

The Rhône

STONE, VINE & SUN

WINE MERCHANTS



I was in the Southern Rhône in early September, in glorious weather, as the vigneronns were just beginning to bring in another perfect harvest; a small one, because of some problems setting fruit, but of very high quality again. There were smiles all round among the vigneronns. The Rhône generally is continuing to enjoy a golden run of vintages, with 2005 to 2007 all being very good to great, and 2008 showing, at this early stage, considerable promise, despite a difficult summer.

Secondly, whilst we tend to list wines below which are largely for drinking now and over the next few years, we have recently shipped all our 2007 Rhône from north and south (and we will be in touch shortly with those who have bought these *en primeur*, for duty and VAT), so do get in touch if you are interested in anything from this great year: Robert Parker described it as being “throughout the southern Rhône...the greatest vintage I have tasted in my thirty years working in the region”.

Simon Taylor
October 2009

Mixed Cases

All cases include 2 bottles of each of six wines, with a discount of at least 7.5%.

RH19 Generous Grenache Reds

£85.00

(6 reds)

2008 Vigneronns d'Estézargues,

Cuvée des Galets, VdP du Gard (p.3)

2008 Terra Vitis, Côtes du Rhône (p.3)

2008 Guicharde, Côtes du Rhône,

Cuvée Léon (p.4)

2007 Pigeade, Côtes du Ventoux

Classique (p.6)

2007 Espiers, Côtes du Rhône (p.6)

2006 Joncier, Lirac, Le Gourmand (p.9)

RH29 Terroirs of the Rhône

£115.00

(Two whites, four reds)

2008 Guicharde, Côtes du Rhône Blanc,
Autour de la Chapelle (p.4)

2007 Cassan, Côtes du Rhône Blanc,
Cuvée St. Christophe (p.7)

2008 Pierredon,
Côtes du Rhône Villages (p.3)

2005 Amadiou, Côtes du Rhône Villages,
Cairanne, Vieilles Vignes, (p.5)

2007 Espiers, Côtes du Rhône Villages,
Sablet (p.6)

2006 Le Prieuré d'Arras,
St. Joseph Rouge (p.13)

RH39 North & South Split

£172.50

(Two whites and four reds; three wines from
the north, three from the south)

2007 Couroulu, Vacqueyras Blanc,
Cuvée Laura (p.8)

2008 Prieuré d'Arras, St. Joseph Blanc (p.13)

2005 Couroulu, Vacqueyras,
Vieilles Vignes (p.8)

2006 Joncier, Lirac, Les Muses (p.9)

2006 Monier, St. Joseph Rouge (p.14)

2004 Balthazar, Cornas, Chaillot (p.15)

Vin de Pays, Côtes du Rhône and Côtes du Rhône Villages

Les Vignerons d'Estézargues

From the land of just ten *vignerons*, co-operative winemaker Denis Deschamps crafts wines from shared grapes - the great value cuvées such as the Vin de Pays du Gard and Côtes du Rhône listed below - and also makes wines for the different, privately owned domaines under their own names. All wines are bottled unfiltered, sometimes lending a slightly hazy look, but, more important, a satisfying density and mouthfeel.

With every visit to this mini co-operative - hugely admired within France - in a small village in the Gard, just west of Avignon, we seem to add another of their wines. This year it's Domaine de Pierredon's Côtes du Rhône Villages, unusual (and strikingly classy) in that it is a blend of halves of Grenache and Mourvèdre. Buy this for drinking now and for keeping a year or two - it tastes much grander than its appellation implies.

Otherwise we offer: the latest vintage of Les Galets, a cheerful blend of Grenache, Cinsaut and Syrah which makes a really honest, daily

drinking wine, which is, if anything, even better than the 2007; the Terra Vitis Côtes du Rhône, from grapes farmed by sustainable, minimal intervention farming discipline, half way to organic viticulture, practiced by five members of the co-operative; and a regular favourite, Jean-Marie Granier's wine from the plateau at Signargues based on 70% Grenache and 20% Syrah.

2008 Cuvée des Galets, Vin de Pays du Gard, 14°

Bottle £6.50 Case £74.10 Code ESZ108

Soft, raspberry hue. Brambly nose with a hint of blueberry and herbs. Juicy, fruits of the forest character, light, mildly spicy and very moreish. Now-2010

2008 Côtes du Rhône, Terra Vitis, 14°

Bottle £6.95 Case £79.23 Code ESZ208

Deeper colour. Ripe scents, with a suggestion of preserved fruits and vanilla. Bittersweet, raspberry and blackberry palate, with some genuine depth and surprising length for the money. Now-2011

2007 Domaine La Montagnette, Côtes du Rhône Villages, Signargues, 14.5°

Bottle £8.25 Case £94.05 Code ESZ307

Pretty floral scent. Juicy mouthful of sweet cherries. Light and pure but plenty of flesh. Delicious. Now-2010

2008 Domaine de Pierredon, Côtes du Rhône Villages, 14.5°

Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code ESZ608

Lovely purple hue. Aroma of Maraschino cherries; and that red and black cherry character is dominant, enlivened by attractive hints of smoke, black olive and black pepper. Really soft but present tannins. Marked by a lively, spicy finish. Both robust and refined, a real find. Now-2012



