

# WINE News

*Find out why we keep coming back to the wines of the Rhône and the regions of southern France.*



## SEPTEMBER 28, 2015 FEATURES

- |   |                           |   |                        |
|---|---------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 2 | Verquiere is Back; Cornas | 5 | Roussillon             |
| 3 | Perrin Family; Ogier      | 6 | Savoie; Antech Bubbles |
| 4 | Languedoc                 | 7 | Villa Symposia; Rosé   |

## There and Back Again...and Again...and Again

By Keith Mabry

**It has been just over a year since I assumed the helm as Rhône and French Regional Buyer.** I have made it my mission to explore the outlying regions of France and bring you some of the newest and most exciting producers we can find. There have been challenges along the way—an excessive amount of travel (it’s not all fun spending hours in the car driving from region to region), and the slowdown at the California ports causing delays that added weeks and months to some of our shipments. Finally, we can begin reaping the rewards of all the hard

work this past year. I am excited about so many of our new producers, and I was pleased to connect with many of our existing ones. With so many new items just arriving, our department gets an expanded edition of Wine News! Our team goes behind the scenes for some exciting new Rhône finds, and we take a deeper look at Cornas. We explore Languedoc and Roussillon, not just as one region but as the two diverse regions they actually are. We look at our first-ever Direct Import from Savoie—and so much more!

## Savory Reds to Start the Fall Season

**2012 Domaine de la Bastide Blanche Bandol (\$24.99)** I can think of nothing better to drink with fall and winter fare than a hearty red. And nothing can touch Bandol for its sheer meatiness and ability to pair with a great braise or stew. Bastide Blanche rivals many of the great producers like Tempier and Pibarnon, but for around half the price. The wine has lush, deep fruit, notes of leather and game, and a velvety texture that lingers for days. 92 points WS.



**2013 Yves Duport Mondeuse “Terre Brune” Bugey (\$17.99)** Yves Duport is our new producer from the small appellation of Bugey (neighbor to Savoie) near the French Alps just east of Lyon. His hillside vineyards are ideal for delivering amazing sparkling wines, exceptional, crisp whites and this most savory red, his Mondeuse. The grape Mondeuse has a wild, spicy side that makes you think of a Turkish bazaar. Aromas of black pepper, paprika, cardamom and allspice surround the core of ripe black fruit. More medium bodied in its texture, this is perfect for pork and chicken dishes.

**2013 Domaine d’Ourea Vacqueyras (\$19.99)** Adrien Rousten founded D’Ourea in 2010, and in its short life, he is already receiving great accolades. The wine is beautifully old school with its full-bodied texture, aromas of garrigue and incense, with a finish of blackberries and fig jam. This wine is persistent on the palate and will pair beautifully with grilled meats. 90-92 points RP.



## Verquière: Back in the House!

By Keith Mabry

It's been over 10 years, but one of our great Direct Imports has returned to the fold. We began working with Domaine de Verquière in the late 1990s. But as things often go, they departed in 2003 for an importer that offered larger distribution. We remained a fan of the wines, and when the opportunity arose to visit them on this year's Rhône trip, we jumped at the chance to taste through their new offerings.

What a treat: all the wines delivered on the promise of classic Rhône character with great regional typicity.

The recent arrivals start with the **2014 Domaine de Verquière Côtes du Rhône (\$9.99)**, a remarkable entry-level wine. It is composed of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah and has all the hallmark notes of the Rhône Valley with its briary, spicy fruit. The wine is overt and immediately accessible but still has all the classic structure that keeps this wine focused and on point. It is one of our best new values.



Verquière's vineyards in Sablet.

The **2012 Domaine de Verquière Côtes du Rhône-Villages Sablet (\$14.99)** comes from the home vineyards. We drove up to visit the site, which was a little treacherous for my poor little Toyota compact. We managed to make it safely up to about 300 meters and see the beautiful terroir. The east-facing vineyard is in a bowl-shaped convex, overlooking the hills of Gigondas. It is a remarkable site. The hillside fruit is planted on primarily clay-limestone soils. It has the higher elevation quality with its more floral, spice box nuances. The wine has ripe fruit but shows restraint. It is an elegant Rhône, to be sure.

The **2012 Domaine de Verquière Côtes du Rhône-Villages Plan de Dieu (\$13.99)** is located in the scrub-filled flatlands below Sablet. The soil is red clay packed with smooth round pebbles, and garrigue is everywhere. Plan de Dieu means "God's Landscape," and it is much warmer in the flats. The wine shows richer fruit notes, with framboise, boysenberry and hoisin flavors. This is the true crowd pleaser with its opulence.

