

2010 Rhône en primeur

(plus the 2009s from Le Couroulu in Vacqueyras)

Contact: Simon Taylor or Gordon Coates
Stone, Vine & Sun
13 Humphrey Farms, Hazeley Road, Twyford
Winchester, Hampshire SO21 1QA

Telephone: 01962 712351
Fax: 01962 717545
Email: sales@stonevine.co.uk
Website: www.stonevine.co.uk

STONE, VINE & SUN

WINE MERCHANTS

2010 Rhône en primeur

Well, the superlatives come out again: after 2007 and 2009 this is another superb vintage in the Rhône, north and south. Once again the weather was basically kind, but with one big exception: a cold and humid spring, followed by a lot of wind in June, meant that almost every *vigneron* complained of *coulure*, i.e. a poor setting of the fruit after flowering. As in many French wine regions this resulted in low yields but the Grenache in the south was particularly badly affected. Our growers reported yields down by 15-25% on a normal year. That apart, the region enjoyed a long dry summer, without excessive heat, and perfect conditions for the harvest. Several commented on the lovely health of the grapes as they came in.

As a result the wines are concentrated, but also classic: they are not inky, over-extracted monsters, and looking back at my notebook it's interesting how often the word "fresh" recurs in my tasting notes. One can waste a lot of time comparing one vintage with another, but when 2010 follows so closely on the splendid 2009 vintage one can't help it - after all the growers themselves always do it. While all agreed both were very fine vintages there was a widespread feeling that they were different. In the north Yann Chave, such a bright young man, related his 2009 Syrahs in style to Châteauneuf-du-Pape, whereas he felt his 2010s were more like Burgundy, meaning he felt they were more about grace and finesse than size and power. Stéphane Pichat felt that a pattern was emerging - odd vintages all "*puissance*", whilst even were more "*classique*". In the south everyone was confident that their grapes enjoyed perfect ripeness, but also that the fruit wasn't too roasted. As ever Marine Roussel at Joncier summed it up so well: she felt her wines were "*intense and elegant at the same time*".

A couple of final thoughts, before we go to the critics: firstly, it's obvious that the early drinking wines which we have already shipped from 2010 are excellent: the raspberry-scented wines from Les Vignerons d'Estézargues, Pigeade's surprisingly dense Ventoux, Joncier's joyously juicy Le Gourmand, and Stéphane Pichat's stunning and underpriced Vin de Pays Syrah from his young vines within Côte Rôtie. This augurs well for what we offer here. Secondly (and I am not the first to say this - see Jancis Robinson's comments below - but it's worth saying anyway), the wines really do show their origins this year. My note book is littered with words and phrases like "so correct"; and "great typicity".

To close, here are a couple of other opinions we respect.

Jancis Robinson, MW (2010 - a word to the wise, purple pages of www.jancisrobinson.com, 28th Nov 2011), made these points:

"After the unusually ripe, relatively low acid wines made in 2009, the 2010s typically show considerably more precision and freshness, and more supple tannins in the case of the southern Rhône.

Whereas 2009 is looking like a vintage that superimposes its own imprint very firmly on any geographical characteristics, 2010 seems to be a vintage in which local differences and terroirs are able to express themselves much more clearly".

Robert Parker, who has vast experience in the Rhône, wrote of the 2010 southern Rhône:

"This is a great vintage that comes close in quality to 2007 in the southern Rhône. Some producers think 2010 eclipses 2007 because of the wines' vivid freshness and focus. Throughout the southern Rhône, the hallmarks of the vintage are very dense purple, sometimes even blue/black colors as well as higher acid levels that have not been seen since 2004 and 2001. In fact, 2010's paradox is that I can't remember a vintage so concentrated, powerful and rich that also has such zesty acidity. The pHs are lower across the board than in 2009 and 2007, and the acids are higher.

The 2010s will have significant aging potential, which is obvious in the level of tannins, but the tannins are sweet with exceptional elegance and finesse. The ratio of high extractive and phenolic skins to the juice has produced wines of extraordinary intensity, freshness, aromatic potential and obvious longevity. This is another great vintage that offers an embarrassment of riches for this region that has enjoyed a succession of extraordinary years". Robert Parker, **Wine Advocate**, October 2011

So there you go: another vintage you should consider buying - especially as there is no doubt that 2011 saw more difficult weather conditions. Secondly, despite the lower yields, our growers are reasonable folk, and price increases, if any, are minimal.