Domaine de la Guicharde, Derboux

We decided to explore the fascinating sub zone of the Massif d'Uchaux, north of Orange, on our latest visit. Among the wooded hills here lie small patches of vines, and some excellent quality wines, notably around the village of Derboux. The young couple of Arnaud and Isabelle Guichard are in conversion to organic viticulture, and though they are highly successful in exporting to the USA and elsewhere, their wines are not known here, except by the indefatigable Rhône writer, John Livingstone-Learmonth. We were particularly struck by their deliciously appley white wine, a blend of 50% Viognier, 40% Grenache Blanc and Gris and 10% Marsanne; and their traditionally styled red, from equal proportions of Grenache and Syrah, has an authenticity too.

2008 Côtes du Rhône Blanc, Autour de la Chapelle, 2008, 12.5°

Bottle £8.75 Case £99.75 Code GUH608

The apricotty perfume of the Viognier is to the fore, with a waxy pear note of the Marsanne. This is so fresh and zippy, delivering the pretty flavours of ripe russet apples. Light - note the moderate alcohol - and dry, but so joyous and charming. Now-2010

2008 Côtes du Rhône Rouge, Cuvée Léon, 13°

Bottle £7.50 Case £85.50 Code GUH108

Soft ruby tone. Light scent of raspberries and currant leaf. Crisp and juicy cranberries and raspberries, supported by a smudge of tannin, and with a gently spicy finish. An honest, straightforward Southern Rhône. Now-2011

Château La Décelle, Saint- Paul-Trois Châteaux

The Seroin family vineyards lie towards the north of the Southern Rhône appellations, where the temperatures are a little more moderate than on the plain to the south. As a result the wines always exhibit a pleasant

freshness and purity, and moderate alcohol levels. The 2005 vintage of the Côtes du Rhône Villages, Valréas has made us a lot of friends. This blend is approximately 60% Grenache, 30% Syrah and 10% Mourvèdre, so cherry-flavoured that one could drink it all night.

2005 Côtes du Rhône Villages, Valréas, 13°

Bottle £8.95 Case £102.03 Code DEC305

An old favourite, smooth, deliciously ripe and juicy, with an enchanting tone of red cherries tone. A rich mouthful supported by silky tannins. Just so enjoyable; Now-2011

Domaine des Amadiou, Cairanne

From Cairanne, arguably the top village in the whole Côtes du Rhône Villages appellation, we present this old vine cuvée, 60% Grenache, 20% Syrah and 20% Mourvèdre, largely from vines over 50 years old. This wine was named in *La Revue du Vin de France* (October 2006) as one of "Les 80 Plus Grandes Cuvées" in the Rhône, with a note that the "*rapport qualité/prix est imbattable*". The 2005 is now drinking superbly, with the mass of a grander appellation.

2005 Côtes du Rhône Villages, Cairanne, Vieilles Vignes, 14°

Bottle £9.95 Case £113.43 Code AMB305

Deep purple robe. Potent aromas of sloe (gin?) and cinnamon. Huge and vital mouthful of briary fruit, with the ripe tannins integrating well. Genuinely peppery too - cracking stuff. Now-2012



Around Les Dentelles du Montmirail

Les Dentelles de Montmirail are the spiky limestone mountains to the east of Orange which dominate the entire southern Rhône plain. To the south lies the village of Beaufort-de-Venise, which now has its own appellation for its red wines to add to the previous well-known appellation for the fortified white Muscat. To the east looms the much higher peak of Mont Ventoux. Côtes du Ventoux can offer distinctive, and very good value, red wine, both light and spicy. On the western slopes of the Dentelles lie Gigondas and Vacqueyras, the second and third most important appellations (after Châteauneuf) in the southern Rhône. These are both famous names for wine, but, as in Burgundy, actually tiny villages where almost the whole population is employed in the wine industry in some way or other. The wines of Gigondas may not be able to reach quite the heights of Châteauneuf but they are a lot more consistent, with nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the wine bottled by individual growers, and with most of the appellation lying on well-drained vineyards running up to almost 600m, on classic limestone and clay soils. Vacqueyras, which became an appellation in its own right in 1990, is less consistent but again the best wines, from either the slopes near the village or the plateau marked by *galets*, can be excellent. A few kilometres to the north along the shoulders of the Dentelles lies the pretty hill-top village of Sablet.

Domaine de la Pigeade, Beaufort-de-Venise

Young perfectionist Thierry Vaute is now recognised as crafting one of the best Muscats de Beaufort-de-Venise. (Muscat de Beaufort-de-Venise is probably the best-known of those delectable Vins Doux Naturels which are found across the south of France. Made

by stopping the fermentation of ripe grapes, half way through its course, by the addition of pure grape alcohol - thereby killing the yeasts - this leaves a sweet wine with lots of natural grapey flavour and sugar). The secret to Thierry's Muscat is the extra care he takes at every stage of harvesting and vinification: the picked bunches of Muscat are brought into the cellar in small boxes, and are then laid out on a *table de trie* for selection. The bunches are then destemmed and chilled right down for a twelve hour maceration before fermentation, also at controlled temperature: all to preserve the enticing aromatics.

