



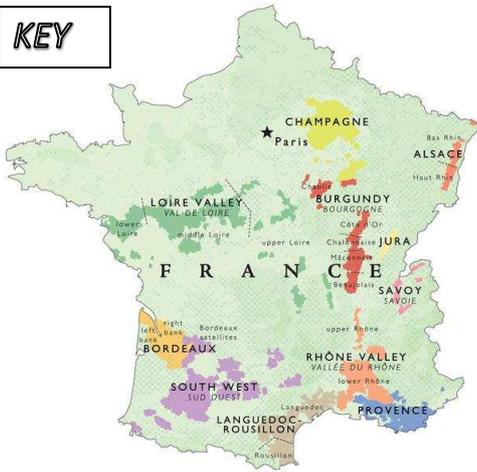
**Tutored Wine Tasting
Thursday 16th July 2019**

RHÔNE WINES



**Speaker:
Eric LAGRE
Head Sommelier**

KEY



- MAIN TOWNS & CITIES
- 17 Rhône Valley Crus
- 2 Vin Doux Naturels
- 1 CÔTES DU RHÔNE
- 1 CÔTES DU RHÔNE VILLAGES
- without geographical indication
- with geographical indication
- 7 SATELLITE APPELLATIONS

THE 28 AOCs OF THE RHÔNE VALLEY

Inter Rhône www.rhone-wines.com



CÔTES DU RHÔNE

CÔTES DU RHÔNE VILLAGES
+ geographical indication:



- 1 Chusclan
- 2 Gadagne
- 3 Laudun
- 4 Massif d'Uchaux
- 5 Plan de Dieu
- 6 Puyméras
- 7 Roaix
- 8 Rocheballe
- 9 Rousset-les-Vignes
- 10 Sainte-Cécile
- 11 Saint-Gervais
- 12 Saint-Maurice
- 13 Saint-Pantaléon-les-Vignes
- 14 Sablet
- 15 Séguret
- 16 Signargues
- 17 Suze la Rousse
- 18 Vaison la Romaine
- 19 Valréas
- 20 Visan

INTRODUCTION

The Rhône Valley counts 70,365 hectares under vines, making it the second largest French region in AOC after Bordeaux. Its vineyard spreads across 6 départements and 3 administrative regions along a 250-kilometre-long stretch of the Rhône River between Lyon and Avignon, forming a corridor between the Mediterranean and northern Europe.

With 2000 years of history, the Rhône Valley is the second oldest wine region of France after Provence, where viticulture was introduced by the Greeks around 600BC. It was the wine produced by the Romans in their colony in Vienne that was to make the reputation of the Rhône Valley around the Mediterranean in the first century AD. In the Middle Ages, the influence of the church gave fresh impetus to the wine industry of the region. After the French king Louis VIII granted the Comtat Venaissin to Pope Gregory X, the papacy moved from Rome to Avignon in the 14th century. The seven consecutive popes who were to rule from the “Palais des Papes” learnt to appreciate the local wines over the Burgundies they favoured at first. In the 15th century, one of the administrative courts of the viguerie d’Uzés was named “Coste du Rhône”. When the port of Roquemaure became a centre of shipping by river, it gave the Coste-du-Rhône wines of the right bank a trading outlet that boosted their notoriety. Regulations were introduced in 1650 to guarantee their provenance and all the barrels transiting through Roquemaure eventually had to be branded with the letters “C.D.R.” by royal decree from 1737. Not until the mid-19th century would that labelling term be extended to the vineyards of the left bank. From then on, one had to refer to the “Côte_s du Rhône” as a plural. The later denomination was recognised by the district courts of Tournon and Uzés in 1936.

Concerned for the quality of its wines, the Rhône Valley played an active role in the establishment of the French appellation system. In the 1930s, the visionary Baron Le Roy fought for the recognition of Châteauneuf-du-Pape where he was a winegrower at Château Fortia. Baron Le Roy eventually secured Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée status for it in 1933. The terms of reference he presented became the model for all subsequent AOC decrees: limits of the growing area, grape varieties, local practices and methods of cultivation, minimum alcohol content and harvesting period. He also campaigned in favour of the Côtes-du-Rhône wines, for which he obtained AOC status in 1937, two years after he and deputy for Gironde in the national parliament Joseph Capus co-founded the “Institut National des Appellations d’Origine” or INAO.

The region draws its strength from the rich and powerful Rhône River, which shapes its landscape and moulds its character. The geological makeup of the valley is the result of an epic clash between the Massif Central and the Alps. 300 million years ago, volcanic activity in the Massif Central produced the granite rock formations of the northern Rhône. Meanwhile, fluvial and marine sediments formed such limestone-rich reliefs as the Dentelles de Montmirail and Mont Ventoux in the eastern part of the southern Rhône. 40 million years ago, the Alps were pushed upwards, causing the southern Rhône Valley to collapse. The Rhône River then began digging itself a deeper bed as the level of the Mediterranean started to go down, creating fluvial terraces on either side and mixing the different elements in the hillside soils: sandy silica and calcareous clay containing rolled flint pebbles.

Today, the terroirs of the northern Rhône Valley and the southern Rhône Valley remain very distinct beyond their geological aspects. It is between Vienne and Valence that the crus of the northern Rhône Valley are tightly stacked one on top of the other along steep and narrow slopes. There, Syrah thrives in a semi-continental climate and yields wines of understated elegance that are well-suited to the beef stews, chitterling sausages and quenelles that form the cornerstone of Lyonnaise cuisine, as well as with creamy cheeses.