Simon Taylor
December 2011

How sales 'en primeur' work. You choose the wines you want to buy now and we will invoice you at the prices quoted. Effectively you are buying the wine overseas, often before it has been bottled. We will then invoice you for duty at the prevailing rate (currently £21.71 per case, but likely to increase in the spring budget) plus VAT (currently 20%), on the cost of the wine and the duty, when it is shipped from the late spring of 2011 onwards. As an example, if you buy a case of wine for £100, then assuming import duty and VAT remain constant, we will later invoice you for £46.05 prior to sending you your wine. Prices are valid until the end of March 2012.

Terms and conditions. Wine is only offered in unsplit cases of 12 bottles or 6 magnums unless stated otherwise. **Please note that wine will NOT be available in bond.** To enable us to be as competitive as possible we ship all wine to our own warehouse, duty paid. We will then deliver it on to you or to your preferred place of storage at our standard delivery charge of £5.50 per case for orders under £250 (including the duty and VAT), £8.50 for two cases, or free above £250 (including the duty and VAT). For Highlands, Islands and Northern Ireland please ask us for a quote. Finally, whilst we make every effort to supply the wines offered above, if the wines fail to be made available by the producer we will either offer to supply similar wines or alternatively refund any payments made.

The South

Domaine des Espiers, Vacqueyras

A tale of two vintages indeed. In 2009 Philippe Cartoux at Espiers made deeply concentrated wines from very low yields. His wines from that vintage reward cellaring: even the Sablet is a keeper. In 2010, however, the wines are more approachable and, I suspect, more to our customers' taste, combining splendid richness with juicy freshness.

The Côtes du Rhône Villages Sablet, from the better land on the slopes above the village towards Seguret, is largely Grenache but with about 30% Syrah. Most of the Gigondas is raised for 6 months in old oak demi-muids, just to round it out. The Les Blâches cuvée (he makes only about 2500 bottles of this) is a similar blend from his best plots, and takes the oak further (though only 15% new barrels) to create a sumptuous and showy bottle.

Côtes du Rhône Villages, Sablet

Case £81.00 Code ESP410

Dark raspberry colour. Open, generous and charming red-berried scent. Brambly red and black fruit, mildly autumnal in character. Bittersweet, fat, yet attractively crunchy too, this offers a lot of depth and concentration for any wine from the Côtes du Rhône Villages. Late 2012-2016

Gigondas

Case £120.00 Code ESP310

Vibrant purple. More black-fruited on the nose than the Sablet above, with a hint of prune richness and cinnamon, but the palate is fresher, showing mouth-filling raspberry and blackberry flavours with juicy acidity. So attractively deep and fleshy.

*"2010 ****(*) dark, nicely oily red robe; has a red berry fruit air that is oily also, filled with a little smoke, has plenty of depth and a lightly grilled, sizzling pork side, with licorice and rosemary to spur it on. The palate sequences well from the nose - there is still a show of suave, well-textured red berry fruit, with clear-cut tannins on cue after half way. Will drink well mid-2013 onwards. There is good Grenache present (tasted blind, turns out to be 80% this year) - this has been well handled. The tannins are ripe, and its fruit will extend with more time. The balance is good. It compacts down towards the finish - needs those 2 winters more",* John Livingstone-Learmonth on www.drinkrhone.com, Dec 2011. 2013-2018

Gigondas, Les Blâches

Case £195.00 Code ESP210

Inky deep purple with a solid core. Cream and cassis scents: the Syrah is dominant at the moment. Velvety texture. showing ripe blackcurrant, black chocolate, with a hint of sloe liqueur. *"This superb black/purple-colored, full-bodied effort reveals lots of crushed rock, lavender, blackberry and kirsch liqueur characteristics. Displaying abundant concentration as well as extract, it will require several years of cellaring and should drink well for 12-15 years. 91-93/100".* Robert Parker, **Wine Advocate**, October 2011. 2013-2019

Domaine Le Couroulu, Vacqueyras

Note: wines from the 2009 vintage offered here

Our customers will know that Guy Ricard at Couroulu is a late bottler so we always offer his wines *en primeur* a year late. Last year we did not offer his 2008 vintage at all: he is such an honest man that he admits he sold most of his wine in bulk, and bottled just a little light and strawberryish wine under the Classique label for early drinking. Here, by contrast, are his two 2009 reds, both showing that lovely liqueur element which one seeks in the best southern Rhônes.