We also loved his red Côtes du Ventoux Classique, from Grenache, Carignan and Syrah, a really pure and elegant example.

2008 Muscat de Beaufort-de-Venise, 15°

Bottle £13.95 Case £159.03 Code PIG108
Halves £7.75 Case (12 x 37.5cl.) £88.35
Code PIG908

Wow – recently bottled Muscat, with a delirious scent of orange blossom and lilies, and a gorgeously exotic pallet of caramelised oranges, honey, and lychees. So light and aromatic for a fortified wine, all freshness, perfume and finesse. Everyone needs some of this - and serve chilled. Now-2011



2007 Côtes du Ventoux Classique, 13.5°

Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code PIG607

Mid purple. Open, pretty scent of fresh berries. This shows the crisp freshness of redcurrants and red cherries. Nicely perfumed, and, by Southern Rhône standards, light and refined - a bottle could vanish very fast indeed.

Now-2011

Domaine des Espiers, Vacqueyras

Philippe Cartoux - such a likeable, intelligent young man - continues to go from strength to strength at the winery he shares with his wife's family at the Domaine de Montvac on the outskirts of Vacqueyras. Somehow he crafts wines which are deliciously drinkable almost as soon as they are bottled, capturing all the cherry and berry flavours without sacrificing intensity and texture. The 2007 vintage really suited his style, delivering supreme "*vins de plaisir*" but with plentiful "*gras*" and glycerol. He likes to bottle early, to preserve all that fruit.

The Côtes du Rhône, from densely planted, low yielding vines around Vacqueyras and Gigondas, is a blend of 70% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, and 10% Syrah. We then move up to the splendid Sablet, from Philippe's vineyards on the slopes above the village, about two-thirds Grenache and a quarter Syrah. The top vineyard holding is 3 hectares of Gigondas. The Tradition is about 2/3 Grenache and 1/3 Syrah, all raised for 6 months in old oak barriques. The Cuvée des Blaches (only 2000 bottles of this) incorporates more Syrah and takes the oak further (though only 15% new barrels) to create a sumptuous and showy bottle.

2007 Côtes du Rhône, 14°

Bottle £8.50 Case £96.90 Code ESP107

"Black cherry fruit aroma combines freshness and ripeness. A lively, bonny wine with really persistent fruit. Great drinking, including without food", John Livingstone-Learmonth, Top 2007 Southern Rhône's, in **Decanter**, May 2008

Now-2011

2007 Côtes du Rhône Villages, Sablet, 14.5°

Bottle £10.75 Case £122.55 Code ESP407

Selected as one of Oz Clarke's **250 wines 2010**.

Terrific depth of ruby/purple. Big spicy nose: plums, blackcurrants and a touch of white pepper. That spice follows through onto the palate, showing gorgeous, lively blackberry and cassis. Really lovely wine. Great tannins - soft and round. Very long, spicy, blueberry finish.

Now-2013

2006 Gigondas, Tradition, 14.5°

**Bottle £14.75 Case £168.15 Code ESP306
Magnum £29.50 Case (6 x 150cl.) £168.15
Code ESP906**

Bright purple. Enticing scents of herbs and liquorice. Big, juicy gulp of ripe red and blackcurrants. Fine textured - very smooth tannins there. Builds well on the palate. *"The best gigondas are mini châteauneufs. 2006 was a particularly good vintage in the southern rhône, and this is one of Cartoux's finest gigondas yet. It delivers the sort of vivid, crimson-purple hue blessed with delicious, spicy, red-fruit flavours that will win it many festive fans"*. Jane MacQuitty, Top 100 Winter Wines, **The Times**, December 13th 2008.

Now-2013

2006 Gigondas, Cuvée des Blaches, 14.5°

Bottle £19.95 Case £227.43 Code ESP206

Oak is apparent on the nose, over a liqueur-like scent. Luxurious cherry fruit, almost Turkish-delight like in its sweetness and perfume, is overlaid by chocolatey oak notes and black pepper. So expansive and seductive. A show-stopper, if not for traditionalists! Now-2013

Domaine du Cassan, Lafare

As we noted in the spring there's change afoot at Cassan where the beautifully sited vineyards straddle the boundary between the appellations of Beaumes-de-Venise and Gigondas. Gérard Paillet has hired a new winemaker, Caroline Archange. Short and smart, she brings new ideas - for example experimenting with micro-oxygenation - and energy to the estate. Secondly, there's also been considerable investment in the seemingly old-fashioned winery.

Gérard's white is a fascinating sideline - only about 350 cases - from around 30% each of Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, and Clairette with 10% Viognier grown on very calcareous soils, and all barrel-fermented in old oak. Of the three reds we offer, the Côtes du Ventoux, from Grenache and Cinsaut, always offers generous vitality and fruit. The Beaumes-de-Venise Cuvée St. Christophe, about 2/3 Grenache, 1/4 Syrah, with Mourvèdre and Cinsaut, named after one of those little chapels to the wayfaring Saint, comes from two parcels of 30-40 year old vines in a little south-facing amphitheatre: this offers Gigondas-like weight and ageing potential without the price tag. The Gigondas, from vineyards on the north slopes of the southern ridge of the Dentelles, is now crafted in a slightly less rustic style than of old: it is always at least 3/4 Grenache, with Syrah and some Mourvèdre.

