have roots in the Languedoc, so neither are exactly unbiased commentators, but we have been putting out the same messages - the virtues of this region in terms of improved quality and value - every spring, since we sent out our first **Beautiful South** list eight years ago.

Precisely because this region offers both value and such interesting *terroir*, it continues to attract aspiring young winemakers. We suddenly noticed how so many of the *vignerons* we buy from are not locals, but outsiders, who have landed here from all over France and, in the case of James Kinglake and Simon Coulshaw, even this country. Another trend is for an increase in organic viticulture. Even those, such as Yves Falmet at Terres Falmet and Bruno Schenk at Grand Arc, who have made deliberate choices not to go down this path do so because they feel (see below) that minimal use of chemicals is less intrusive to the vines than the more frequent spraying of copper and sulphur permitted by organic standards. We note these qualities (and some others) beside each estate below.

This year we again make a distinction between wines from the plains - where the vines are usually cropped higher, and picked by machine - and those from the arc of hills. The appellations we feature start near Montpellier, with St. Georges d'Orques and Pic Saint Loup, and continue through a wide inland arc, with some interruptions (notably the gap between Narbonne and Carcassonne) right down to Banyuls at the end of the Pyrenees by the Spanish border. Most of our wines from the hills come from old, bush-trained vines grown on poor, degraded rock soils.

Reviewing the list this year, and summarising my conclusions from a hectic drive round our suppliers in February, I feel that so many of my favourite wines, and the core of the list, are reds from the hillside appellations, priced between £8.00 and £12.00 a bottle; so not cheap. But these bottles - and may I direct you to Belles Pierres, Trinités, Météore, Terres Falmet, Grand Arc, Fontanel and Depeyre in particular - offer perhaps the greatest expressions of *terroir* at their price in the world. I will be drinking many of these wines from now, and laying them down too.

Simon Taylor - March 2011

**Please note: we will be holding tastings of a selection of wines in this list, with the support of the Maison de la Région Languedoc-Roussillon, as follows:**

**Hampshire:** Thursday April 14th, 6.00-8.30pm - The Barn at Bury Court, Bentley, Farnham, Surrey GU10 5LY

*Please let us know as soon as possible if you would like to attend, and bring guests.*

**London:** Tuesday May 10th, 6.00-8.30 pm - Maison de la Région Languedoc-Roussillon, 6 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0PD

*Invitations will be sent to London addresses in April, but do contact us if you would like to attend.*

## Mixed Cases

### BS111 The Beautiful South

(3 whites, 1 rosé and 8 reds) £88.50

Here is your chance to taste one bottle of each of the twelve wines listed below, making up a sampler case discounted by over 10%. This will introduce you to some of our favourites, and encourage you to come back and buy more of them.

- 2009 Croix Belle, Caringole Blanc (p.5)
- 2009 Creyssels, Picpoul de Pinet (p.5)
- 2010 La Grave, Minervois Blanc, Expression (p.5)
- 2009/10 Grand Arc, La Tour Fabienne, Rosé (p.10)
- 2010 Les Hauts de Median, Petit Verdot (p.4)
- 2009 Les Vignerons Réunis, Carignan, Vieilles Vignes (p.4)
- 2010 La Grave, Minervois Rouge, Tristan et Julien (p.5)
- 2008 Belles Pierres, Les Clauzes de Jo Rouge (p.6)
- 2010 Mas des Brousses, Chasseur des Brousses (p.7)
- 2008 Météore, Saint Chinian, Clos de Bijou (p.9)
- 2009 Terres Falmet, Carignan (p.9)
- 2009 Fontanel, Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes (p.11)

The following mixed cases include two bottles of each of the six wines listed, with a discount of at least 7.5%.

### BS211 Sunny Satisfaction Case

(three whites and three reds) £74.75

- 2009/10 Preignes Le Vieux, Reserve Blanc, IGP (p.3)
- 2009 Croix Belle, Caringole Blanc, Côtes de Thongue, IGP (p.5)
- 2009 Creyssels, Picpoul de Pinet (p.5)

- 2010 Mas de Canal Rouge, IGP Pays d'Oc (p.3)
- 2009/10 Comtesse de Marion, Merlot, IGP Pays d'Oc (p.4)
- 2009 Les Vignerons Réunis, Carignan, Vieilles Vignes (p.4)

### BS311 Med Reds (six reds) £86.25

- 2010 Les Hauts de Median, Petit Verdot (p.4)
- 2009 Domaine La Croix Belle, Caringole Rouge (p.5)
- 2010 La Grave, Minervois Rouge, Tristan et Julien (p.5)
- 2007 Trinités, Languedoc (p.8)
- 2009 Terres Falmet, Cinsault, Vin de Pays d'Oc (p.9)
- 2009 Fontanel, Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes (p.11)

### BS411 Languedoc Terroirs

(three whites and three reds) £119.75

- 2009 Belles Pierres, Les Clauzes de Jo Blanc (p.6)
- 2008 Saint Daumary, Coteaux du Languedoc, La Boca Loca (p.6)
- 2010 Météore, Faugères Blanc, Les Léonides (p.9)
- 2008 Saint Daumary, Pic Saint Loup, Voilà Le Printemps (p.6)
- 2007 Météore, Faugères Rouge, Les Orionides (p.9)
- 2007 Terres Falmet, Saint-Chinian, L'Ivresse des Cîmes (p.9)

### BS511 Grand Reds of the Hills (six reds) £147.75

- 2008 Belles Pierres, St. George d'Orques, Chant des Ames (p.6)
- 2007 Saint Daumary, Pic Saint Loup, Belladonna (p.6)
- 2007 Mas des Brousses, Terrasses du Larzac (p.7)
- 2007 Trinités, Languedoc, La Deves (p.8)
- 2009 Grand Arc, Corbières, En Sol Majeure (p.10)
- 2009 Depeyre, Côtes du Roussillon Villages (p.11)

# Vins de Pays / Indication Géographique Protégée

Vin de Pays is no more: the French have come in line with a Europe wide initiative to rename such wines instead as Indication Géographique Protégée, or IGP. The same freedom survives - to choose whatever grape variety you wish to grow; and, more importantly, to name wines by grape variety - and also the same proliferation of names on the bottle. It is, therefore, still difficult to get to grips with this system, as growers can name their wines in any one of three ways: from either a very narrowly defined local IGP; or IGP of their local department; or IGP d'Oc, wine from anywhere in a huge region. So the Vic's Reserve Blanc, below, from near Vias, could be labelled either as it is, IGP Coteaux de Libran; or IGP de l'Hérault; or IGP Pays d'Oc.

We offer IGPs in a number of guises and from a variety of sources. Whilst appellation wines tend to be blends of approved local grape varieties, IGPs are often pure single varietals, from Viognier and Vermentino to Merlot, Cinsaut, Carignan and even Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Secondly, they can be blends which include non-local varieties - such as the Merlot in the Chasseur des Brousses, or the Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay in the Caringole Blanc from La Croix Belle.

As for quality, IGPs can range from simple and unpretentious, such as the Mas de Canal wines from the Vic family below, via really well-made wines from good land crafted by estates specialising in their production, devoting as much care and attention to their wines as any appellation wine - those from Croix Belle come into this category; thirdly, there are splendid Vin de Pays made by top growers alongside their appellation wines, such as the excellent wine from Domaine Fontanel on page 11.