## Opening up to Cornas

By Andrew Whiteley

The minuscule region of Cornas in the Northern Rhône represents the greatest challenger to the renowned wines of Hermitage. The entire region totals just under 300 acres of planted vines, smaller than many a single château in Bordeaux. The labor-intensive requirements of the region's steep granitic slopes led to a decline in production throughout the early twentieth century. However, a renewed interest in high-quality wine in the late 1980s led to a resurgence of the appellation, as vigneronns have reestablished the terraces and improved quality throughout the winemaking process. By law, a wine can only be labeled as Cornas if it is made from 100% Syrah grapes grown within the borders of the well-defined AOC.

The **2012 Alain Voge "Les Vieilles Vignes" Cornas (\$69.99)** defied and redefined my expectations for a powerful and brooding Syrah. It is a profoundly graceful Cornas. I was first struck by the gorgeous royal purple color. Extremely expressive, the nose is full of rich berries—black, blue, and red—and the healthy dose of crushed black pepper and spice that you expect. All those same players present themselves on the palate, but not as standouts: they form a tight-knit team that works seamlessly together. The result is a wine that is clean and silky, yet taut and powerful. It has the impression of being light bodied, but this is not the case. It is a powerful, well-constructed wine that isn't too hot or heavy. A splendid achievement in balance.



The **2013 Vincent Paris "Granit 30" Cornas (\$29.99)** (the 30 refers to the slope of the hill, not the age of the vines) packs a deep purple core into an earthy body. It has the rich aroma and texture of a very old, but immaculately clean, stone cellar stuffed full of fresh berries. Warm and inviting, this wine is very drinkable now, but is naturally endowed with the structure and balance to reward many years in the bottle.

The **2013 Vincent Paris "Granit 60" Vieilles Vignes Cornas (\$39.99)** not only comes from older vines than the Granit 30, but much steeper slopes near the top of the hill. The superior vineyard site yields a wine that is everything the Granit 30 is, but is also so much more. The 60 opens up in a big way with several hours in the decanter, or if you have the patience, a long stint in the cellar. It's the perfect candidate for a multi-bottle purchase to see how a great young wine can evolve.

The **2013 Vincent Paris "La Geynale" Cornas (\$49.99)** shows the full power of highly concentrated Syrah. In contrast to the Granit wines, the La Geynale sees no destemming. The concentration of the 100-plus-year-old vines is remarkable. In addition to the huge blackberry, black pepper, clove, and chocolate flavors, there is a stunning decomposed granite minerality. Of the three wines of Vincent Paris, La Geynale is the deepest, most complex wine in the lineup. It will pay dividends if you have the willpower to keep it in the cellar for a decade or more.

# The Amazing Wines of the Perrin Family

By Alex Pross

There are a handful of reference-point producers in the Rhône Valley. The Perrin Family is the preeminent producer of wines in the Southern Rhône, headed by their flagship winery Château de Beaucastel. Château de Beaucastel makes wines from entry-level offerings through amazing white wines, all the way up to tête de cuvée offerings, all at world-class quality for their given price ranges. Besides fashioning fantastic wines under the Beaucastel label, they also have a thriving label known as Famille Perrin, where they make a dazzling array of inexpensive offerings running from just under \$10 a bottle to a little over \$50.

We have four fantastic wines that are currently in stock and available for purchase. We begin with the **2013 Coudoulet de Beaucastel Côtes du Rhône (\$29.99)**, a great entry-level offering that is often referred to as a “baby Beaucastel” because it is made from a parcel of land just to the east of the Beaucastel plot and shares many similarities with its big brother, but costs merely a fraction. If you’re looking for a world-class, top of the mountain wine, then the **2012 Château de Beaucastel “Hommage a Jacques Perrin” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$499.99)**. This is the perennial “wine of the vintage.” 99 points RP and 96 points AG.

One of the more exciting recent developments are Famille Perrin’s wines from the Southern Rhône, which are not made under the Beaucastel banner. The **2012 Famille Perrin “Les Hauts de Julien” Vieilles Vignes Vinsorbes (\$49.99)** is a stunning wine. Full-bodied and fruit-driven, with incredible notes of mineral and earth, this is a remarkable wine for the Côtes-du-Rhône moniker. 94-96 points RP. The second wine in our dynamic duo of Famille Perrin wines is the **2012 Famille Perrin “Domaine du Clos des Tourelles” Gigondas (\$59.99)**. A wine that is easily one of the greatest Gigondas I have ever tasted, it’s loaded with dark fruits, spice, licorice and minerality. This is the example all other Gigondas should strive to achieve. 94-97 points RP, 93 points AG and WS.