2007 Côtes du Rhône Blanc, Cuvée St. Christophe, 13.5°

Bottle £11.50 Case £131.10 Code CAS907

Some oak apparent on the nose, along with floral and honeyed hints. The attack is all bittersweet, with lime marmalade vying with tangerine, kiwi and more exotic fruit. Full-bodied, yet showing a chalky minerality, this is a lively Mediterranean *Vin de Terroir*, with an excellent finish. Now-2011

2007 Côtes du Ventoux, Les Esclusels, 13.5°

Bottle £7.95 Case £90.63 Code CAS507

We loved this in this splendid vintage! With a vivid purple hue, a brambly scent with

roasted hints, and delivering a big, spicy glass of blackberries and black cherries, this has the guts to age for a year or two as well. Joyous wine. Now-2011 Limited stock

2006 Beaumes-de-Venise, Cuvée St. Christophe, 14.5°

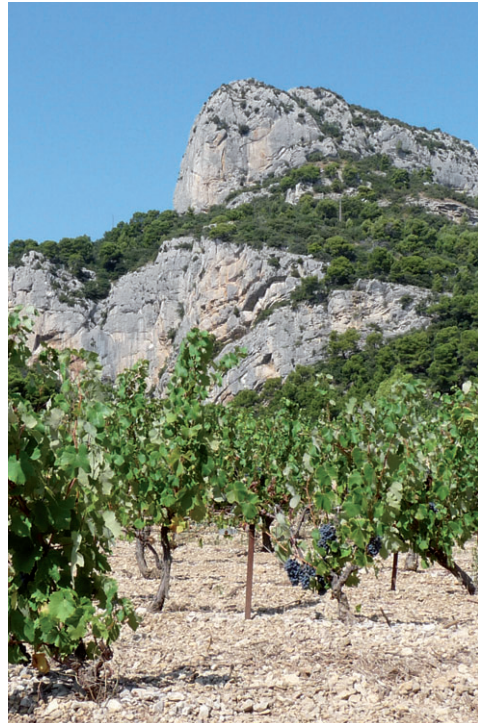
Bottle £10.95 Case £124.83 Code CAS206

Open aromas of kirsch and pepper. Lively, sweet and ripely spicy mouthful, with a good acid spine and a very pure black cherry finish. An honest wine, true to its southern Rhône origins. The 2007 vintage follows. Now-2013

2006 Gigondas, 14.5°

Bottle £14.25 Case £162.45 Code CAS306

Surprisingly pretty scent, with notes of coffee and cinnamon. Very seductive. Sweet core of cassis and cherries, juicy and alive. Rounded and balanced. Very long. We will move to the 2007 at £15.25, with magnums at £32.95. Now-2013 Limited stock



Domaine Le Couroulu, Vacqueyras

Guy Ricard, short, chubby, and with a mat of curly grey hair, has become one of our favourite suppliers. His shoulder-shrugging modesty, disarming smile and dishevelled clothing make him almost a caricature of the middle aged French *vigneron*. He makes reds in a thoroughly old-fashioned style, demanding and benefiting from a few years in bottle. Lovers of chunky, complex Rhônes should stop here, especially as prices are very fair and stable.

The white (a rarity, as so little white Vacqueyras is made, and Guy only produces 2,000 bottles) is splendid. From Viognier and Roussanne in barrel and Grenache Blanc and Clairette kept closed in tank, this is akin to a decent white Châteauneuf at a friendlier price.

The Classique is the domaine's chief wine, a blend of about 60% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 15% Mourvèdre, aged in large old oak foudres. We also always list his top red, about 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah, made from old vine parcels planted on the plateau amidst the *garrigue* by his grandparents. This is a terrific, profound wine.

2007 Vacqueyras Blanc, Cuvée Laura, 13.5°

Bottle £13.50 Case £153.90
Code COW607

Gentle scent of stone fruit with a note of thyme. Immediately fresh and dry, and then opens out with apricot and citrus, and finishes with white pepper and a stony freshness. Vigorous and distinctive. Now-2011

2005 Vacqueyras, Classique, 14.5°

Bottle £13.50 Case £153.90
Code COW105

This is a surprisingly big wine, still youthful, with a meaty scent; followed by depths of cooked mulberry and black cherry flavours, spiked with herbs, nutmeg and even chocolate. Excellent concentration (this was cropped at only 29 hl./ha.), and plenty of structure for ageing. Now-2012