## Domaines Vic, Preignes Le Vieux

The Vic family - Jérôme, Robert, Bruno, brothers, cousins etc. - have pooled their land, making them one of the largest landowners in the Languedoc, and collectively make their wines in a hamlet at Preignes near Beziers, ranged round an enormous courtyard. Yet it is still very much a family-owned estate, and every wine comes with some variant of the Vic or Preignes name on the label, although the vineyards are quite far-flung around Beziers. This year's tasting with Jérôme Vic was really outstanding, hence more of their well-priced wines being listed than ever before. He thought that the 2010 vintage was particularly good for whites in the south: very cool nights enabled the grapes, harvested between 2am and 8am, to arrive in excellent condition. Several of the whites are based on Vermentino (known as Rolle in Provence, where it tends to be expensive!), also grown in Corsica and northern Italy, a grape which thrives in the heat of the Mediterranean, retaining its freshness and giving considerable weight.

### 2009 Mas de Canal, Blanc, IGP Pays d'Oc, 12.5° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £5.95 Case £67.83 Code VIC709**

Based on Vermentino and Chardonnay, with other varieties. Citrus and lightly floral aroma. Fresh, easy drinking mouthful showing stone fruit, nice weight and limey acidity. We will shortly move to the 2010 vintage at the same price. Drink this year.

### 2009 Preignes Le Vieux, Reserve Blanc, IGP Coteaux du Libron, 12.5°

**Bottle £6.50 Case £74.10 Code VIC809**

The Reserve white from Vic is really worth trading up to, an aromatic and fruity wine based on the excellent Vermentino (= Rolle), with more aromatic varieties. Such an open and attractive perfume. Lively, enticing gush of lime, pear and melon, with a hint of menthol. Medium bodied, and finishes well too. Could only be a Mediterranean wine, so full is it of local character and sunshine. The 2010 follows at £6.75. Drink this year.

### 2010 La Petite Source, Le Clos, Viognier, IGP Pays d'Oc, 13° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £8.75 Case £99.75 Code VIC610**

A fresh style of Viognier, lively but with a hint of fat, with citrusy fruit and a pretty apricot element. A lovely aperitif, or enjoy with prawns or scallops. Now-2011

### 2010 Preignes, Vermentino, IGP Pays d'Oc, 13°

**Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code PRF810**

From vines now about 25 years old; and left on its lees for a few months to develop weight and flavour. Lightly floral aromas, with cream and a hint of pine. Not a fruit wine, but rather Italianate in its layers of texture and understated herbiness. Smooth and balanced. Now-2012

**N.B. Arriving in late spring 2011.**

### 2009 Mas de Canal, Rosé, IGP Pays d'Oc, 12.5° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £5.95 Case £67.83 Code VIC509**

Grenache and Cinsaut. Pale clear pink with a hint of onion skin. Light scent of berries. Fresh mouthful of strawberry and cranberry. Nothing complicated, just a really well-made, balanced, dry rosé for drinking by the vat. The 2010 vintage follows shortly at the same price. Drink this year.

### 2010 Mas de Canal, Rouge, IGP Pays d'Oc, 12.5° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £5.95 Case £67.83 Code VIC410**

Largely from Grenache, Cinsaut and a little Cabernet Sauvignon, this used to be a fairly rustic wine but has become so much more polished in recent years. Black-fruited but with a lighter, raspberry accent too. Simple, but a smooth, easy-drinking style. Now-2012

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**2009 Comtesse de Marion, Merlot,  
IGP Pays d’Oc, 13° [Screw-cap]**

**Bottle £6.75 Case £76.95 Code VIC309**

Aromas of sweet plum with a leafy touch. Supple and lightly creamy, with barely discernible tannins. This is unfailingly good. The 2010 vintage follows shortly at the same price. Now-2012

**2010 Les Hauts de Median, Petit Verdot,  
IGP Pays d’Oc, 13°**

**Bottle £7.75 Case £88.35 Code VIC210**

Petit Verdot, which ripens late, is well-suited to the heat of the Languedoc: even here the grapes for this wine were harvested as late as the 10-12th October. We return to this splendid example, crafted by Aurélie Trébuchon, Jérôme Vic’s wife. Deeply hued. The nose is exciting: with deliciously ripe fruit, mildly roasted, it smells like a much more expensive wine. The palate lives up to that promise too, offering super-smooth layers of red and black fruits, a hint of herbs and subtle tannins. A terrific finish too. We will sell a lot of this modest wonder. Now-2013

**2009 Preignes, Grains de Cabernet Franc,  
IGP Pays d’Oc, 12.5°**

**Bottle £7.75 Case £88.35 Code PRF309**

Such pretty aromas - strawberry leaf and roses - and that floral charm follows on to the palate of this elegant and supple example. Who would have thought that this Loire transplant could deliver such a balanced and elegant wine in the Languedoc? Delicately red-fruited, supple and with a textbook lead pencil note. Drink this year. Limited stock.

**Alain Grignon Wines, Carcassonne**

Alain Grignon is a colourful character who, despairing of the unwillingness of the Languedoc co-operatives to build successful brands for export, decided to go it alone. Now he sources juice from all over the region, and puts his own team of winemakers to work in a couple of major co-operatives to craft terrific value wines for export. This old vine Carignan, from vines averaging about 40 years old, has become a big favourite here: who would have thought that we would have sold pallets of wine made from Carignan, that much maligned grape? This skilfully balances the vibrant fruit and acidity of the grape with subtle oaking and a hint of juicy sweetness.

**2009 Les Vignerons Réunis, Carignan Vieilles  
Vignes, IGP Pays d’Hérault, 12.5° [Screw-cap]**

**Bottle £6.25 Case £71.25 Code AGW609**

Flaunt purple. Delicious gush of ripe black cherries and blackberries. Vibrantly fruity. So winning, supple enough to be enjoyed on its own yet with plenty of texture too. Perfect for parties. The 2010 vintage follows at the same price. Drink this year.

**Domaine La Croix Belle, Puissalicon**

La Croix Belle is acknowledged in numerous guides and journals as a benchmark estate for IGP wines. Whilst we do not ship their top wines (we are not sure the British market is ready for £15 Côtes de Thongue!), we admire the efforts made by the Boyer family and their team to craft excellent blends at any price level. Interestingly, when the vignerons in the Côtes de Thongue were offered the chance to have their own appellation some years ago they spurned it, preferring the freedom to make wine from whichever grapes they liked.

We continue to offer the Caringole wines: a white Chardonnay-based blend, lifted by about 20% sprightly Sauvignon Blanc and a little Muscat and Viognier; and a red, largely from Syrah, Carignan and Merlot, with some of the wine made using carbonic maceration, giving a Beaujolais-like freshness. Of the superior wines, using grapes which would qualify them for appellation status in most of the Languedoc, we offer a white, Le Champ des Lys, largely from 2/3 Grenache Blanc and Viognier, and their Syrah/Grenache blend, Le Champ du Coq.

**Wine boxes**

5 litre boxes (the equivalent of 6 2/3 bottles), each with its own simple tap: perfect for parties, barbecues, cooking wine, or just keeping in the kitchen for the odd glass (many people find them indispensable to the good working of a refrigerator). They last well over a month.

Both come from the Vic family, and the wine is the same wine as in the Mas de Canal bottles.

Note: a box can be included in a mixed case in place of 4 bottles.

**2010 Le Petit Pont, Blanc,  
IGP Pays d’Oc, 12.5°**

**5 litre bag in box £33.95 Code BIB610**

Drink this year.