The crus of the southern Rhône Valley are scattered between Montélimar and Avignon. This is also where almost all the wines under a Côtes-du-Rhône label are produced. Here, Grenache thrives in the warmth of the local Mediterranean climate. Together with Syrah and Mourvèdre, Grenache forms the typical Rhône blend. Its spiciness helps enhance local dishes based around a wide variety of vegetables together with lamb or grilled fish.

Out of 27 authorised grape varieties, the region produced just over 3 million hectolitres of wine in 2016, 81% of which was red, 13% rosé and 6% white. 1/3 of the production is exported and the UK is the leading export market. The share of production for each of the 28 AOCs across the 250 communes that form the Rhône vineyard breaks down as follows:

19 Crus	17%	5%	8 Northern Crus	
		12%	9 Southern Crus	
		0+%	2 VDN Crus in the South	
1 Côtes-du-Rhône Villages	59%	11%	250 communes	95* communes
1 Côtes-du-Rhône (<i>Regional</i>)		48%		
7 Satellite Appellations	24%	24%	*20 can be named on “CdR Villages” labels	

Tutored Rhône Valley Wine Tasting

Tuesday 16th July 2019

Speaker: EIC Head Sommelier Eric LAGRE

Tasting notes by WSET Diploma Graduates Eric LAGRE & Magda KOTLARCZYK



TASTING LIST

- 1** 2014 Saint-Péray « La Muse de Richard Wagner » Effervescent Brut Naturel, M. Chapoutier

- 2** 2016 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc « Extrait » Domaine Chante Cigale

- 3** 2016 Condrieu « Les Chaillées de l'Enfer » Domaine Georges Vernay

- 4** 2018 Tavel « La Forcadière » Domaine Maby

- 5** 2012 Cornas « La Sabarotte » Domaine Courbis

- 6** 2012 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge « Château de Beaucastel » Famille Perrin

- 7** 2012 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge « Réserve » Domaine Roger Sabon

- 8** 2015 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge « La Part des Anges » Domaine Raymond Usseglio & Fils

- 9** NV Rasteau Rancio « Vin Doux Naturel » Domaine Bressy-Masson

Description: Saint-Péray, Effervescent Brut Naturel « La Muse de RW –Richard Wagner's initials »
Vintage: 2014
Producer: M. Chapoutier www.Chapoutier.com
Winemaker: Michel Chapoutier
Indication of origin: Saint-Peray AC
Style: Sparkling wine by the traditional method

This sparkling wine is the result of two terroirs whose grapes have been vinified separately. The terroir located at low altitude with soils of sedimentary origin (clay, limestone and silt) brings body and aromatic expression whilst the terroir located higher up with partially decomposed soils of granitic origin imparts mineral freshness of acidity. The grapes are harvested by hand early enough so as to maximise freshness. After a short period of settling, 70% of the carefully selected juices resulting from whole-bunch pressing are fermented in stainless-steel and 30% in used demi-muids. Bottling for the "prise de mousse" (the second fermentation in the bottle) takes place in the spring following the harvest. The sparkling wine is aged "sur latte" (on lees in the bottle) for 36 months before being disgorged then put to market with zero dosage.

Assemblage: 100% Marsanne
Alcohol: 12.5%abv
Closure: Champagne stopper = agglomerated body + 2 discs of natural cork
Capacity: 75cl
Supplier: Mentzendorff www.mentzendorff.co.uk
UK retail price: £30.00 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



Saint-Péray is the southernmost cru of the norther Rhône Valley. Marsanne and some Roussanne thrive in its terroir. 100% of the wines produced across the appellation's 85ha of vineyards are indeed white. More interestingly, 1/3 of those 3,000hl of wine is sparkling. Vines have been cultivated in Saint-Péray since the 15th century but the traditional method will not be introduced into the region before 1829, when Louis-Alexandre Faure pioneered the first ever sparkling Saint-Péray by emulating Champagne through the triggering of a second fermentation in the bottle. Saint-Péray remains the Rhône Valley's only cru to produce sparkling wine... if one overlooks the 86,500hl of Clairette de Die and Crémant de Die produced across 1,500ha of vineyard on the other side of the river in the middle of the Drôme. If many people count the Diois as part of the Rhône, its wines are not promoted by Inter-Rhône (www.rhone-wines.com) but by a governing body of their own (www.clairette-de-die.com). The 19th century marked the heydays of Saint-Péray, which was drunk at the table of the rulers of the time, from the Russian tsars to Queen Victoria. The wine was also a great source of inspiration for artists. Michel Chapoutier's great grandfather Marius sent a large shipment of sparkling Saint-Péray to Richard Wagner. The bill was never settled but the letter of the prestigious composer was framed and it has been cherished ever since the order was placed. Richard Wagner is said to have composed Parsifal having drunk Saint-Péray (hence the name of the present cuvée). Lamartine, Daudet, Maupassant and Baudelaire all mention the wine in their work. Pope Pius VII himself sang the wine's praises. Saint-Péray eventually became one of the nine first wines of France to receive AOC status in 1936.

Appearance:

This sparkling white wine looks clear and bright. It is medium lemon yellow in colour. The bubbles are small and of medium persistency. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits developing aromas of medium-plus intensity. The orchard fruit, with plenty of apple and pear, plus a hint of greengage, is lifted by lemon zest. Underlying notes of toasted brioche and vanilla bring some warmth and a sense of roundness.