The Vieilles Vignes bottling is a very special Vacqueyras. Average production of this wine is around 10,000 bottles, about 75% Grenache and 25% Syrah, based on old vine parcels planted mainly by Guy's grandparents on the plateau amidst the garrigue.

Robert Parker has always endorsed Guy's wines, the latest encomium (October 2011) reading: "*This impressively run, 40-acre Vacqueyras estate has consistently made top-notch wines for many years*".

2009 Vacqueyras, Classique

Case £102.00 Code COW109

Intense scent of cooked strawberries. First impression is of surprising density: this doesn't give a lot away immediately, but it blooms in the glass, showing pure, heated red fruits, very ripe tannins, and a very long finish. This is more like Guy's 2005 than his 2007 - a keeper.

"The most forward and drinkable of these offerings is the 2009 Vacqueyras Cuvee Classique, which is a blend of 60% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 15% Mourvedre primarily aged in cement tanks. This gorgeous effort reveals abundant notes of tapenade, black cherries, soy, new saddle leather, blackberries and earth. This seductive, round, generous, pure, velvety-textured 2009 should drink well for 7-8 years. 90/100", Robert Parker, **The Wine Advocate**, October 2011. 2013-2018

2009 Vacqueyras, Vieilles Vignes

Case £129.00 Code COW309

Powerful perfume of cherries - or rather Kirsch - with an earthy note. Integrated but very promising tannins underlying very ripe and lush black cherry and blackberry fruit. Very concentrated; and this really shouts "*vin de terroir*" this vintage, with a strong mineral grip.

"Potentially better, but backward and in need of several years of bottle age at present, the 2009 Vacqueyras Vieilles Vignes comes from 60-year-old vines..... it exhibits a dense purple color in addition to restrained aromatics, a highly extracted mouthfeel, but no hard edges. Silky tannins, low acidity and stunning concentration suggest it should turn out to be a brilliant Vacqueyras that will hit its prime in 2-3 years, and last for 10-12". 90+/100, Robert Parker, **The Wine Advocate**, October 2011. 2014-2020

Domaine du Joncier, Lirac

Marine Roussel was really excited when we visited her about the quality of her 2010s. Organic in practice for years, now certified by Ecocert, she began working with bio-dynamic methods in 2009. She thinks that her soils have become lighter; her vines grow more upright and with stronger shoots; and she had better yields in 2010 after a very short crop in 2009.

We have already shipped her 2010 Gourmand - by some distance the best vintage we have offered of her early drinking, red-fruited cuvée: we list this at £11.25 and I can't recommend it too strongly. The Classique is from about half Grenache, with Syrah, Cinsaut and Carignan. Les Muses is an unusual Southern Rhône, based on about 3/4 Mourvèdre, supported largely by Syrah and Grenache, which makes for a powerful, deep-hued wine with ageing potential - more comparable to (but cheaper than) a Bandol.

Lirac, Classique

Case £87.00 Code JON110

First impression is all of such appealing mass: this is so rich and concentrated. But it's so aromatic too, showing nuances of herbs of the *garrigue* and liquorice around the heart of raspberry fruit. Very well-integrated tannins. Fresh. This will be approachable young. At the same offer price as last year this looks like a bargain - filling of boots is advisable. Late 2012-2016

Lirac, Les Muses

Case £114.00 Code JON310

Two varieties tasted prior to blending. Mourvèdre: very ripe indeed, but the scent of black, plummy fruit is counterbalanced by an attractive leafy note. Smooth, autumnal black fruit: blackberries, black plums and damson, with black pepper and that characteristic smoky note of Mourvèdre. Syrah: glossy purple. Pure cassis, deliciously silky, but with fine acid and tannic spine. 2014-2019

Domaine Roger Perrin, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Following the untimely death in 2010 of Luc Perrin, a leading figure in Châteauneuf, the estate is being managed by his very capable sister, Véronique Perrin-Rolin, herself an oenologist working in Tain. When I visited in September she was energetically running around the cellar in shorts, and offered a wide-ranging tasting of the vats, with a lively commentary. Véronique had a slightly different take on the merits of 2010 versus 2009: she felt the 2009 wines were flattering (and we do recommend the 2009 Perrin Châteauneuf-du-Pape as making lovely drinking from now), whereas she felt 2010 was more classic.