**2010 Le Petit Pont, Rouge,  
IGP Pays d’Oc, 12.5°**

**5 litre bag in box £33.95 Code BIB210**

Drink this year.

## 2009 Caringole Blanc, Chardonnay-Sauvignon Blanc, IGP Côtes de Thongue, 12°

**Bottle £7.25 Case £82.65 Code CRO809**

Based on Chardonnay lifted by zippy Sauvignon Blanc (plus some Viognier and Muscat) a blend which makes perfect sense in the warm south. Scents of ripe melons and jasmine. There's enough energy to give this wine a surprising depth of flavour and length. *"Very delicate and lively...I could imagine this as a house white in many a house"*, Jancis Robinson MW, Southern French gems on [www.jancisrobinson.com](http://www.jancisrobinson.com), 3rd June 2010. The 2010 vintage follows at the same price. Drink this year.

## 2009 Le Champ des Lys, Grenache Blanc-Viognier, IGP Côtes de Thongue, 13°

**Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code CRO709**

A mildly toasty note on the nose (a tiny proportion goes into barrel) is followed by intense grapefruit, with considerable heft, and subtle notes of grape seeds and almonds. A white which could accompany all white meat, from pork to turkey. The 2010 follows. Drink this year.

## 2009 Caringole Rouge, Syrah-Carignan-Merlot, IGP Côtes de Thongue, 13°

**Bottle £7.25 Case £82.65 Code CRO109**

Light, perfume of violets. So fresh, pure and vital, with red fruits, ripe but juicily crisp, backed by the merest smidge of tannin. A wine which is easy to drink on its own, and which can be served lightly chilled when the weather warms up. Drink this year.

## 2009 Domaine La Croix Belle, Le Champ du Coq, IGP Côtes de Thongue, 13.5°

**Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code CRO309**

A part oak-aged wine, Syrah with Grenache. Deep dark tone. Cedar and toast on the nose. Ripe heart of juicy blueberry and cherry, garnished with caramel from the barrels, finishing with a hint of mint. Not subtle, rather a New World style in the Languedoc, and striking. Now-2013



## Domaine de Creyssels, Mèze

Picpoul de Pinet is a little known appellation near the Bassin de Thau, south-west of Montpellier, for just a single grape, the white Piquepoul. The grape has the advantage of being slow-ripening: picked after the heat of summer has passed it retains freshness and flavour. The wine is much appreciated within France, a staple in Parisian bistros to accompany seafood. Fresh, slightly sharp, with a bit of weight and a tang of the sea about it, it really does wash down oysters, mussels or fish perfectly (the vineyards are within sight of the oyster beds in the Bassin). Look on it as the Muscadet of the Mediterranean, albeit with more heft and flavour.

Julie Benau's vineyards are on clay and gravel soils, which lend greater weight than the sandier fields nearer the sea, set amidst woods of pines and cypresses. She crops at low yields, around 40hl/ha., picks very late - well into September - and leaves the wine on its lees. This care produces a wine with considerable concentration and character, which has become a real favourite here.

## 2009 Coteaux du Languedoc, Picpoul de Pinet, 12.5°

**Bottle £7.75 Case £88.35 Code CRE109**

Green-tinged. Light scent of white flowers. Bright fruit - kiwi and lime - but as usual with a mildly herbal note. Nicely weighted, always a very complete wine, as good as an aperitif as with seafood. Drink this year.

## Château La Grave, Badens, Minervois

Owned by the Orosquette family, and named after the gravelly soil on the Etang de Marseillette, Château La Grave lies in the south-western part of the Minervois, now known as Les Balcons de l'Aude.

The unusual Expression white is based (80%) on a parcel of old vine Maccabeu, with Vermentino and Marsanne, which makes for a surprisingly weighty wine at the price. Their rosé, made largely from Syrah with Grenache, is always a real charmer, and is our best-selling rosé year after year. The 2009 Tristan et Julien, named after a son and cousin here, from about half and half Syrah and Grenache, was much applauded - Jancis Robinson called it *"a lovely house wine ready to quaff"* - but the 2010 vintage offered below is even better.

## 2010 Minervois Blanc, Expression, 13°

**Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code GRV610**

Scent of herbs - almost Vermouth-like. As ever, textured and quite concentrated, with nectarine, pineapple and ripe pear with almond nuances. Lively finish. Excellent. Now-2012

## 2009 Minervois Rosé, Expression, 13°

**Bottle £7.50 Case £85.50 Code GRV409**

This unfailingly delivers splendid ripeness and intensity. Lively pink. Red fruit aromas. Oodles of strawberry and red cherries, bright and ripe. Plenty of texture. Perfect all rounder, fruity enough to enjoy on its own but also dry enough for food. The 2010 vintage will follow shortly. Drink this year

## 2010 Minervois Rouge, Tristan et Julien, 13°

**Bottle £7.50 Case £85.50 Code GRV110**

Just so open, simple and enjoyable, the sort of youthful French country wine of old. Vibrant purple. A ripe scent of crushed blackberries and blackcurrants prefaces a joyous gush of refreshing, juicy fruits, with the merest hint of supporting tannins. That attractive black fruit returns on the finish. A transparently honest wine; and it could be served lightly chilled in summer. Consume regularly. Now-2012

# The Arc of Hills: around Montpellier

We start with two appellations near Montpellier: St. Georges d'Orques is a superb argilo-calcaire micro-terroir lying across rolling hills (up to 235m) within sight of the sea just to the west of Montpellier, with vineyards in little patches cut out of the *garrigue*; and Pic Saint Loup, a mountainous appellation north of Montpellier, cooled by wind and some altitude, and offering calcareous soils long known as excellent for Syrah.

## Domaine Belles Pierres, St. Murviel les Montpellier, St. Georges d'Orques

**DOMAINE FAMILIALE VIGNERON INDEPENDANT** Damien Coste and his father created Belles Pierres (literally "beautiful stones") in the hill-top village of St-Murviel, near St. Georges d'Orques, in 1992, having taken their land out of the local co-op. Here the grape skins take on the evanescent oils of the surrounding flowers and herbs - lavender, oregano, thyme and bay - giving fascinating Mediterranean nuances to the wines. You only have to smell these wines to be transported there!

The first two wines are named in homage to Damien's father, Joseph (a "*clauze*" is a short stone wall enclosing the fields). The strikingly unusual and distinctive oaked white is from 60% Roussanne with equal proportions of Viognier and Grenache; a big, wildly perfumed wine which can accompany strongly flavoured food. The red, basically Syrah and Grenache with some Mourvèdre, is a wine which shows that elusive scent and flavour of the *garrigue*, and develops earthy complexity with a year or two in bottle. This year we have also added their top red, Chant d'Ames (the "song of souls"), from 80% Syrah with Grenache and a little Mourvèdre, an impressive Northern Rhône lookalike.