Palate:

This medium-plus-bodied wine is dry. The mousse is creamy, yet a degree of minerality in the shape of underlying salinity adds a sense of sharpness that cuts through the fatness. The acidity is high and the alcohol only medium, which also contributes to the overall liveliness of the aromatic profile. Some lemon sherbet adds some zing to the green and yellow apple. Flowery notes infuse the warm, brioche-like autolytic character with freshness. The finish is of medium-plus length.

Assessment of quality:

This sparkling wine is very good. One can sense the potential underneath the seemingly simple aromatic profile of this wine. Development is needed before layers of complexity become unlished. With time, notes of salted and roasted nuts together with some quince will appear. This is definitely a food wine. Grilled fish and white meat dishes are good food pairings. Try this Saint-Péray together with a cauliflower and salmon Parmentier more specifically.

Description: Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc « Extrait »
Vintage: 2016
Producer: Domaine Chante Cigale www.chantecigale.com
Winemaker: Alexandre Favier
Indication of origin: Lieux-dits Cabrières and Palestor, Châteauneuf-du-Pape AC
Style: Fuller-bodied white wine

The vines are 40 years of age. 70% of the grapes are grown in Palestor on clay and limestone and 30% in the famous plateau of Cabrières near Château Montredon on typical rolled pebbles. The grapes are harvested by hand at full maturity. They are double selected, first on the vine then a second time in the winery. The juice resulting from whole-bunch pressing is fermented in concrete eggs and demi-muids. The resulting wine is left to age on fine lees for 9 months prior to bottling.

Assemblage: 70% Roussanne, 30% Grenache Blanc

Alcohol: 14%abv

Closure: Natural cork

Capacity: 75cl

Supplier: Boutinot www.boutinot.com

UK retail price: £41.00 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



The Marsanne-Roussanne combination is a staple throughout the French Midi. The work-horse variety that is Marsanne brings body and power to the blend. Marsanne wines are usually low in acidity and fat, with typical notes of honeysuckle, white-fleshed orchard fruit and marzipan. The far less easy to grow Roussanne yields wines of greater finesse with a refreshing perfume akin to herbal tea and reminiscent of spring blossom. Since it is higher in acidity, Roussanne also makes for wines that have a greater ageing potential. A parent-offspring relationship between Marsanne and Roussanne explains why they are often confused. Syrah, Viognier, Marsanne and Roussanne all belong to the Sérine ampelographic group indeed. They are the four iconic grapes of the Northern Rhône Valley where all of them saw the light of day. Unlike its natural blending partner Roussanne, Marsanne was unknown in Châteauneuf-du-Pape in the 1930s when the rules of the appellation were drawn up, which is why Marsanne doesn't count as one of the 13 varieties authorised in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Of the 6 noble white grapes of the Rhône Valley (Bourboulenc, Clairette, Grenache Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne and Viognier), Grenache Blanc plays an important role. Rhône whites are often served well-chilled, if not ice-cold in restaurants, in which case Grenache Blanc manages to shine through thanks to its intrinsic crispness of character. In contrast, most of the other white grape varieties of the Rhône region tend to shut down, only becoming expressive and unfolding the full richness of the blend as the wine starts to warm up in the glass. Sommeliers find the white blends of the Rhône Valley quite frustrating to deal with. They are seemingly quite simple and mono-dimensional in their youth and require time in the bottle and development in order to reveal their many layers of complexity. Unfortunately, these blends can be prone to premature oxidation, especially when Marsanne dominates. Premature oxidation does not plague the white blends of the Rhône Valley exclusively. The fault came to the fore in the past two decades with reports of issues with Burgundy whites. Patience potentially rewards you with nothing other than a brownish, boiled-cabbage-scented, lacklustre and flabby offering in the end.

Appearance:

This white wine looks clear and bright. It is pale gold in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits developing aromas of medium-plus intensity. The peach fruit is perfumed with acacia and enlivened with lemon citrus. The underlying sweet vanilla oak is slightly yeasty on the edges.

Palate:

This full-bodied wine is dry. The medium acidity fails to offset the medium-plus alcohol, though the underlying salty minerality and lemon zest manage to restore a sense of freshness to the peach fruit layered with bitter lemon peel and vanilla custard. It is at the end of the finish of medium-plus length that the wine becomes noticeably hot in alcohol.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is very good. Once again, the wine is still young and lacking in development. More time will reveal richer layers of creamy dulce de leche and nuttiness. As the wine becomes broader, it will feel better-balanced also. This wine is not designed to be drunk on its own anyway. It positively is a food wine that will work wonders in accompaniment of Provençal and Mediterranean cuisine. Foie gras, chicken with creamed girolles, grilled sea bass, lobster, scallops and king prawns are particularly good pairings.