Like many top estates here, the average age of the vines is very high across all their land, with a large part of the wine in their splendid old vine Côtes du Rhône from ancient trunks planted in 1906; and the average age of the vines in their 15.6 hectares of Châteauneuf being about 60 years. The Côtes du Rhône Vieilles Vignes is about 73% Grenache, 22% Syrah and 5% Cinsaut.

The Châteauneuf-du-Pape is a very traditional blend of about $\frac{3}{4}$ Grenache, plus, in descending order, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Cinsaut, Clairette, Counoise and Vaccarese. Grapes are partially destemmed, and aged in a mix of stainless steel, old *foudres*, and a few new barrels. Somewhat unusually - and this tradition goes back to Luc's tenure - the grapes are vinified together here; and about 1/3 goes into the mix of barrels whilst 2/3 is in tank. As Véronique puts it, they are not seeking excessive extraction here, but rather a drinkable, traditional style.

Côtes du Rhône Vieilles Vignes

Case £75.00 Code PES210

Very deep-hued and glossy. Gorgeous scent of black cherries. That black fruit character marks the palate, showing black cherries, plums and damsons, with a hint of sloes. Concentrated, with good grip, but not in the least rustic, it finishes with a flourish. A good value wine which can be approached fairly young but is also worth keeping. Late 2012-2016

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Case £144.00 Code PES410

Numerous barrels and tanks tasted. A synthesis of the notes would be:

- Scents of pure black cherries, cooked black fruit, Kirsch, with some roasted notes of "*torréfaction*".
- A couple of samples creamy and strawberryish; but most fat, rounded, showing intense black cherry and black plum, enlivened by spice and dried fruit hints - fig.

Overall impression is of a big wine - some parcels were coming in at over 15° of alcohol - but both supple and with enough structure for ageing. Fairly priced and recommended. 2013-2018

Domaine La Barroche, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Our most recent visit to Barroche was a mixed experience. First, retasting his 2009s confirmed their outstanding quality and power. The 2009 Signature, from very low yields, showed superbly: a wonderful perfume of crushed raspberries was followed by a gorgeously fat and smooth mass of red fruits, again with mint and hints of dried fruit. Plenty of grip, but covered by the voluptuous fruit. Huge finish, with so much peppery energy. 2009 Pure, by contrast, appeared more elegant, with ascent of strawberries and cinnamon; and, on the palate, jellied red fruit with that lovely note of roses which Grenache sometimes sings. However, as Julien Barrot was away, it wasn't possible to have more than a cursory look at 2010; and as the final blends are not decided until the spring, you will have to go on trust here! As in 2009 Julien will bottle just two cuvées in this vintage: Signature, Barroche's principal wine; and the estate's top wine, Pure, 100% very old vine Grenache produced in tiny quantities. For the latter we can only accept orders of 6 bottles per customer. Secondly, as there's huge demand for this, **if people would like to buy Pure we would expect them to buy Signature from Barroche as well, or alternatively other wines in this offer to the value of £250.00 or more.** We are very reluctant to do this, but we also don't much like selling this rarity to cherry-pickers or carpet-baggers either!

For three years now we have been banging on about Barroche, which only began bottling their own wine in 2003, as a rising star. However, just as Robert Parker notes below, this estate has definitely arrived, sadly with prices rising to match demand for these terrific wines. The key is the Barrot family's precious inheritance of old vines, including about a third of the estate's 12 hectares planted to 100 year old Grenache vines. Most of the vines lie in the north and north east of the appellation, on the plateau near to Rayas and Beaucastel, on very meagre, sandy and pebbly soils. I will now pass you on to Robert Parker, that great advocate of the Rhône wines and Châteauneuf in particular. His first note needs to be taken with caution, as he seems to have reviewed Terroir (which we are informed is not being made this year) rather than Signature.