### 2009 Coteaux du Languedoc, Les Clauzes de Jo Blanc, 14°

**Bottle £11.25 Case £128.25 Code BEL609**

Bright, tinged with pale green. Powerful aromas: toasty oak, exotic fruit - pineapple and guava - plus floral and honey hints. Totally consistent on the palate, with the full-flavoured exoticism of the fruit counterbalanced by the nougat and macadamia notes of the oak. A big wine, well matched to strongly flavoured, herby, Mediterranean cuisine. Now-2013

### 2008 Coteaux du Languedoc, St. Georges d'Orques, Les Clauzes de Jo Rouge, 14°

**Bottle £10.95 Case £124.83 Code BEL308**

Scent of smoke, black cherry, bay leaf and spice. Lovely brambly attack, with vanilla and coffee nuances. Bags of depth and character. Supple tannins. Long and perfumed finish. Terrific. Now-2013

### 2008 Coteaux du Languedoc, St. Georges d'Orques, Chant des Ames, 14°

**Bottle £15.95 Case £181.83 Code BEL408**

Very ripe scents - with cassis dominant. Very bright fruit, black cherry and currant, lush but grippy. Serious, ageworthy wine which would benefit from a little more time and will keep well. Now-2014



## Saint Daumary, Valflaunès, Pic Saint Loup

**DOMAINE FAMILIALE ORGANIC, IN CONVERSION** Julien Chapel's vineyards lie mainly on the flanks of the plateau of Hortus, just to the north of the 685 metre peak of Pic Saint Loup. Many of his little plots are scraped out of the *garrigue*, the surrounding scrub, on mainly limestone rich soils which suit Syrah, although there is also Grenache on the sandier sites and he has planted Mourvèdre in his hottest corners. We have really found a star in this modest and amiable young man, who took over part of his father's land at the age of 19 in 1999 (and was then the youngest winemaker in the whole of the Languedoc) and converted to organic cultivation - he believes organics delivers better "*transmission de terroir*".

First up is a classy white, La Boca Loca, 80% Roussanne with Grenache Blanc, about a third of which is lightly oaked. Of the reds, Voilà Le Printemps ("here comes the spring") is unoaked, deliciously perfumed, and to be enjoyed early for its smooth black fruit. Belladonna is almost all Carignan, from one parcel of low-yielding 45-50 year old vines, given 12 months in old oak barrels, and as deliciously silky and refined as his other reds. Julien bottled just 1200 bottles of this for the first time, and we have taken as much as we have been allowed. Asphodèle, named after the plant which dots the slopes, gets 18 months in barrel, 50% new: it's oaky, concentrated and has more than a touch of Côte Rôtie about it.

### 2008 Coteaux du Languedoc, La Boca Loca, 14°

**Bottle £12.95 Case £147.63 Code DAU608**

Aromas of grapefruit, limeflower and cream. Initial sense of ripe citrus is followed by more complex aromatics of herbs and almonds. Beautifully weighted, and long. A silkily harmonious white. Now-2012

### 2008 Pic Saint-Loup, Voilà Le Printemps, 14°

**Bottle £9.95 Case £113.43 Code DAU108**

About 65% Syrah, 30% Carignan and 10% Grenache, unoaked. Scent of red fruit with a mildly savoury note. Juicy red fruit is dominant on the palate, raspberries and redcurrants, again allied to a certain meatiness. Plenty of mildly earthy Syrah character. Now-2012

### 2007 Pic Saint-Loup, Belladonna, 14°

**Bottle £13.25 Case £151.05 Code DAU207**

Deliciously red-fruited, without any of that animal edge so often present in Carignan. Thrilling on the palate, a sort of vinous Fry's Turkish delight, all perfumed, jellied fruit wrapped in chocolate, freshened by the variety's lively acidity. Unusual and splendid. "*Intriguing, well developed and well balanced nose. Sweet and refined and with real lift. Very complete. Yet it seems to have potential too. Persistent and spicy. 17/20*", Jancis Robinson MW on the Purple Pages of [www.jancisrobinson.com](http://www.jancisrobinson.com), 3rd June 2010. Now-2013

### 2007 Pic Saint-Loup, Asphodèle, 14°

**Bottle £16.50 Case £188.10 Code DAU407**

70% Syrah, plus 10% each of Grenache, Mourvèdre and Carignan. Wines that smell of cassis, as this does, are always going to be lovely. Spicy notes of vanilla and cinnamon too. Bittersweet attack, crisp redcurrants vying with sweet brambly fruit. Very concentrated - nice mass. Huge potential. Now-2014 Very limited stock

# The Arc of Hills: Terrasses du Larzac

This zone covers a wide range of terroirs in the north of the Coteaux du Languedoc, abutting the Larzac plateau. This is largely a hilly band running from St Jean de la Blaquière in the west, across via St. Saturnin and Montpeyroux to Puéchabon in the east. Andrew Jefford, a cerebral wine critic, called the Terrasses du Larzac *"some of the greatest vineyard land in the south of France"* (**Financial Times**, 8th August 2009).

## Le Clos du Serres, St Jean de la Blaquière

**DOMAINE FAMILIALE  
ORGANIC, IN CONVERSION**

Sébastien Fillon only became a *vigneron* in 2006 at the age of thirty, but already his wines have won rave reviews in the French wine press. He spent three years looking for somewhere to buy before settling on this estate. Most of the vines here are on the slopes around St. Jean, up to 350 metres in altitude, where cool currents come down from the Larzac plateau, and there is a marked diurnal change of temperature. This lends a lively freshness to the wines. Furthermore the landscape is remarkably diverse: there are amazing red volcanic soils, the *terres rouges* known locally as *"ruffe"*, but also schist on the slope and *galets* in places. 15 different parcels, all vinified separately, give Sébastien plenty of scope for interesting blends.

Le Clos is based on 40% each of a local clone of Cinsaut (the *"Oeillade"*) and Syrah, plus 20% Grenache. La Blaca is 90% Syrah and 10% Grenache, unoaked, beautifully black-fruited. Les Maros is also basically unoaked, 80% from low-yielding Grenache, with Syrah and Carignan.

### 2008 Languedoc, Le Clos, 13.5°

**Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code SER108**

Strong purple. Scent of red cherries. Intense red and black cherries, spiced with liquorice and even a hint of menthol. Fine grained tannins. Still very youthful. *"It is very ripe with fruits noirs, mainly black cherries, with a rounded palate, with tannin and acidity, and that hallmark freshness of the Larzac terraces. There was an attractive peppery note on the finish"*, Rosemary George MW on [www.tastelanguedoc.blogspot.com](http://www.tastelanguedoc.blogspot.com). The 2009 vintage follows shortly at the same price. Now-2012

### 2007 Languedoc, Terrasses du Larzac, La Blaca, 14°

**Bottle £11.50 Case £131.10 Code SER407**

Unusual aromas of black fruits, caramel and dark chocolate. That cassis note continues on to the palate, with touches of toffee and mint. Intriguingly different: classy Syrah with a southern accent. Now-2013 Limited stock

### 2007 Languedoc, Terrasses du Larzac, Les Maros, 14°

**Bottle £12.50 Case £142.50 Code SER307**

This Grenache-based blend always shows raspberry and blackberry fruit, with an interesting gamey nuance and a hint of liquorice. Warming and characterful. *"Mid crimson. Rich and round - really quite a bit of depth. Lots of tannin still in evidence but masses of hand-crafted personality too. Mountain wine! 17/20"*, Jancis Robinson MW, Southern French Gems, 3rd June 2010 on [www.jancisrobinson.com](http://www.jancisrobinson.com). Now-2012 Limited stock

## Mas des Brousses, Puéchabon, Terrasses du Larzac

**DOMAINE FAMILIALE  
ORGANIC, IN CONVERSION**

Brousses translates as bush, or brush; this is, literally, the farm in the brush. Amidst the rolling scrub-covered hills around Puéchabon and the pebble-strewn terrasses near the Hérault river lie the domaine's plots of vines. Tall Géraldine Combes (from a family who have inhabited Puéchabon, near Gignac, since 1525) juggles looking after three small boys with tending the vines.