Description:	Condrieu « Les Chaillées de l'Enfer » The term "Chaillées" is the name given to the dry stone walls that support the vineyard terraces. The "Terraces of Hell" name refers to the intense heat that one endures when standing on the steep-sloped south-facing hillside at the height of summer.
Vintage:	2016
Producer:	Domaine Georges Vernay www.domaine-georges-vernay.fr
Winemaker:	Georges' daughter Christine Vernay
Indication of origin:	Condrieu AC
Style:	Fuller-bodied aromatic white wine The old vines were planted back in 1957 along steep granitic hillsides rich in biotite (black mica). The topography commands that all the work in the vineyard is done by hand. No herbicides or insecticides are used. The guyot-trained vines are planted at a very high density of 8,000 to 10,000 vines per hectare and only yield 30hl per hectare. The grapes are harvested at full maturity then they are transported in small crates to the winery. The juice from whole-bunch pressing is left to settle before it is fermented in 225 litre barrels for 3 to 4 weeks. The wine is aged in wood, ¼ new, for 12 to 18 months with regular stirring of the fine lees.
Assemblage:	100% Viognier
Alcohol:	13.5%abv
Closure:	Natural cork
Capacity:	75cl
Supplier:	Hallgarten & Novum www.hmwines.co.uk
UK retail price:	£83.00 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



Condrieu, on the right bank of the river, is the northernmost white wine appellation in the Rhône Valley. There, just south of Côte-Rôtie, a stone throw from Vienne, impressive mono-varietal wines are produced from Viognier. The grape has been cultivated since Greek times and appears to be native to Condrieu (Viognier being a parent off-spring of the Mondeuse Blanche of the Alps). The wine it yields was thought to be very intoxicating. Emperor Domitian believed that it was detrimental to his soldiers and ordered the vines to be uprooted in 92AD. In turn, Emperor Probus praised its beneficial effect on men and ordered the vines to be replanted in 280AD. First a Gallo-Roman village, Condrieu became the property of the Diocese of Lyon and the wines of the commune acquired a reputation for excellence from then on, notably amongst the Popes of Avignon. More recently, Curnonsky named it the best wine of France. The Prince of Gastronomy died in the 1950s when the wine market of Condrieu (the oldest in the region) was closed. The Phylloxera crisis, the great depression and an aggressive process of industrialisation saw Condrieu's original 170ha of vineyard shrink to no more than 10ha under vines. It is extraordinary to think that the world-famous Viognier grape, now planted in virtually every wine region around the world, came so close to extinction! Thankfully, passion for the exceptional quality of the local wines spurred a few winemakers to keep the Condrieu appellation alive long enough to see a renaissance in the 1980s. Regulations were revised in 1986 so that only the best hillsides with the best exposure could be exploited. Viognier does indeed need maximum sun exposure and heat to thrive. Condrieu has now become a global benchmark when it comes to producing the finest of Viogniers.

Appearance:

This white wine looks clear and bright. It is medium gold in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits developing aromas of medium-plus intensity. Magda comments that the level of concentration and ripeness is such that one would think that they are dealing with a sweet wine. The peach, apricot and passion fruit is caramelised indeed, though notes of acacia and fruit blossom manage to convey a sense of freshness. The nose is underpinned by a mineral-boosted quality of nuttiness in the shape of salted cashew nuts.

Palate:

This medium-plus-bodied wine is dry contrary to what the richness of the nose leads one to expect. The acidity is only medium, yet a degree of oiliness manages to keep the medium-plus alcohol in check. The fruit is of medium-plus intensity. The richness of the peach and apricot fruit spiced with sweet vanilla and cinnamon and dipped into butterscotch is freshened up by flowery notes of stone-fruit blossom, acacia and honeysuckle, energised by plenty of lemon and lime citrus and lifted by underlying salinity. That display of integrated complexity stimulates the palate right to the end of the finish of medium-plus length.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is outstanding. This young, layered and complex wine already displays an incredible level of integration. The wine will be delicious in accompaniment of grilled fish, game bird or mature cheese, especially once it reaches room temperature.

Description:	Tavel « La Forcadière »
Vintage:	2018
Producer:	Domaine Maby www.domainemaby.fr
Winemaker:	Third generation Richard Maby
Indication of origin:	Tavel AC
Style:	Rosé wine
	The 50-year-old vines are biodynamically grown on flat, brittle stones in the plateau of Vestides, on sandy soil along the hillsides of l'Olivet and on rolled pebbles in Vallongue and Cravailleux. The total vineyard yields 30hl per hectare. The grapes are harvested at full maturity in early September. The grapes are destemmed then the juice is cold macerated on the skins for 24 hours before being racked into stainless steel vats in order to be fermented at cold temperatures. Malolactic fermentation is prevented so as to preserve maximum freshness. Bottling takes place in January following the harvest.
Assemblage:	60% Grenache Noir, 30% Cinsault, 10% of the other 5 authorised varieties: Bourboulenc, Clairette, Mourvèdre, Picpoul and Syrah
Alcohol:	14.5%abv
Closure:	Nomacorc Green Line 100% recyclable cork from sugarcane-based raw material
Capacity:	75cl
Supplier:	Yapp Bros www.yapp.co.uk
UK retail price:	£14.75 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



If wine production in the Rhône Valley is mostly red, Tavel is synonymous with rosé. It is actually one of France's few all-rosé appellations. Louis XIV was very fond of the wine and writers Balzac and Mistral continued to promulgate the superiority of Tavel over other rosés. That historic reputation is still sufficient to justify a sometimes unwarranted price premium. Tavel does have the potential to be one of those "gastronomic" wines that combines refreshment with interest and concentration. In Honoré de Balzac's experience, a top-quality Tavel was one of the rare rosés that could age for the better. However, such was demand for the wine in the 1950s that the area of production was considerably extended by clearing vast areas of garrigue and the bulk of production today is easy-drinking rosé designed for early drinking. Production is dominated by the cooperative cellar of "Les Vignerons de Tavel & Lirac" but some quality-minded estates like Château d'Acqueria are worth mentioning, though producers in nearby Lirac are more dynamic and often more remarkable (Domaine de la Mordorée does supplant any Tavel in terms of quality for instance). In Tavel, Grenache and Cinsault are the main grape varieties alongside some Bourboulenc, Clairette and Picpoul. Syrah and Mourvèdre were not permitted before 1969. Grenache and Cinsault are natural bedfellows. Both cultivars thrive in the heat of the southern Rhône Valley, where they prove out to be particularly resilient to drought and strong winds. Since they yield wines with an average depth of colour and stylish fruity flavours, Grenache and Cinsault are particularly well suited for making rosés by the "saignée" method. The rosé wines of Tavel are always bone dry, yet the blend's low acidity and high alcohol means that Tavel tends to have more body and structure than most rosés hence a certain apparent sweetness. That intrinsic unbalance means that chilling the wine is essential. An ice-cold Tavel will be the most delightful alternative to red wine in hot weather.