2005 Vacqueyras, Vieilles Vignes, 14.5°

Bottle £16.50 Case £188.10
Code COW305

Guy thinks this is the best wine he has made since he started in 1982; and see Mr Parker's score below for corroboration. Very deep hue indeed. Showing some evolution on the nose, with suggestions of game and coffee. A heart of cooked blackcurrant and blackberry, dense and powerful, with dark hints of liquorice and rich gravy. This is real, old-fashioned wine. *"The sumptuous 2005 Vacqueyras Vieilles Vignes is certainly one of the wines of the vintage for this appellation. A gorgeous deep ruby/purple color that is almost black as well as a fabulous nose of cassis, charcoal, garrigue, licorice, and pepper are followed by an intense, multi-layered wine oozing with fruit, extract, and wonderfully sweet, velvety tannins. This is a superb Vacqueyras that should drink well for 10-12 years. Don't miss it. 92/100!"* Robert Parker's **Wine Advocate**, February 2008. Now-2014



Lirac

Domaine du Joncier, Tavel

Lirac is not a homogenous appellation, which holds back its reputation - you can't make great wine if your vineyards lie on sand or pure limestone. However, if your vineyards lie on the same big banks of *galets* as Châteauneuf, as do those of Joncier, then you can indeed rival big brother just across the river, but at a very fair price.

The engaging Marine Roussel thinks Joncier is the only domaine making solely Lirac (as opposed to also owning land in Tavel or Châteauneuf) and she's proud of it. She crops very low and the domaine is currently in conversion to organic certification via ECOCERT.

This year we have shipped a little of her white, a complex, intriguing wine from Roussanne (picked late), Marsanne and Bourbolenc,



alongside our usual offering of her three reds: Le Gourmand, about 3/4 Grenache with Carignan and Cinsaut, is beautifully red-fruited, lighter than the Classique. The latter is from Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre, with Cinsaut and Carignan. Les Muses is based on 75% Mourvèdre, with 15% Cinsaut, 6% Syrah and 4% Grenache, which makes for a powerful, deep-hued wine with ageing potential - lovers of Bandol take note.

2007 Lirac Blanc, 14.5°

Bottle £11.75 Case £133.95 Code JON707

Pale gold with a green glint. Scents of dried apples, honey and lavender. Dry but honeyed, richly textured and not at all a fruit wine, with nuances of almonds and a hint of oxidation. Not for the first time I find a Southern Rhône white somewhat akin to a Savennières. Now-2010

2006 Lirac, Le Gourmand, 14.5°

Bottle £8.75 Case £99.75 Code JON506

Pretty, floral notes on the nose – roses and cherry blossom. Juicy gulp of red cherries and berries, bright and lively. We will follow this with the 2007 vintage, which will be at £9.25 – and perhaps worth the extra, just so scrumptiously fresh, juicy and drinkable. Now-2010 Limited stock

2006 Lirac Classique, 14.5°

Bottle £9.95 Case £113.43 Code JON106

Open, mildly savoury scent. Core of red fruit with grilled and peppery touches. Splendid sweet finish. So complete, and a definitive autumn and winter wine. Now-2012

2006 Lirac, Les Muses, 14.5°

Bottle £13.25 Case £151.05 Code JON306

Smells just so enticing - rich black cherries. Excitingly open mouthful of sloes and damsons in a rich, liqueur-like idiom. Fine grained tannins giving a firm grip. Hint of tobacco (this often shows on Mourvèdre). So aromatic. Big framed wine with potential. Now-2014

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Given our reservations about Châteauneuf (the appearance of papal keys on the bottle is certainly no guarantor of fine wine in this huge appellation covering over 3,200 hectares), we focus on top wines, made from old vines grown on some of the best land. These are classics, most capable of ageing a decade or more.

Domaine La Barroche, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

We introduced the wines of Domaine La Barroche (probably named for the rocks under the cellar - "*bas roche*") last year. It's not yet a well-known name, as the Barrot family only ceased selling their grapes (after 300 years of viticulture!) to begin bottling their own wine in 2003, but this is a superstar estate in the making. Winemaker Julian Barrot (see below) is only 29 but wholly focussed on tending the vines and the intricacies of the terroir, confident that the family's old vines (65 years old on average, with almost a third of the blocks, largely Grenache, over 100 years old)

will deliver. As he puts it, "*You can't make bad wine with my grapes*". 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.

Terroir comes from the fruit of the younger (i.e. 15-30 year old, so not that young!) vines, and is delightfully red-fruited, for drinking from now; Signature, the estate's principal wine, is dominated by Grenache, and is a concentrated wine for ageing.

2006 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Terroir, 15°

Bottle £19.95 Case £227.43 Code BAS106

Charming scent of pure red fruit. So immediately appealing, showing a seamlessly textured and open palate of red fruits - raspberries and mulberries - with smooth tannins, a touch of the *garrigue* and immediate appeal. Now-2014

2006 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Signature, 15°

Bottle £29.50 Case £336.30 Code BAS206

Quite closed. Dark fruit - cooked damsons. No aggressive tannins. Polished, well balanced. Plums and cassis: red fruit spice, very fresh fruit and lovely balance. Great mass, and splendid potential. 2010-2016

Domaine de Villeneuve, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Villeneuve's vineyards lies in the north of the appellation. Here Philippe du Roy de Blicquy, a Belgian businessman, transformed this estate of only 9 hectares in the mid 1990s, converting cultivation entirely to bio-dynamic principles (certified by ECOCERT) and earning plenty of press recognition, for example from



Robert Parker. In 2006 the old vine cuvée was highlighted as one of “*Les 80 Plus Grandes Cuvées*” in the Rhône in **La Revue du Vin de France**: it is named Vieilles Vignes as over 50% of the vines are 50+ years old, with 10% planted in 1904. The blend is about 70% Grenache, 16% Mourvèdre, 8% Syrah, and 6% for Cinsaut and Clairette. Less than 20% of the wine goes into barrel, largely in one to three year old barrels.