She had been out pruning and burning the cuttings on my latest visit, and apologised for smelling of the bonfire - she is tough! Husband Xavier Peyraud, grandson of the legendary Lucien Peyraud of Domaine Tempier, is the winemaker. Their first vintage was only 1997, and some of their grapes still go off to the local co-operative.

Chasseur is an old favourite here, named after the African bee-eater (= chasseur) which can be seen over the vines in summer. The blend is about 60% Merlot with Grenache and a little Cinsaut, a wine with Bordelais style from the *garrigue*, the herby scrub which surrounds the vineyards here. Their appellation wine is a blend of about half and half Syrah and Mourvèdre, aged largely in old oak: this always seems to show some of the fragrance of the land, fresh and pine-scented.

### 2010 Chasseur des Brousses, IGP Pays d'Oc, 13°

**Bottle £9.25 Case £105.45 Code MAB110**

Soft deep ruby. Such a consistent nose on this wine: it always smells of black fruit lifted with herbs. Black plum and berries, very ripe - the fruit just attractively cooked. Juicy. Some tannin - this will improve through the summer. Pleasantly long. This always offers smooth and classy drinking, so food-friendly. Now-2013

### 2007 Coteaux du Languedoc, Terrasses du Larzac, 13°

**Bottle £13.50 Case £153.90 Code MAB207**

Deep purple. Intensely black-fruited and refined, with caramel and liquorice notes around a coulis of blackcurrants. Very suave. Now-2013

### 2009 Coteaux du Languedoc, Terrasses du Larzac, 14.5°

**Bottle £14.75 Case £168.15 Code MAB209**

Very deep hue. Excitingly complex aromas: cool black fruit, spiked by coffee, liquorice and nutmeg. Very refined palate, damson and blackcurrant compôte with vanilla. Very supple. Sustained finish, with liqueur aromatics. Late 2011-2015



# The Arc of Hills: Pézenas, Faugères and Saint-Chinian

More change afoot in the inscrutable game of snakes and ladders which is the French Appellation system: Pézenas (a pretty town, but not previously that well-known for its wine), was last year designated as one of the new “Grand Crus” of the Languedoc, along with appellations such as Terrasses du Larzac and Pic Saint Loup. This was justified by only including a very careful selection of the Pézenas vineyards, largely on the hills: Simon Coulshaw at Domaine des Trinités said six people crawled over his land to approve it.

Bizarrely, and unfairly, Faugères, a small and very homogenous appellation - only 2,000 hectares in production, and 35 growers, almost all of a very high standard - didn't make the cut for the new “Grand Cru” list. Part of Saint-Chinian did, in the north, around Roquebrun. What unites Faugères and that northern sector is that all the vineyards lie on soils of degraded schist. Schist is formed of foliated sedimentary layers changed by heat and pressure. Its common distinguishing feature, like slate, is that it splits easily into thin flakes or slabs, so the vineyards look as though they are covered in shards of rock; which can range in colour from soft pinky-beige in Faugères to coal-black near Maury in Roussillon. It is hard to see how vines can survive on such a sterile matrix: they do so through their roots penetrating deep into the fissures in the rock to find moisture and nutrients during the long dry summers. Schist wines are very distinctive: do try Trinités Faugères Le Portail or Météore's Saint-Chinian, Clos de Bijou for these unique aromas and flavours.

Saint-Chinian also has vineyards on limestone, classic “argilo-calcaire” soils such as those at Terres Falmet; and on river terraces in the south too.

## Domaine des Trinités, Roquessels, Faugères

### OUTSIDER

### ORGANIC, WITHOUT CERTIFICATION

Simon Coulshaw, an Englishman brought up in the wine culture of France (but trained in winemaking at Plumpton College in Sussex) looked at over 100 estates before these 24 hectares of hillside vines called to him in 2006. His land stretches from yellow schist vineyards within the newly created Grand Cru of Pézenas, to vines in Faugères, on the plateau at 300 metres above his little cellar in the tiny village of Roquessels. With Monica, his Spanish wife, and a child, he is now putting down roots, and was delighted when Le Portail (see below) won the trophy for the best entry-level (i.e. unoaked) Faugères in the appellation at a local blind tasting last summer, judged by oenologists and journalists.

### 2009 Viognier, IGP Pays d'Oc, 13°

**Bottle £9.50 Case £108.30 Code TRI607**

Whole bunch pressed and cool-fermented, a really carefully made and refined example. Simon says that the vineyard is schist over basalt, and the latter gives natural acidity. Pale and clear. Light scent of white flowers. Subtle white peach accents. Lively but smooth. Now-2012

### 2007 Languedoc, 14°

**Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code TRI107**

If this was a more recent vintage it would be permitted to have the name Pézenas on the label. 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah and 10% Carignan, unoaked. This is charming, offering the gaminess and suppleness of maturity. Cooked red fruits, just a smudge of tannins, and a scented finish. Tim Atkin MW praised this wine as: “full-bodied and supple.... a lovely warmth of spiced red berries and wild herbs. 91/100”. Now-2012

### 2009 Faugères Rouge, Le Portail, 14°

**Bottle £9.25 Case £105.45 Code TRI309**

60% Syrah, 30% Grenache, and 10% Mourvèdre, unoaked. A little reduced (i.e. a little farmyardy) on the nose, but also showing red fruits. Pure and light on the palate, with vivacious raspberries and cherries dancing on top of a fine minerality. Very soft tannins. So graceful. Now-2013

### 2007 Languedoc, La Deves, 14°

**Bottle £11.75 Case £133.95 Code TRI407**

As above, this will be labelled Pézenas in the future. 50% Grenache, 20% each of Syrah and Carignan, and 10% Mourvèdre; with half the Syrah and Mourvèdre given a year in old barrels. Very ripe - the locals would say “confit” - scents, very perfumed, with appealingly savoury secondary notes. gorgeously lush core of warm and velvety cooked fruit, and a long and spicy finish. Splendid accompaniment to a hearty roast or casserole. Now-2012

## Domaine du Météore, Cabrerolles, Faugères

### DOMAINE FAMILIALE VIGNERON INDEPENDANT ORGANIC, IN CONVERSION

Domaine du Météore (named after the huge crater of a meteor which punctuates the vineyards) lies in the north of the Faugères appellation, where the vineyards go up to 350m: here breezes offer fresher temperatures and Syrah thrives. We have managed to secure more of the domaine's powerful (and rationed) white this year, and continue with their crisp and elegant rosé. As for the reds, I wouldn't normally quote a vigneron at length, but I agree wholeheartedly with this statement from Geneviève Libes: “Les millésimes 2007 et 2008 sont de très beaux millésimes pour les vins rouges chez nous. Ce sont des vins puissants et chaleureux avec une belle finesse et beaucoup de fraîcheur. Ces vins ne sont pas lourds et facile à boire même s'ils



*sont très structurés*”. The three reds really are superb. Les Léonides Rouge is an unoaked blend of more or less equal parts of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Carignan. Second, we have added the first vintage of their Saint-Chinian (50% Syrah, 35% Grenache, and 15% Carignan), from vines right up against the plateau just over the appellation border in Sainte Nazaire de Ladarez. Unoaked, this is so expressive of the schist, with high-toned fruit and exciting minerality. Finally, we can really strongly commend to you that old favourite here, Les Orionides, based on 55% Syrah with 30% Mourvèdre and 20% Grenache, a well-oaked wine really back on song in the 2007 vintage.