Appearance:

This rosé wine looks clear and bright. It is pale ruby in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits youthful aromas of medium intensity. The fruit is somewhat confected and akin to tinned strawberry and cassis liqueur. That artificial character is lifted by fresher herby notes of basil, tarragon and oregano (or a traditional mix of Provençal herbs).

Palate:

This medium-bodied wine is dry, yet the confected character of the wine might lead some people to perceive a degree of sweetness that isn't actually there. The acidity is only medium and does not manage to offset the high alcohol. The medium intensity of tinned strawberry, strawberry-flavoured boiled sweet and cassis liqueur is underpinned by medicinal notes of herbs mixed with eucalyptus leaf. The finish is only of medium length.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is good but one cannot get over its artificial edge and a degree of alcoholic unbalance. The wine will prove very drinkable when served well-chilled at a barbecue. It will pair well with cold cuts, poultry and white meat also but the best match will probably be with exotic, spicy dishes like a harissa roast chicken or a spicy vegetable tagine or all sorts of Asian dishes.

Description:	Cornas « La Sabarotte »
Vintage:	2012
Producer:	Domaine Courbis www.vins-courbis-rhone.com
Winemaker:	Laurent Courbis
Indication of origin:	Cornas AC
Style:	Fuller-bodied red wine
Assemblage:	100% Syrah
Alcohol:	14%abv
Closure:	Natural cork
Capacity:	75cl
Supplier:	Hallgarten & Novum www.hnwines.co.uk
UK retail price:	£52.00 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



The vines are grown along steep granitic hillsides of well-draining sand and rock. The 1.5ha of southeast-facing vineyard yields an average of 26hl per hectare. The grapes are harvested at full maturity and transported to the modern winery in small crates. The grapes are 100% destemmed and lightly pressed. The juice is fermented in temperature-controlled stainless steel vats at 30°C to 32°C on the skins for 3 weeks. The wine is then racked into wood where malolactic fermentation takes place. The wine is bottled after 18 months of maturation in 2/3 new, 1/3 second-fill barrels.

Syrah shines as a mono-varietal wine in the crus of the northern Rhône. It was long thought that Syrah was brought by the Greeks from the Iranian commune of Shiraz to France via the port of Marseille around 600BC. However, recent DNA analysis points at it being a great-grandchild of Pinot Noir and a natural progeny of the Mondeuse Blanche of the Alps and the Dureza of the Ardèche. Such parentage makes Syrah a half-sibling of Viognier and firmly anchors its origins in the Rhône-Alpes region of France. In the first century AD, the Romans made the grape famous around the Mediterranean thanks to the Vinum Picatum they grew around Vienne. Nowadays, a third of the global Syrah vineyard is planted in France and a quarter in Australia, where the grape is called Shiraz. Plantings are expanding since consumers tend to favour Shiraz to Bordeaux blends more and more. In order to thrive, Syrah needs a mild and consistent climate as well as shelter from the wind; conditions which are met in the northern Rhône. Syrah actually is the only black grape variety authorised in the northern Rhône Valley, yet Cornas is the only cru where red wine must be made exclusively from Syrah. White grapes are indeed used in red blends throughout the Rhône Valley. At a time when the grapes of the region were co-harvested and co-fermented, some say that the colourless phenolics in white grapes helped extract and fix the anthocyanins found in the skins of the black grapes, thereby stabilising the colour in red wines. Others suggest that, since white grapes were more likely to reach full ripeness during the mini Ice Age of the Middle Ages, blending a proportion of white grapes to red wine might have been a way to add roundness. Nowadays, grape varieties are fermented separately and producers often make do without white grapes in red wine. When they do use them, it is for no reason other than to inject an elusive note of perfume.

Appearance:

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is medium ruby in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits developing aromas of medium-plus intensity. The fruit is dark, with notes of black cherry, blackcurrant, blueberry and blackberry. As for the spices, they are quite dry. The clove, black pepper, dark-bitter chocolate and roasted coffee bean is lifted by a pencil-shaving quality of minerality and the refreshing scent of eucalyptus leaf. A smell of humus and wet leaves bring a sense of earthiness to the nose.

Palate:

This medium-plus-bodied wine is dry. The acidity is medium-plus, the alcohol is medium-plus, the tannins are medium-plus and so is the intensity of flavours. The flavour profile reflects exactly the aromas described on the nose. The earthy and dry-spiced dark fruit lingers in the finish of medium-plus length.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is very good. It is intense and complex, and as far as the structural elements are concerned, they are perfectly balanced. The only aspect that proves a bit confusing is the style. Static oxidative ageing in wood is commonly used in the Rhône Valley, yet the aim is to bring some roundness and stability, never to depart oak flavours. Here, new French oak barrels were used to such an extent that the resulting wine smells and tastes almost like a Bordeaux wine. Roast beef would actually be a great pairing. Game, slow-cooked fatty meats, stews and creamy cheeses are usually a better accompaniment to northern-Rhône reds.