2003 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Les Vieilles Vignes, 14°

Bottle £19.50 Case £222.30 Code VIL103

Such a warming and complex wine, with depths of herbs, truffle and spice behind the ripe berried core. Now drinking perfectly, and excellent value. Now-2013

Bosquet des Papes

The Boirons, father and son, have always made very traditionally styled, robust wines at Bosquet des Papes on the outskirts of Châteauneuf. The Tradition is approximately 75% Grenache, 7% of both Syrah and Mourvèdre, plus Counoise, Cinsaut etc. Chant Le Merle is made only in excellent vintages, from 80-100 year old vines, and is one of the great wines of the appellation.

2003 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Tradition, 13.5°

Bottle £18.25 Case £208.05 Code BOS103

Ripe scents with cooked and raisiny elements. Generous red cherry palate, seasoned with black pepper and cinnamon. Big. Now-2011 Limited stock

2003 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Chant Le Merle, 14°

Bottle £29.50 Case £336.30 Code BOS303

More Mourvèdre in the blend this vintage but still about ¾ Grenache. Very rich aromas, a touch figgy. Fantastic fruit; mouth-coating blackberries and black cherries, not jammy at all. Big ripe tannins. Lots of black pepper. Very long indeed. Now-2015 Limited stock

Clos des Papes, Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Clos des Papes have long made a speciality of their white wine. It is unusual in its blend, being approximately a fifth each of Bourbolenc, Clairette, Grenache Blanc, Picpoul and Roussanne. They pick late and seek a rich but fresh style, which ages well: the wine becomes more mineral with years in bottle.

2004 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc, 14°

Bottle £24.95 Case £284.43 Code CDP304

Now out of its shell, with gentle herb, straw and stonefruit nuances. Perfect with simple roast chicken. Now-2013

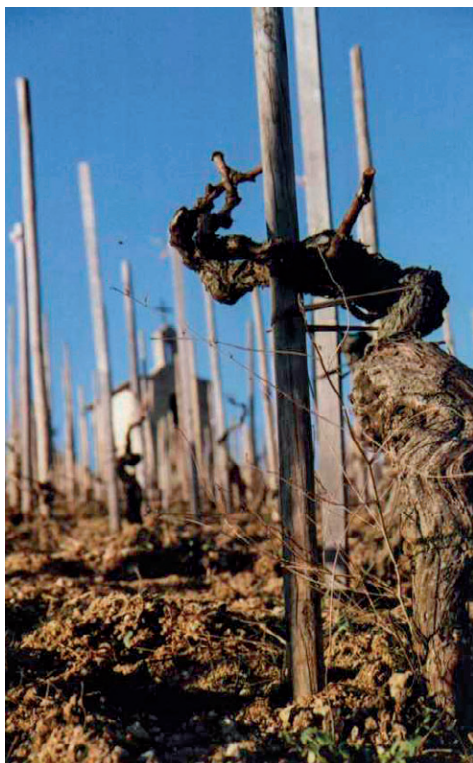


Hermitage & Crozes-Hermitage

The great hill of Hermitage produces the most famous wine of all the Rhône. Praised in Roman times, served at the court of Louis XIII, used to bolster the first growths of Bordeaux, and with numerous references in literature, it is perhaps the single wine in the region for which the law of supply and demand will drive the price inexorably upwards: only 131 hectares are planted, and that is it. Crozes-Hermitage, on the other hand, is an appellation of eight times the planted area, and probably over twelve times the volume. Wines here can vary hugely in quality and price so it's particularly important to choose your grower carefully here – we showcase one of the very best in Yann Chave.

Yann Chave, Mercuriol

Yann, highly competitive and very bright indeed, subscribes firmly to the belief that great wine is made in the vineyard. He is increasingly organic in practice, strips leaves to expose the grapes, usually makes two green harvests and picks late (he is always one of the latest in the appellation) for maximum ripeness. Everything is hand harvested.



Yann treats his two cuvées of Crozes-Hermitage differently. The standard Crozes receives micro-oxygenation in tank which makes for a forward wine which can be drunk quite early, without sacrificing any of the beguiling density of fruit which Yann achieves. On the other hand his Crozes Le Rouvre, named after a type of sessile oak, is aged in *demi-muids*, and is one of the best wines of the appellation. This comes each vintage from the same parcels of old vines on the very stony fields at Les Chassis, and is a very serious, mineral wine for ageing: three independent reviews of the 2006 vintage attest to its quality.

Yann's Hermitage, also in *demi-muids*, but all new barrels, comes from plots in Beaumes and Péléat on the great hill. The 2004 was applauded by **La Revue du Vin de France** (October 2006) as one of "*Les 80 Plus Grandes Cuvées*" in the Rhône.