### 2010 Faugères Blanc, Les Léonides, 13.5°

**Bottle £9.75 Case £111.15 Code MET710**

A blend of half Roussanne, half Marsanne. Excitingly fresh scents: citrus fruit, orange peel and a hint of ginger. Splendidly fat but also lively and fresh, showing a fascinating palate of tangerines and cream. Powerful and long. Now-2013

### 2010 Faugères Rosé, Les Léonides, 13.5°

**Bottle £8.95 Case £102.03 Code MET510**

From Grenache with Cinsaut and a little Syrah. Vibrant salmon pink. Fresh and mineral, with redcurrant, red cherry and strawberry fruit, allied to a finesse and perfume which derives from the schistous soils. Dry, and offering enough stuffing to accompany food well. Now-2012

### 2007 Faugères Rouge, Les Léonides, 13.5°

**Bottle £8.95 Case £102.03 Code MET107**

The aromas on this are just in transition from bright primary fruit to nuances of liquorice and fennel. As the nose suggests, it's a wine moving from the vitality of youth to a more complex and textured style. Depth of cooked cherries and raspberries. Delicious. Now-2012

### 2008 Saint-Chinian, Clos de Bijou, 14°

**Bottle £9.50 Case £108.30 Code MET208**

Strikingly intense and distinctive scents: high-toned raspberries with cinnamon leap out of the glass. Supremely graceful pure red fruit, with hints of *framboise*. Silky tannins, almost invisible. Sprinkle of white pepper. A wine which could **only** come from vines grown on schist: ethereal. Now-2013

### 2007 Faugères Rouge, Les Orionides, 13.5°

**Bottle £10.95 Case £124.83 Code MET307**

Punchy red fruit, cedar and spice-box aromas. All velvety richness and power up front, red berries and black cherries. Mocha notes from the barrels vie with liqueur-like ripeness. Super-soft tannins just add backing mass. However, it's not just a fruit-bomb: there's a slightly wild, high-toned note from the schist. A great vintage, right up there with the 2001, and we sold pallets of that! Now-2014

## Domaine des Terres Falmet, Creissan, Saint-Chinian

**OUTSIDER** Yves Falmet is a first generation *vigneron*. He has created his own wine estate the hard way: having studied bio-chemistry, he has worked in wineries all over the world - from his home region of Champagne (where he grew up on a mixed farm) to Germany, California and New Zealand. He then took out a large loan, and in 1996 bought 20 hectares of north-facing vineyards in the Languedoc, some of which had been abandoned by the previous owner, and shunned by neighbours. He added a tiny cellar in nearby Creissan in 2001. On his limestone-crested slope, it's tough labour. But Yves saw the potential of site and the old vines and is making splendid, fairly priced wines. Interestingly he chooses not to go organic, as he prefers spraying only twice a year with

fungicides against oidium, rather than spray much more often with the copper and sulphur permitted by organic practice.

His Saint-Chinian is a blend of 40% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache and 30% Syrah, unoaked, from vines averaging sixty years of age. He calls it L'Ivresse des Cîmes, which is a nice pun: you could translate it literally as drunkenness of the peaks, but in French it really means mountain sickness, suitable as the grapes come from a very steep vineyard near the ridge, on calcareous soils.

### 2009 Cinsault, IGP Pays d'Oc, 13.5°

**Bottle £7.75 Case £88.35 Code FAL109**

A splendidly textured wine from a southern grape usually known for making red-fruited rosé. Here it delivers a deep hue, scents of raspberry jelly, and a supple, perfumed palate, all ripe red berries with rhubarb, clove and cinnamon. Soft enough to enjoy on its own, yet with enough stuffing to accompany food as well. Now-2012

### 2009 Carignan, IGP Pays d'Oc, 13.5°

**Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code FAL209**

From vines with an average 70 years of age. Brambly and mildly porty scents. Concentrated and smooth, with suave tannins, but also exemplifying Carignan's characteristic untamed gush of sharpish redcurrants and black pepper. Enjoyable now and will develop well. Now-2013

### 2007 Saint-Chinian, L'Ivresse des Cîmes, 13.5°

**Bottle £9.95 Case £113.43 Code FAL307**

Deep purple. Attractive autumnal aromas - hedgerow fruits and herbs. A wine just *à point* between youth and maturity, with plenty of vigorous damson and briary fruit but also exhibiting subtle hints of smoke, dried fruit and even tea. So well-textured, with a decent backing of firm but ripe tannins. Southern fruit but classic structure, and fine wine by any standards. Now-2014



# The Arc of the Hills: Corbières and Limoux

Corbières and Limoux are both large appellations spread across hilly and mountainous land, the former best known for reds and the latter for Chardonnay and sparkling wine.

## Domaine du Grand Arc, Cucugnan

**OUTSIDER  
VIGNERON INDEPENDANT  
MAKER OF NATURAL WINE**

Bruno Schenk's vines are on classic *argilo-calcaire* soils, with some sandstone, in the wild hills between Cucugnan and Padern, surrounded by amazing hill-top Cathar castles. It's surprisingly cool here in these vineyards - Bruno was told when he arrived from Alsace that the land was only good for white and rosé - and this gives great finesse and freshness to all the wines.

Like Yves Falmet he prefers minimal chemical treatments to extensive organic spraying, but he stops all spraying in mid-July, and makes wine with natural yeasts and without using any sulphur at all until bottling - so he qualifies as a "natural" winemaker. He attributes the amazingly deep colours of his rosé and reds to this practice.

Reserve, Cuvée des Quarante and Sol Majeure are all oaked wines: the latter two are spectacular in the 2009 vintage and, both very young, will reward keeping for several years.

### 2009 Corbières Blanc, Veillée d'Equinoxe, 14°

**Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code DGA609**

55% Grenache Blanc, 30% Roussanne and 15% Maccabeu. A floral scent is followed by a beautifully weighted, fragrant palate of ripe lime, white peach and ripe pear. Pure and elegant. Now-2012

### 2009 Corbières Rosé, La Tour Fabienne, 14°

**Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code DGA509**

Baed on Cinsaut, and widely considered to be among the best in Corbières. As usual, a vibrant hue, almost bluish crimson!

Delightful *fraises des bois* character, enlivened by stone fruit notes. Crisply dry, and combines the depth of bright fruit of a red wine with the freshness and bite of a white. The 2010 will follow at £8.50. Drink this year.

### 2010 Corbières Rouge, Nature d'Orée, 13°

**Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code DGA110**

From Grenache, Mourvèdre, Carignan, Syrah, and Cinsaut, unoaked. Inky purple. Black fruit aromas. Fresh attack, but plenty of substance: so much body for an entry level Corbières. Plum and blackberry. Merest trace of spice. Now-2012

### 2008 Corbières Rouge, Reserve Grand Arc, 14°

**Bottle £8.75 Case £99.75 Code DGA208**

About 55% Carignan, with 30% Grenache and 15% Mourvèdre, aged in old barrels. Youthful tone. The oak is now thoroughly integrated, leaving a fresh, well-textured mid palate of fresh red and black berries. Medium weight, and so well balanced. One of our best-sellers. Now-2012

### 2009 Corbières Rouge, Cuvée des Quarante, 14.5°

**Bottle £10.50 Case £119.70 Code DGA309**

Based on 45% Carignan with 35% Grenache and 20% Syrah, all in barrel, about 20% new.