Description: Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge « Château de Beaucastel »
Vintage: 2012
Producer: Famille Perrin www.familleperrin.com
Winemaker: Marc Perrin
Indication of origin: Châteauneuf-du-Pape AC
Style: Fuller-bodied red wine

The 70ha of old vines have been cultivated organically for over 50 years in the northern limit of the appellation. The soil is formed of typical rolled pebbles on top of sand, clay and limestone. The grapes are harvested by hand and each of the 13 authorised varieties are vinified separately. The reductive Mourvèdre and Syrah are fermented in oak fermenters whilst all the other, more oxidative grape varieties are fermented in more traditional enamelled concrete tanks. After the malolactic fermentation has taken place, the wines are blended and matured in old foudres for 12 months prior to bottling.

Assemblage: All 13 authorised grape varieties:
30% Grenache Noir, 30% Mourvèdre, 10% Counoise, 10% Syrah, 5% Cinsault
+ 15% Vaccarèse + Terret Noir + Muscardin + Clairette + Picpoul + Picardan + Bourboulenc + Roussanne

Alcohol: 14.5%abv

Closure: Natural cork

Capacity: 75cl

Supplier: Berry Bros & Rudd www.bbr.com

UK retail price: £66.50 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



The grapes of the Rhône Valley were born to blend. Even if Syrah is more likely to be blended than bottled as a varietal wine in the north, it is in the south that blending is the norm. Down in the south, the practice is a way to make up for the shortcomings of the dominant black grape variety that is Grenache. 27 grape varieties are authorised in the making of red wine in the southern Rhône Valley, half of them black, but more often than not half of the blend will be driven by Grenache Noir and a good proportion of the rest will consist of Syrah and Mourvèdre. Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre are indeed the region's 3 complementary noble black grape varieties. Grenache is thought to have come from Aragon in Spain. The grape variety arrived in the Roussillon in the late 18th century before spreading to the rest of the French Midi. The resilient grape is particularly suited to challengingly dry and windy growing conditions hence its popularity in the south of France. However, Grenache is also notorious for lacking colour pigments (anthocyanins) and antioxidants (phenolic compounds). Grenache brings instant appeal and mellowness but Syrah is needed to add perfume, colour and structure to the blend. Grenache is approachable when young but Mourvèdre will contribute longevity and a depth of aromas and flavours that will only increase with age. That archetypal Rhône blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre is also known by its acronym: GSM. GSM labels will be instantly recognisable in the New World, especially in Australia.

Appearance:

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is medium garnet in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits developing aromas of medium-plus intensity, though some would argue that the nose is delicate and refined more than it is pronounced. Here, the red fruit is lifted by notes of mint and white pepper. The strawberry, red cherry and cassis fruit is dipped into milk chocolate. The bouquet is a complex mix of Provencal herbs like thyme and garrigue flowers like lavender.

Palate:

This medium-plus-bodied wine is dry. The acidity is medium-plus, the alcohol is medium-plus, the fine and ripe tannins are medium-plus and so is the intensity of flavours. The strawberry, red cherry, blackcurrant and redcurrant fruit is layered with notes of Provencal herbs and garrigue flowers. The sweet vanilla, cinnamon and star anis spice is underpinned by milk chocolate, espresso coffee and Earl Grey tea in the finish of long length.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is outstanding. It is incredibly precise and elegant. Below the layers of complexity, one can sense that this wine is starting to integrate yet more time will bring many rewarding returns. The aromatic profile provides an almost cinematic picture of the terroir in which the wine is grown and one can truly talk of typicity of character in this instance. Roast lamb with rosemary and garlic will be a perfect accompaniment to this stunning offering.

Description:	Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge « Réserve »
Vintage:	2012
Producer:	Domaine Roger Sabon (Est. 1952) www.domainerogersabon.com
Winemaker:	Didier Négron (Denis & Gilbert Sabon proprietors)
Indication of origin:	Châteauneuf-du-Pape AC
Style:	Fuller-bodied red wine
Assemblage:	80% Grenache Noir + 10% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah
Alcohol:	15%abv
Closure:	Natural cork
Capacity:	75cl
Supplier:	Jeroboams www.jeroboams.co.uk
UK retail price:	£52.00 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



The grapes are grown on clay and sandstone in 14 different plots within the appellation. Harvest is done by hand. The grapes are 100% destemmed then fermented at 28°C to 30°C in temperature-controlled stainless steel tanks with 1 month of maceration on the skins and regular pumping-over. The wine is racked into seasoned oak where it is left to mature for 18 months in a mixture of 40hl foudres, 25hl vats and 600l demi-muids.