2006 Crozes-Hermitage, 13.5°

Bottle £13.75 Case £156.75 Code CHA106

Good dense tone. Very clean scents, lightly floral with touches of cassis and mint. Vibrant briary fruit, not sweet but nicely fleshy. Now-2011

2006 Crozes-Hermitage, Le Rouvre, 13.5°

**Bottle £17.50 Case £199.50 Code CHA206
Magnums £37.50 Case (6 x 150cl.) £213.75
Code CHA906**

"The dense purple colored 2006 Crozes-Hermitage Le Rouvre has a beautiful nose of licorice, black olives, blackberry and raspberry, with some sweet cherry, smoke, and earth, and displays good tannins, fresh acidity, and

a long, heady finish. 90/100" Robert Parker's **Wine Advocate**, February 2008.

"Lovely concentrated, peppery, slightly herbal, dark fruit and dark oaky spice and yet there's a perfume that emerges through all this to give lift. Subtle, even delicate for the appellation. Fine tannins, long dry finish", Julia Harding, MW on www.JancisRobinson.com.

*"There's a lovely mineral edge to the nose, which combines with a cherry and damson fruit character, and a lovely earthy depth. Delicious stuff, with a gorgeous, slightly dry, bitter-fruit finish", **Wine & Spirit, Côtes du Rhône** supplement, October 2008 2009-2016 Limited stock*

St. Joseph

We continue to trumpet the potential of St. Joseph, and its significance in the northern Rhône. With almost every square metre of Côte-Rôtie, Hermitage and Cornas planted (and the wines subsequently subject to continual upward price pressure) the only appellation left with decayed granitic soils and plenty of steep east and south facing soils (i.e. the classic terroir for Rhône Syrah) is St. Joseph.

Le Prieuré d'Arras, Arras

Etienne Becheras worked as oenologue at the co-operative at Sarras before establishing his own 2½ hectares of vines (he has apricots and cherries too) around his house and cellar on the slopes above the church in Arras. His first vintage was 1999, and we began working with him from the 2003 vintage. Soils here are markedly granitic - it's not that far north of Cornas.

We continue with the latest vintage of Etienne's white St. Joseph, from half Roussanne and half Marsanne. He has only four barrels of this, so it gets 25% new oak! White Rhône's such as this are always going to be a minority taste, but they are exceptionally food-friendly and characterful.

Etienne makes a traditionally styled northern Rhône Syrah, fragrant and medium-bodied, all from old barrels of 400 litres or larger, and a mix of oak (there's even a bit of American

2004 Hermitage, 13.5°

Bottle £32.50 Case £370.50 Code CHA304

Classic cassis aromas. Fresh, curranty primary fruit, supported by sweet oak, giving a touch of mocha. Big but svelte. Velvety tannins. Surprisingly elegant. Very long, sweet-fruited finish. Now-2017

Jaboulet Aîné, Roche de Glun

1999 Hermitage, La Chapelle, 13.5°

Bottle £48.00 Owc 6 btls £288.00 Code JAB199

Very dense and deep, very concentrated. Limited stock

oak). This benefits from a bit of time in bottle but offers excellent value.

2008 St. Joseph Blanc, 12.5°

Bottle: £14.50 Case £165.30 Code BEC608

Bright gold. Subtle scent of jasmine and apricot. After a fresh and lively entry this unfolds attractively, with a tropical character cut by lime and showing the fat and flavour of brazil nuts. No marked oak, so already drinking very well. Now-2012

2006 St. Joseph Rouge, 12.5°

Bottle £12.95 Case £147.63 Code BEC306

Pale, but still youthful purple. Scent of raspberries and blackberries with a vanilla nuance; and the palate equally combines red and black fruit. Silkily textured, perfumed in the mouth, and offering a satisfying and lightly savoury finish. The sort of fresh and light bodied wine which can slip down all too easily over dinner. Now-2013

Domaine Monier, St. Desirat

Jean-Pierre Monier is a bio-dynamic producer, having farmed organically since the early 1980s, and converted to bio-dynamism in 1997. He first bottled his own wines in 2001. He owns a mere 5 hectares of south to south-east facing vines just north of St. Desirat on very steep, granitic vineyards. The standard St. Joseph comes from five plots, all close to the domaine. Two single vineyard wines are produced: in the 2006 vintage we preferred the Terres Blanches.

M. Monier crops very low (25-30 hectolitres a hectare) and picks late: he likes, as he says "*une légère surmaturité*", so alcohol levels here are highish for the northern Rhône. Both reds are 100% Syrah, destemmed after 12 hours fermentation, given a temperature controlled fermentation and both spend one year in *barrique*, about 1/3 new, the rest two to three years old, before being bottled



without any filtration at all. His perfectionist approach extends to his selection of wood for the barrels, insisting on naturally dried oak from Tonnellerie Doreau (this process takes seven years, as opposed to industrially dried wood) from the Tronçais and Allier regions.