"The 2010 Chateauneuf du Pape Terroir reveals copious quantities of vivid mountain berry fruit intermixed with strawberries as well as more acidity and freshness, great purity and precision, and terrific texture and sweetness of tannin. If this outstanding effort continues to gain richness and weight, it will merit an even higher score. 90-92/100

*Young Julien Barrot's ... bottled 2009s showed better this year than they did last year - always a fabulous sign. I tend to underrate these wines initially, only to add points after they spend time in the bottle. Barrot is one of the young turks that appears to no longer be "up and coming," but has arrived. This 30-acre estate is spread throughout the appellation, and in most vintages, three cuvees are produced - Terroir, Signature and Pure, the limited production, remarkable, 100% Grenache cuvee made from century old vines planted in pure sandy soil from the lieu-dit known as Grand Pierre... 2010 appears to be another great vintage for proprietor Julien Barrot", Robert Parker, **The Wine Advocate**, October 2011*

Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Signature

Case £267.00 Code BAS210

The mainstay of production, a Grenache dominated blend : about 65% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 15% Mourvèdre and 5% Cinsaut (the Cinsaut, from old vines in Les Cerises, is wonderful in this cellar). 2015-2021

Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Pure

Case (6) £192.00 (6 bottles only per customer - linked to the purchase of 12 bottles of Signature from Barroche as well, or alternatively other wines in this offer to the value of £250.00 or more) Code BAS510

Pure Grenache, from one parcel of vines planted in 1901, in the Grand Pierre area near to Rayas, on sandy but red-irony soils.

*"While it is less sexy and open than the 2009, there is even more to the 2010 Chateauneuf du Pape Pure. One of the greatest wines of the vintage, it possesses a very singular style with oodles of raspberry and kirsch liqueur notes intermixed with licorice and spring flowers. Opulent as well as reserved and well-delineated, this massively endowed yet light on its feet Grenache must have alcohol levels pushing 16%. Drink it over the next 20-25 years. It is an incredible example of Provencal viticulture and the greatness of this sun-drenched, wind-swept appellation in southern France. 96-99/100", Robert Parker, **The Wine Advocate**, October 2011. 2015-2022*

Clos des Papes, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Clos des Papes is an estate steeped in history: Avril ancestors have been growers in Châteauneuf since about 1600; were the town treasurers in the second half of the 18th century; and prime movers in the creation of the Appellation between 1911 and 1923. They are the owners of the now terraced vineyard which surrounds the ruined papal castle, formerly enclosed by a wall, hence the name Clos; and began selling wine under the Clos des Papes label as far back as 1896.

Under the leadership of Vincent Avril this estate has steadily ascended the hierarchy in the Appellation, and now makes what is rightly famed as one of the top wines, despite just making one red wine, not numerous special bottlings. From about 65% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah and 5% of Counoise, Vaccarèse and Muscardin, it's always highly refined - Vincent, trained in Beaune, seeks a Burgundian "*finesse*" - and approachable quite young, although the relatively high percentage of Mourvèdre adds longevity.

It wasn't possible to taste at Clos des Papes this year: perfectionist Vincent Avril demands a lengthy morning visit and we couldn't fix a time. But a series of superb vintages from this great estate give one assurance that he will once again have crafted a great and classic wine. After all, his 2008, in a difficult vintage, is a better wine than most Châteauneuf-du-Pape producers will make in a lifetime of trying! So you will have to make do with Robert Parker's notes. Another taster I respect describes it as a "*millésime de garde*, not unlike 1990".