Almost as much wine is produced in Châteauneuf-du-Pape as in the entirety of the northern Crus. 13 grape varieties can legally be grown in Châteauneuf-du-Pape (or 18 if one considers white, pink and black variations as separate varieties). Compared to Perrin's complex Châteauneuf-du-Pape blend, which aims at showcasing the full varietal diversity of the appellation, Sabon's example is more of a simplified GSM blend dominated by Grenache Noir. Grenache is one of the world's most planted grape varieties, yet it is so often blended that rarely does its name appear on labels. It is positively the most widely planted grape variety in the Southern Rhône Valley. Half the production in the Rhône Valley is labelled as "Côtes-du-Rhône" and a Côtes-du-Rhône blend must include a minimum of 40% Grenache by law. Most appellations in the southern Rhône do actually impose a minimum of 50% Grenache in their blends. In contrast, all of the 18 black, pink and white grape varieties allowed in the making of both red and white Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines can be used in any proportions and with no restrictions. In other words, it is theoretically possible to produce a mono-varietal Châteauneuf-du-Pape or a blend that does not include Grenache at all. However, the reality is that only 1 in every 16 bottles produced in the appellation is white, and most Châteauneuf-du-Pape blends are dominated by Grenache. In 2004, 72% of the appellation was planted with Grenache, followed by Syrah with 10.5% and Mourvèdre with 7%, which means that Châteauneuf-du-Pape is likely to be the most Grenache-rich blend of all in the whole of the Rhône Valley. In that respect, the present Cuvée by Roger Sabon definitely is the most representative Châteauneuf-du-Pape blend amongst all the examples showcased here.

Appearance:

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is medium Garnet in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits developing aromas of medium-plus intensity. The nose is dominated by heady notes of kirsch and cassis liqueur. There is a savoury edge to the fruit that one can only describe as a combination of farmyard, cigarette ashes and green olives (or the brine of tinned green olives to be more precise). That aromatic profile of this wine is underpinned by the dry spiciness of liquorice, cracked black pepper, dark-bitter chocolate and roasted coffee bean.

Palate:

This medium-plus-bodied wine is dry. The medium-plus acidity struggles to offset the high alcohol. The medium-plus tannins are fine and ripe, yet they have a drying effect on the gums. The flavours, which are medium-plus in intensity, reflect the aromas described on the nose, with lavender-boosted notes of kirsch and cassis liqueur spiced with dry liquorice, clove, black pepper, espresso coffee and black tea. The savouriness of green olives persists in the finish of medium-plus length.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is very good. As much as it is expressive and complex, one cannot help but be frustrated by a degree of alcoholic unbalance. Grenache tends to ripen to very high levels of sugars, and high sugars in grapes always result in wine with a high alcohol content. One ought to chill that style of wine ever so slightly before serving. Such heady styles of wine need stews and gamey dishes or mature cheeses in order to come into their own.

Description: Châteauneuf-du-Pape Rouge « La Part des Anges »
Vintage: 2015
Producer: Domaine Raymond Usseglio & Fils (Est. 1948) www.domaine-usseglio.fr
Winemaker: Stéphane Usseglio
Indication of origin: Châteauneuf-du-Pape AC
Style: Fuller-bodied red wine

In 1963, Raymond took over the domaine that his father Francis had established after having emigrated from Italy to the region back in 1931. Raymond initiated a conversion to biological farming then his son Stéphane eventually transitioned to biodynamic farming in 1999. Here, the grapes are grown in the vineyards of Le Mourre de Gaud and Les Terres Blanches on a terroir of sand and rock of granitic origin. The bulk of the blend is constituted of the late-ripening and capricious Mourvèdre, which is certainly one of the most exacting cultivars of the South of France, especially when it is grown, as it is here, at the northern limit of the growing region. This type of blend is a bit of an exception in the appellation. In order to tame its firm tannic structure, 80% of this cuvée is aged oxidatively in oak with no topping up of the barrel. Part of the volume evaporates, which is known as "La Part des Anges" (The Angels' Share). The wine is bottled totally unfiltered.

Assemblage: 70% Mourvèdre, 20% Grenache Noir, 10% Syrah
Alcohol: 14.5%abv
Closure: Natural cork
Capacity: 75cl
Supplier: Berry Bros & Rudd www.bbr.com
UK retail price: £42.50 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19



This Mourvèdre-dominated Châteauneuf-du-Pape blend by Raymond Usseglio & Fils is a unique example within the appellation. Little is known about Mourvèdre. Some even start questioning that it is the same grape as the Monastrell of the Spanish Catalan country. Its name might be derived from Morvedre, which was until 1868 the Catalan name of the town of Sagunto, an important wine port north of Valencia from the 15th century onwards. The cultivar is known as Mataro in the French Roussillon (as well as in Australia and California today), Mataró being the name of a port on the Catalan coast between Barcelona and Valencia also. It has therefore been assumed that the noble grape variety might have been introduced in the 16th century from Morvedre to Provence and from Mataró to Roussillon. One thing is for certain, Mourvèdre was much more widely cultivated in the Catalan country and the French Midi prior to the Phylloxera crisis. Mourvèdre is a very demanding and difficult cultivar that needs high temperatures, especially at the end of its late ripening period. This is why Mourvèdre is usually grown within 80km of the Mediterranean in Europe. The low-yielding grape is also highly susceptible to drought hence it is suited to deep calcareous soils that provide a limited but regular water supply. The cultivar enjoyed a certain vogue in the late 20th century in France as better yielding clones started to be used as an ameliorating ingredient in blends. Bandol, Provence's most famous red wine, is arguably Mourvèdre's finest expression. The wine has now developed a cult following and a "Conservatoire du Cépage Mourvèdre" was even created at the heart of the Bandol AOC in the commune of Saint-Cyr back in 2002, the aim of the experimental nursery being to house every known variety of Mourvèdre in the world regardless of the quality of the fruit it produces. In excess of 100 specimens have already been gathered.