Jean-Pierre thinks his reds are typified by cassis, *myrtille* & cherry and are very "*confits*", not jammy but charmingly ripe. He also sees them as having seven to eight years of ageing, despite being sumptuous already! His wines are truly harmonious (is this the biodynamics?) and the fact that M. Monier sells them to no less than three triple Michelin-starred Parisian restaurants speaks volumes both for their class, and the supple suavity which makes them hugely enjoyable soon after the vintage. Our only problem is getting enough of his delectable wine.

We have also managed to wheedle a little more Viognier out of M. Monier - only 1,500 bottles were made. Grown on degraded granite, and barrel fermented, this would put a lot of Condrieus to shame.

2007 Viognier, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes, 14°

Bottle £15.25 Case £173.85 Code MOP607

Such classy aromas - ripe, almost sweet, stone fruit melded with creamy oak. So pure, with a lemony note that balances the oak and opulent texture. Now-2010 Very limited stock

2006 St. Joseph Rouge, 13.5°

Bottle £15.75 Case £179.55 Code MOP506

Charmingly open black-fruited scent. Deliciously juicy mouthful, not sweet, but with the sharpness of freshly crushed blackberries and blackcurrants. So supple. Touch of pepper on the finish. Now-2012

2006 St. Joseph Rouge, Terres Blanches, 13.5°

Bottle £18.50 Case £210.90 Code MOP106

Very young, black/purple hue. Gently perfumed - blackcurrant and mint. A veneer of fine oak over a smooth tannic structure. Velvety fruit with black chocolate notes. Great finesse. Now-2016

Cornas

Cornas used to be a well-kept secret; a tiny appellation of less than 100 hectares engendering splendidly long-lived Syrah at a reasonable price. However rising demand for Côte Rôtie and Hermitage has brought Cornas into the limelight too. It's a splendid terroir, with gritty, friable granitic soils on slopes almost as vertiginous as at Côte Rôtie.

Cave Balthazar, Cornas

Nothing changes here - the wine is still somehow made in the miniscule cellar near the church in Cornas by the small but perfectly formed Franck Balthazar, from very low yields off three tiny parcels of vines, 41 and 92 years old, totalling 2 hectares, on very well-sited, granitic land in Les Chaillots. The grapes are not destemmed, and the wine goes into old 600 litre demi-muids before being bottled without fining or filtration. The 2004 is classic, both accessible now and with the ability to age well in the medium term. We also still stock a small quantity of the 2005 vintage, reminiscent of Franck's great 2001, a big, long-lived wine. Franck's summary was brief. Comparing it to 2004 he said *"les tannins sont plus présents et la couleur très très noire"*.

2004 Cornas, Chaillot, 13°

Bottle £19.95 Case £227.43 Code BAL104

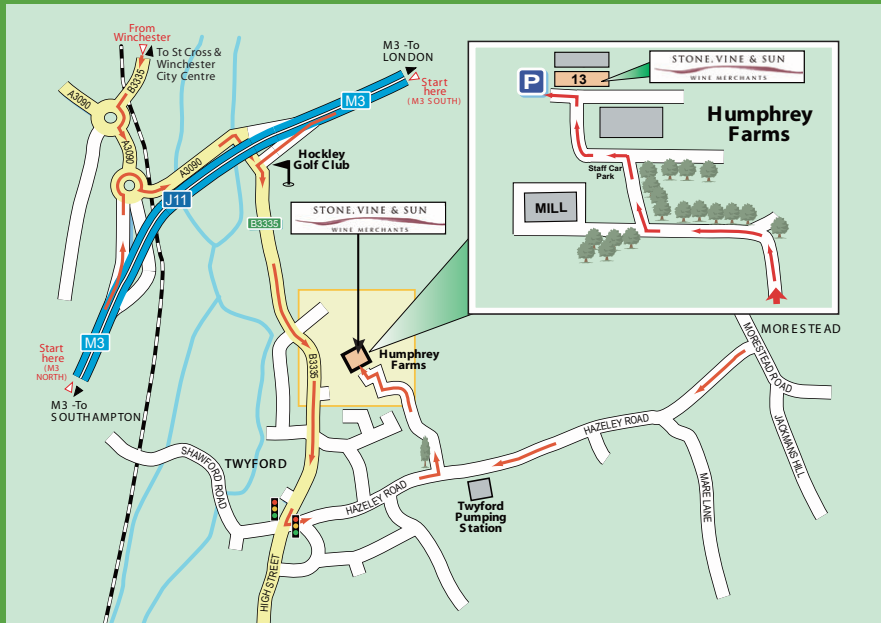
Clear purple. Very open, entrancing scent; cassis and violets. Sharp red fruit, redcurrants and raspberries, not sweet but very supple. Excellent grip of acid and tannin. Rounded and balanced and very long, with fruit shining on the finish. *"..oodles of blackberry fruit, tinged with black olives, spice and a touch of meatiness. . Lovely depth and grip, along with a subtle hint of oak. This represents very good value from an often pricey appellation"*, Natasha Hughes, **Wine & Spirit** tasting notes, June 2008. Now-2014

2005 Cornas, Chaillot, 13°

Bottle £19.95 Case £227.43 Code BAL105

On the palate this offers great substance, with very ripe, mouth-coating brambly coulis, lively and exciting. A bit untogether currently, but so powerful. Indisputably a keeper. 2010-2016





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