Clos des Papes have long made a speciality of their white wine, wholly unoaked but capable of long ageing. It is varied in its blend, including: Roussanne and Grenache Blanc ("for fat and fruit" as Vincent Avril said); Bourbolenc and Picpoul (for "acidity"); and Clairette and Picardou (for "finesse"). They pick late and seek a fruity but mineral style, which can be drunk young or alternatively left for many years (as it can close down in between and be rather mute and disappointing). **We have very limited stocks of these two wines so please call us immediately if you would like to buy either.**

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc

£378.00 Code CDP310

"The 2010 Clos des Papes blanc, which as I said earlier is an equal part blend of Grenache blanc, Clairette, Roussanne, Picpoul, and Bourbolenc, is aged in stainless steel, with malolactic fermentation blocked to preserve all of its acidity. The 2010 displays honeyed grapefruit, licorice and an almost exotic pineapple note along with a hint of truffle. The wine has superb fruit, precision, minerality and freshness, and should drink nicely for 20-25 or more years. 93/100", Robert Parker, **The Wine Advocate**, October 2011. Drink 2012-early 2013, or alternatively 2017-2019

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge

£582.00 Code CDP110

"The 2010 looks to be extraordinary. A slightly fresher and more elegant version of the 2007, I think it may well be the greatest Clos des Papes since the 1990 and 1978. The 2010 has a dense ruby/purple color, a beautifully precise and pure nose of deep black

raspberry, black cherry, boysenberry and blueberry notes with some licorice, garrigue, and bouquet garni. Additionally, there is a meaty richness that probably comes from the Mourvedre and Syrah. It is an extraordinarily intense, fresh, lively wine with great finesse and elegance, which is somewhat unusual given the richness of fruit and the power of this wine. The color is a dense ruby/purple, perhaps slightly less opaque than the 2007, but very dark. This wine should evolve for 30+ years.

*Tasting here is always a treat, but it takes a while to work through all the different lots and then look at the potential assembled version of the 2010. I was consistently rating each foudre between a low of 92 or 93 to a high of mid- to upper-90s. That is as impressive as 2010 is. Avril told me that the average alcohol in 2010 was high on all the different lots, which is in keeping with recent vintages. (The 2003 was 15.6%, and the 2007 was 15.7%, while the final assembled version of the 2010 is 15.9% and the 2009 is 15.6%.) The 2010, paradoxically, has relatively high acidity compared to other top vintages. 96-98/100", Robert Parker, **The Wine Advocate**, October 2011.*
2013-2022

The North

Yann Chave, Mercuriol

Yann's comparison above of the 2010 vintage to "Burgundy" is borne out by the grace and finesse of his 2010s here. He seeks to make wines of perfect ripeness but without high alcohol levels, so this year's weather was more to his liking than one of the hotter years.

Yann treats his two cuvées of Crozes-Hermitage differently. The standard Crozes receives micro-oxygenation in stainless steel tank, making for a forward, deliciously fruity wine which can be drunk quite early. On the other hand his Crozes Le Rouvre, named after a type of sessile oak, is aged for 12 months in new, one and two year old *demi-muids*, 600 litre barrels. This comes from parcels of old vines on the very stony fields at Les Chassis, and is a very serious, mineral wine for ageing. Yann's Hermitage, also in *demi-muids*, but 100% new, comes from plots in Beaumes and Péléal on the great hill. Yann says he likes to use new oak as its greater porosity prevents reduction (Syrah being very prone to reduction), so he doesn't have to manipulate the wine by pumping over.

It was a bit disturbing to learn from Yann that he has started selling his wine into China: I was hoping the teeming millions would stay fixated on fancy Bordeaux for a few more years!

Crozes-Hermitage

Case £120.00 Code CHA110

Bright purple. Gentle scent of black fruit - blackcurrants and blackberries. So open and textured, creamily black-fruited. As usual, it's difficult to believe this wine is unoaked, such is its roundness and depth of flavour. Showing beautifully already.
2012-2015

Crozes-Hermitage, Le Rouvre

Case £156.00 Code CHA210

Case Magnums (6 x 150cl.) £165.00 Code CHA910

Two samples tasted: from a first fill *demi-muid*, deep purple, with aromatics of vanilla, cinnamon and cherry liqueur, and a core of black cherries, not sweet but lively and crunchy; and, from a new *demi-muid*, an even deeper colour, and a velvet-smooth and richer palate, intense, with a black chocolate hint. 2014-2019

Hermitage

Case £420.00 Code CHA310

Beautifully pure aromas of fresh blackcurrants and sweet vanilla oak. Perfectly poised and fine. Very ripe palate, showing cassis with blackberries and mulberries. Has the unforced, juicy acidity of fresh blackcurrants. Very long finish - with notes of white pepper and a difficult-to-define minerality. 2016-2021

Domaine Monier-Perréol, St. Desirat

M. Monier has now teamed up with another bio-dynamic grower, Philippe Perréol, but the minor name change has not otherwise changed things at this small domaine in the hamlet of Brunieux high above St. Desirat. Here the contrast between his family's very modest village house and the smart equipment (the latest toy being a very expensive gentle pump) in his temperature-controlled cellar below continues to amaze me.