Appearance:

This red wine looks clear and bright. It is medium ruby in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits developing aromas of medium-plus intensity. The black cherry, strawberry and blackcurrant fruit is perfumed with the wild scent of garrigue herbs and flowers. Dry spicy notes of clove, liquorice, black pepper and nutmeg compliment the underlying aromas of farmyard and humus. Hints of black olive of the type used as pizza topping add savouriness.

Palate:

This medium-plus-bodied wine is dry. The acidity is medium-plus, the alcohol is medium-plus, the fine and ripe tannins are medium-plus and so is the intensity of flavours. The garrigue-infused fruit is ripe, yet it is lifted by mint. However, the espresso coffee, Earl Grey tea, black olive and mix of dry spices convey a sense of savouriness to the finish of medium-plus length.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is very good. One can sense the potential hidden beneath the shyness of youth. The structural elements in this blend are ever so well-balanced but one wishes that the magic of time had developed the preserve-like character of fruit layered with roast meat and bacon fat that makes matured Mourvèdre so exciting. Game dishes in a rich sauce and slow-cooked, fatty meats like lamb shoulder are perfect accompaniments to that style of wine.

Description: Rasteau Rancio « Vin Doux Naturel »
Vintage: NV
Producer: Domaine Bressy-Masson (Est. 1947) www.domaine-bressymasson.com
Winemaker: Marie-France Bressy and son Paul-Emile Masson
Indication of origin: Rasteau Rancio AC
Style: Fortified wine with extended oxidative ageing in wood.

Marie-France Masson inherited 34ha of vineyards from her father Emile Bressy. She and husband Thierry adopted a sustainable approach to viticulture and vinification, thereby bringing the best out of their vines (many of which are over 100 years of age) and dramatically improving the quality of their wines. Their son Paul-Emile took over as winemaker when he joined the estate in 2012. The grapes are vinified by the saignée method the way rosé is made. The juice, the sugar content of which must be over 252 g/l by law, is left to settle for 24 hours. Once the must reaches between 5% and 10% of alcohol, fermentation is interrupted through mutage with a grape spirit of at least 96% proof, thereby preserving at least 100 g/l of residual sugars. The minimum actual and potential alcohol of the resulting wine must be 21.5%, with an actual content of at least 15%. If VDN Rasteau is akin to Port, its Rancio version resembles Madeira. The style's nuttiness is the result of 4 years of ageing in Cognac barrel with no topping up. That wine is eventually blended together with older vintages.



Assemblage: 100% Grenache Noir
Alcohol: 16%abv
Closure: DIAM cork
Capacity: 75cl
Supplier: The Big Red Wine Company www.bigredwine.co.uk
UK retail price: £18.00 inc. VAT as per www.wine-searcher.com on 19/05/19

The Rhône Valley has a worldwide reputation for sweet wines, notably for its Beauges-de-Venise made from Muscat, a cultivar introduced by Greek colonists around 600BC. A less known, yet key area in the history of the sweet wines of the valley is Rasteau. In the 17th century, the vineyards of Rasteau counted amongst some of the largest in the Vaucluse. Their South-facing hillsides made standard winemaking problematic but they were ideal for the over-maturation of grapes. The phylloxera crisis of 1863 almost wiped out the region's sweet wine making tradition and it took the appointment of M. Galabert as the new technical director and winemaker at the Cave de Rasteau in 1935 to revive it. Monsieur Galabert was originally from Frontignan in the Pyrénées-Orientales, where VDN Muscat is king. It is he who introduced the production of VDN Rasteau, a sweet fortified wine or "Vin Doux Naturel" made from at least 90% Grenache Noir. The VDN Rasteau appellation was eventually recognised in 1944, quickly followed by VDN Beauges-de-Venise in 1945. Ortas-Cave de Rasteau www.cavederasteau.com is still responsible for 80% of the local production of VDNs, though it is worth highlighting the fact that VDNs represent no more than 3% of the output of the cooperative winery. Fortified wines have gone a bit out of fashion and economic considerations have forced producers to now focus their attention on table wine. Rasteau and Beauges-de-Venise obtained their Côtes-du-Rhône Villages appellations by decree in 1966 and 1978, before being elevated to two of today's 9 crus of the southern Rhône in 2010 and 2005 respectively. VDN Rasteau is becoming scarce. Even rarer is VDN Rasteau Rancio. Bressy-Masson was almost the only domaine to produce VDN Rasteau Rancio and the present offering counts amongst the last bottles left in the world now that they have replaced it by VDN Rasteau Ambré.

Appearance:

This wine looks clear and bright. It is pale tawny with red copper highlights in colour. Legs and tears run along the side of the glass.

Nose:

The wine smells clean. It exhibits deliberately oxidised aromas. Here, the rancio character is defined by notes of walnut, hazelnut and almond. The sultana and quince fruit is underpinned by sweet vanilla and cinnamon. There is also a degree of sappiness and vegetal character, with undertones of Provencal herbs, plus some coffee-like chicory and chocolate-like Ovaltine from malt extract.

Palate:

This medium-plus-bodied wine is sweet. It is fortified to a low level of alcohol, which is perfectly offset by a medium-plus level of acidity. Tannins are so low that they are not worth mentioning. A touch of orange peel adds some tang to the nutty milk chocolate topped with caramel sauce. The length is only medium in the finish.

Assessment of quality:

This wine is very good. It is a tad simple but ever so well-made and charming (Magda and I bet our bottom dollar that members are going to really enjoy it!). Served slightly chilled, it will prove very easy to drink on its own or in accompaniment of Christmas pudding or any dessert rich in dried fruits.