Quite closed - one feels this is still a bit like a coiled spring - but on the palate this opens out dramatically, displaying crunchy black cherries, spice and liquorice. Juicy, but also smooth and beautifully mannered: Bruno talks of "*grande finesse et grande souplesse*". Young but splendid. Now-2015

### 2009 Corbières Rouge, En Sol Majeure, 14.5°

**Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code DGA409**

60% Grenache and 40% Syrah, all in barrel, 50% new. This is a wine marked by extravagant flavours, with vanilla and cedary wood layered on luxuriant black fruit, blackcurrants and blueberries. Both vibrant and voluptuous. Fresh black fruit returns on the finish. Now-2016

## Domaine Begude, Limoux

**OUTSIDER  
ORGANIC, IN CONVERSION**

James Kinglake, ex City banker, has now been ensconced at Domaine Begude, about 350 metres up in the foothills of the Pyrenees near Limoux, since 2003; and his wines have been getting better and better as he and his team get to grips with the terroir here. He inherited organically farmed land, and continues to promote organic practice. He has carved out an enviable reputation for his Chardonnays: the example below is enlivened by the addition of 10% Chenin Blanc. We also offer his naughty little experiment, which he names L'Exotique: this is 80% Grüner Veltliner (a strictly illegal interloper) and 20% Chardonnay, the latter barrel fermented in old oak. We have just a little 2009 Pinot Noir left, at a reduced price; and we will shortly be shipping his delicious 2010 Pinot (from plantings of four top Burgundy and Champagne clones), a wine of great levity, purity and finesse, and again only 12° of alcohol.

### 2010 Chardonnay, Amélie, IGP Pays d'Oc, 12.5° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code BEG110**

Bright and clear. Tangerine nose with a hint of white flowers. Crisply green-fruited, apple and lime, but also nicely rounded. (The 10% of Chenin Blanc brings a little weight). Now-2012

### 2010 L'Exotique, IGP Haute Vallée de l'Aude, 13° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £11.25 Case £128.25 Code BEG310**

This seems fresher and livelier than most Austrian Grüners, but has the same texture and character, with a bittersweet pears and citrus palate, and that interesting grassy/pleasantly vegetal flavour. Fascinating. Now-2013

### 2009 Pinot Noir, IGP Haute Vallée de l'Aude, 12° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £8.95 Case £102.03 Code BEG609**

Soft, pale hue. Light aromas of *fraises des bois*. Delicate cranberry and strawberry fruit, so gracefully light yet perfectly ripe too. Secondary Pinot hints of undergrowth just developing. Now-2012 Limited stock

### 2010 Pinot Noir, IGP Haute Vallée de l'Aude, 12° [Screw-cap]

**Bottle £9.95 Case £113.43 Code BEG610**

The contents of a single barrel went into the tank - less than 5% of the blend - but this may have just given a deeper colour and a fuller palate than the 2009. Smells like a good Burgundy should, with strawberry and cherry aromas. Delicious soft red fruit palate. Lies somewhere between Burgundy and New Zealand in style - such fun. Now-2013

**N.B. Arriving April 2011**

# The Arc of Hills: Roussillon

Roussillon - a hot, dry, largely mountainous and windswept environment - is the source of unusual whites, distinctive reds (often marked by a mildly tarry, roasted note) and that Roussillon speciality, the fortified *Vin Doux Naturel*.

## Domaine Fontanel, Tautavel

**DOMAINE FAMILIALE** M Fontaneil, heir to 35 hectares of a family domaine since 1864, has been a stalwart of our lists since 2003. From his range of reds we offer his terrific value red Vin de Pays, his sturdy but unoaked red Côtes du Roussillon, and his flagship red, Le Prieuré. From one parcel near Tautavel on a high, windswept, north facing vineyard marked by *galets*, rounded stones, this blend of 2/3 Syrah, with Mourvèdre and a little Grenache, is given a 42 day maceration and 18 months half in new oak, half in first fill barrels. This can approach Hermitage in style after a few years in bottle.

### 2008 Côtes du Roussillon Blanc, 14°

**Bottle £11.50 Case £131.10 Code FON708**

From old vines of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Malvoisie, planted together in 1908, well-oaked. As ever, a lovely honeyed nose. Really textured, with notes of honey, fig and apricot, lifted by touches of fennel. So long and well structured. Already delicious, but we know this keeps well too. Now-2012. Limited stock

### 2009 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, Rouge, 14°

**Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code FON409**

Pierre Fontaneil could label this wine, from Syrah and Grenache, with the prestigious Côtes du Roussillon Villages appellation on the label; but as this wine comes from his young vines he chooses instead to label it simply as a Vin de Pays! Delightfully supple, so ripe and charming, all black cherry and a pinch of spice. Plenty of concentration too. Now-2013

### 2007 Côtes du Roussillon Rouge, 14°

**Bottle £8.95 Case £102.03 Code FON107**

60% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 15% Carignan grown on schist near Maury, Deep purple. Brooding nose, full of black fruit and southern herbs. Rich and peppery palate of melting black fruit with hints of tar and woodsmoke. Sweet blackberry liqueur finish, warming and full of local character. Now-2012. Limited stock.



### 2009 Côtes du Roussillon Rouge, 14°

**Bottle £9.50 Case £108.30 Code FON109**

Aromas of black cherries with dark chocolate touches. Lively, plum and black cherry favours. Good ripe tannins. Just slightly (and attractively) roasted and toasty, despite being unoaked. Now-2014

### 2008 Côtes du Roussillon Villages, Tautavel, Le Prieuré, 14.5°

**Bottle £16.75 Case £190.95 Code FON308**

Very open, inviting perfume of melting black fruit and mocha. Smoothly textured, not a block-buster, with finely integrated oak, cassis and blackberries, and a barely discernible sense of supporting tannins. Very aromatic. Best kept a year or more. Now-2016

## Domaine Depeyre, Cases-de-Pène

Serge Depeyre, from a Rhône wine-making family, and Brigitte Bile, from Cases de Pène, met at wine-making college in Avignon. Together they returned to her birthplace, and worked at Mas Amiel, while starting the purchase of their own vineyards in 1997, and producing their first wine in 2002. Serge's day job is working as *Régisseur*, effectively estate manager and overseer in charge of Clos des Fées (one of the most highly rated and hugely expensive Roussillon estates) at Vingrau, and their own little domaine has grown to 12 hectares, largely looked after by Brigitte. Hearing them, one senses how hard it is to be a grower among these arid, wind-blasted hills: they need a pick-axe in order to plant a vine; they plough using a mule; and yields are ludicrously low. We return to a wine which we shipped in the 2002 vintage, their Côtes de Roussillon Villages, 50% Syrah, 25% old vine Carignan from Vingrau and 25% Grenache. Wholly unoaked, this is concentrated and velvety.

### 2009 Côtes du Roussillon Villages Rouge, 14.5°

**Bottle £11.50 Case £131.10 Code DEP109**

Youthful, opaque deep purple. Scents of rich cooked black plums, with spice, dried fruit and candied peel. Velvet texture, so impressive. Sharp black fruit spiked by suggestions of menthol, tar and liquorice. Excellent weight, and with well-judged tannins, this is a classic Roussillon blend; and one which will last well too. Now-2015

## Domaine du Traginer, Banyuls

**BIO DYNAMIC** Jean-François Deu, multi-lingual Catalan (he speaks French, Spanish, Catalan, English and Portuguese), and committed eco-winemaker, does not do anything by halves. He began making wine at the age of sixteen. His land is ploughed by a mule (Traginer translates as "mule worker"), he tends his vines bio-dynamically (i.e. ultra-organic, working by phases of the moon), crafts miniscule yields - 17-25 hl./ha. across his range, and bottles with minimal sulphur.