Jean-Pierre has been farming organically since the 1980s and biodynamically since 1993, long before this extreme and fascinating branch of organic viticulture became fashionable: his wines are certified by Ecocert. Jean-Pierre thinks his reds are typified by cassis, blueberry and cherry and are very "*confits*", not jammy but charmingly ripe. He also sees them as having the potential for seven to eight years of ageing, despite being sumptuous soon after bottling.

Both reds are 100% Syrah, destemmed after 12 hours cold soak, then given a temperature controlled fermentation before spending 12 months in barrel. The straight Saint Joseph comes from 30 year old vines near the cellar and goes into about 20% new oak. The low-yielding production of Terre Blanche (about 30% new oak) derives from limestone/clay parcels on more steeply pitched vineyards. In the 2009 vintage I felt the Terres Blanches was a big step up on his basic village wine, but in 2010 the first red showed beautifully, and one won't have to wait long to enjoy this silky delight.

Saint Joseph

Case £129.00 Code MOP510

Perfume of red cherries, strawberries and raspberries; and those bright red fruits dominate the palate. Jean-Pierre calls it "*friand*", i.e. fresh, juicy and crunchy. Finely textured, with delicate acidity, this is just so correct in its fragrance and grace. Late 2012-2017

Saint Joseph, Terre Blanche

Case £162.00 Code MOP110

Aromas of cooked black fruit, cassis and smart oak. Again, light, fresh, red-fruited, with strawberry essence backed by decent tannins for longevity. 2013-2018

Domaine Balthazar, Cornas

Young Franck Balthazar, was a little downbeat on this visit: his yields, after a dry year in 2009 were again down due to the problems with flowering. He harvested only 22 hectolitres per hectare from his century old vines on the steep, very granitic slopes above the village in Les Chaillots. Nevertheless, the tasting from numerous *demi-muids* in his miniscule cellar was as enjoyable as ever.

Franck makes a traditional style of Cornas in that his wines really show the terroir, but without that blackstrap leathery note or rusticity which mars so much old-style Cornas. The grapes are not destemmed, and after a traditional fermentation the wine goes into old 600 litre *demi-muids* before being bottled without fining or filtration. Franck has effectively been organic in production since 2006.

Note: limited stock this year

Cornas, Chaillot

Case £201.00 Code BAL110

Four samples tasted from his old barrels. Aromas ranged from red cherry to cassis. Red fruits were to the fore, with some samples gutsy, grippy, earthy and structured; and others suppler and more juicy. Once again we anticipate a Cornas of great typicity, with excellent ageing potential. 2014-2020

Domaine Pichat, Vérenay

Stéphane Pichat has been one of our best finds in latter years. From the 2010 vintage we are already selling his lightly oaked Vin de Pays Syrah (actually from his young vines within the Côte Rôtie appellation), a wine of remarkable depth and value at £13.25; plus his subtly stone-fruited, mineral Condrieu. Now we offer his principal Côte Rôtie, Champons, 85% from the vineyard of that name in the northern, schistous sector of the appellation, with the rest from Plomb and Cognet. There's about 2% Viognier in this wine. Stéphane uses a restrained hand with the oak and doesn't seek huge extraction. As his deliciously approachable 2009 shows he seeks elegance and finesse - and the 2010 we offer at the same price as last year.

Côte Rôtie, Champons

Case £252.00 Code PID310

Attractive whiff of very clean oak. Red and black cherries. Supple, very fine grained tannins. There's a linear purity to this which is immediately appealing, but there's nice mass too. Charmingly ripe red fruit reappears on the finish. 2015-2021