Al Ribéral, from a vineyard along a stream, is from Grenache, Carignan, Syrah and Mourvèdre in stainless steel, and bottled early to showcase its delectable purity of fruit. Jean-François Deu is also a Banyuls specialist, having inherited ancient *foudres* of old Banyuls from his father.

### 2006 Collioure Rouge, Al Ribéral, 14°

**Bottle £21.50 Case £245.10 Code TRG506**

Very deep and opaque. Coulis of damsons and spicy black plums. The fruit is so pure and fine. Fine acid thread. This wine is youthfully alive, yet has perfect balance to age well too. Now-2013 Very limited stock.

# Vin Doux Naturel

Vins Doux Naturels are made by stopping the fermentation of very ripe grapes, part way through its course, by the addition of alcohol (a process known as *mutage*); thereby preventing the yeasts from working, and leaving a fortified wine with plentiful natural grape sugar and anywhere between 15 and 17 degrees of alcohol.

As one can see below, Vins Doux Naturels come in different colours and styles; and from diverse regions. Rivesaltes VDNs are named after the town near Perpignan, but can be made over a relatively large area, either eponymously from Muscat or a wide range of other white grapes such as Grenache Blanc and Malvoisie. Banyuls shares the same vineyard area as Collioure: if fortified the appellation wines are called Banyuls, if not, then Collioure.

## 2009 Domaine Fontanel, Muscat de Rivesaltes, L'Age de Pierre, 15.5°

**Bottle £13.50 Case £153.90 Code FON809**

Entirely from the superior Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains. Pale lemon. Such a voluptuous scent: hothouse lilies and sun-warmed grapes. Intense, bitter sweet flavours, redolent of marmalade, lychee and pineapple, concentrated and viscous. Superb example. Now-2013

## 1999 Domaine Fontanel, Rivesaltes Ambré, 16.5°

**Bottle £14.25 Case £162.45 Code FON999**

From late-picked, 60 year-old vines of Grenache Blanc and Gris. The Ambré - literally amber - tone develops after at least five years of mildly oxidative ageing in barrel, though this had nearly ten. It's a remarkable wine which has built up a cult following among our customers. Deep golden-brown - this looks like old Cognac, and indeed smells quite like Cognac, with fumes of cooked plums, and a hint of sherry-like oxidation. Dates and toffee dominate, with accompanying subtleties, including walnuts and coffee: mysteriously delicious. Now-2015

## 2006 Domaine du Traginer, Banyuls Rimage, 17°

**Bottle (50cl.): £17.95 Case (12 x 50cl. bottles) £204.63 Code TRG706**

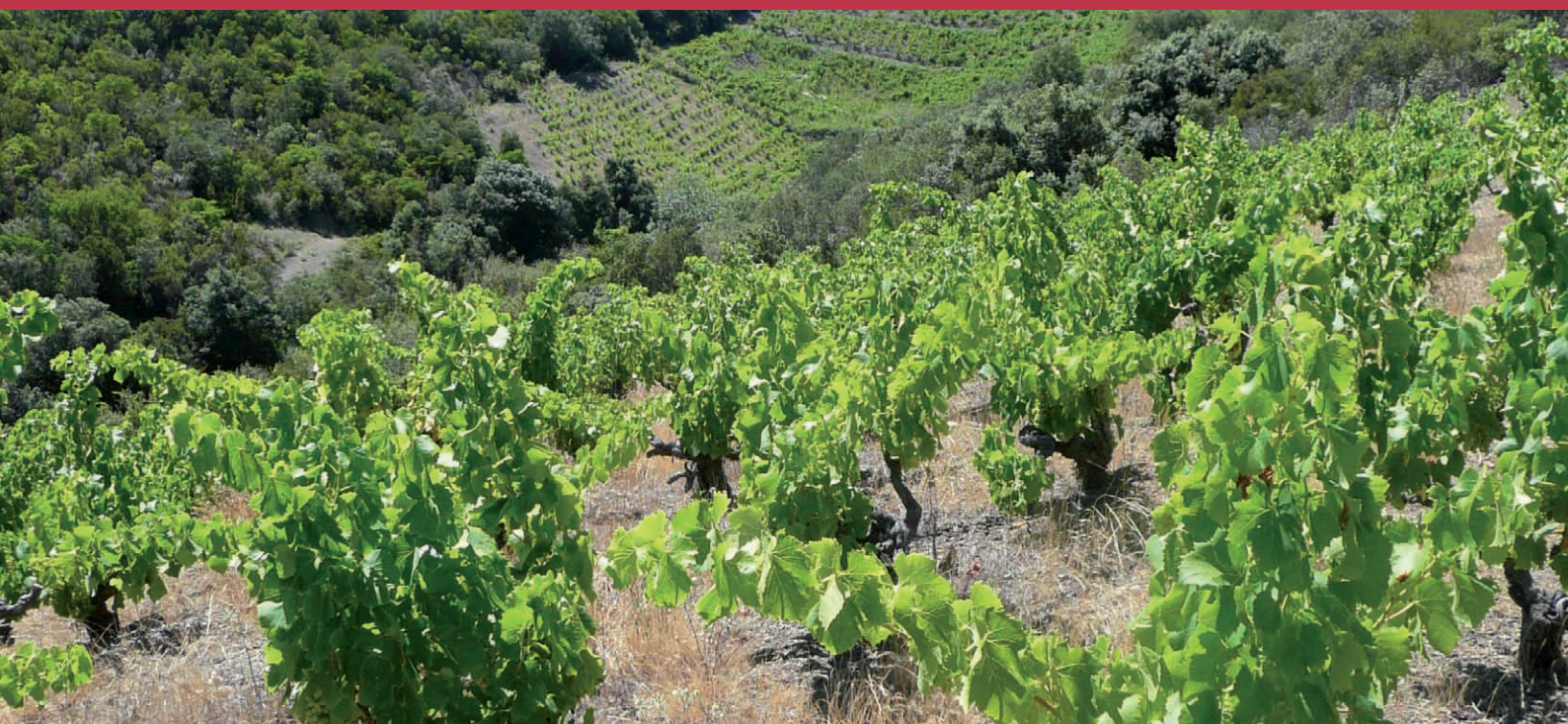
Rimage refers simply to a vintage wine made in closed vats (i.e. not in an oxidative style): this is made in tank and bottled early to preserve the aromas and freshness of the delicious, raspberry-scented Grenache. Banyuls can accompany chocolate puddings, rather as berried fruit may be dipped in chocolate. Solid ruby tone. Sweet but pure, with soft tannins and a fine silkiness in the mouth. Now-2013

## 2006 Domaine du Traginer, Banyuls Blanc, 16.5°

**Bottle (50cl.): £20.75 Case (12 x 50cl. bottles) £236.55 Code TRG206**

From Grenache Blanc and Gris and Muscat à Petits Grains, unoaked and aromatic.

Fresh Muscat on the attack, but behind lie depths of very sweet pears, stone fruit, cream and vanilla. Irony power too. Very long. A wine to sip, with definite meditative quality! Now-2013 Limited stock



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