Don’t miss out on these stunning offerings from the Perrin family! And be sure to check out page 8 for our full listings of pre-arrival wines, including more from Château de Beaucastel.



## From Father to Son: Ogier

By Keith Mabry

Of all the Syrah-producing regions in the northern part of the Rhône Valley, Côte-Rôtie is the most Burgundian. These are the, dare I say, “more feminine” wines made from that noble grape. They are perfumed and elegant, as opposed to the more southerly region Hermitage, whose wines tend to be meaty and bold. One of our favorite producers from this region is Michel & Stéphane Ogier.

Now mostly retired, Michel passed the reins to his son, Stéphane, who is one of the Young Turks of the region. We recently visited them and saw their new, modern facility, which will help them to more readily break down the individual parcels to best express the full potential of

each one. After barrel tasting both the '13s and '14s, we know there are great wines on the horizon. For now, we content ourselves with the current releases which recently landed. From bottom to top, the quality of the Ogier wines excels.

Their entry-level wine, the **2012 Domaine Michel & Stéphane Ogier Syrah “d’Ogier” Collines Rhodaniennes (\$17.99)** is made from 100% Syrah from 20-year-old vines. This magnificent drinker captures the essence of everything I look for in a Rhône Syrah. Fresh black fruit, peppery spice and crushed violets explode on the nose. Silky tannins and a seamless finish make this a favorite go-to wine.

The **2012 Domaine Michel & Stéphane Ogier “La Rosine” Collines Rhodaniennes (\$31.99)** is another magnificent effort sourced from parcels just outside the appellation of Côte-Rôtie (some just yards away). A more polished and deep wine, this is contemplative. Truly a baby Côte-Rôtie for a fraction of the price.

The **2011 Domaine Michel & Stéphane Ogier Côte-Rôtie (\$99.99)** is the core wine. Composed of parts from both the Brune and Blonde sides of the appellation, this has real persistence and length. There is some stem inclusion, and the wine sees about 20% new French oak. An explosion of aromatics range from violets to Szechwan peppercorns, black plums, smoked brisket and fig paste.



*In the vineyards of Côte-Rôtie overlooking the village of D'Ampuis.*

# Loving the Languedoc

By Keith Mabry

There are so many sub-regions in Languedoc, it may seem difficult to keep track of them all. Grenache Rouge is the dominant red grape, and Grenache Blanc the dominant white. But Carignan, Cinsault, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Picpoul, Terret Blanc and Noir, Roussanne, Viognier and so many more are all planted. This year we visited Minervois, Pezenas, Corbieres, Picpoul de Pinet, Saint Chinian and Limoux. We have new producers from each of these regions, but sadly, they can't all be featured here. Each one we do have, though, represents top value and quality in their respective regions.

## Corbieres

Corbieres is a hilly and rocky region formed when the Pyrenees Mountains were created 500 million years ago. The land is covered in windswept garrigue. The primary soil is limestone with a mix of schist, red clay, galets roulés and marl. As the fourth largest appellation in France, it was best known for bulk wines that were on the wild and rustic side. This is Carignan and Grenache country. Now, as more producers begin to advance artisanal winemaking in the region, our own producer Sophie Guiradon and her Clos de l'Anhel wines are at the forefront of this movement. Sophie is a one-woman show. She is certified organic, has a non-interventionist view towards winemaking and does virtually everything on her own. She has three standout wines that we are so happy to represent. The **2013 Clos de l'Anhel "Lolo de l'Anhel" Corbieres (\$12.99)** has been a tremendous staff favorite. It is primarily Carignan, with lovely fruit,



*Fossilized oyster shells in Sophie's vineyard.*

garrigue and violet aromas. This is Corbieres at its entry-level finest. The **2013 Clos de l'Anhel "Les Terrassettes" Corbieres (\$16.99)**, from older vines, is also based on Carignan but with more Grenache in the blend and a touch of Syrah. The wine is gorgeous with its rich fruit, floral aromatics and roasted plum qualities. The **2013 Clos de l'Anhel "Les Dimanches" Corbieres (\$22.99)** is from the oldest vine fruit, generally from Sophie's highest altitude vineyards. Detailed and precise, this wine lingers on the palate. Give it a little air in a decanter, or better yet, put a few bottles away. Like Sophie, this is a keeper.

## Minervois

Just to the north of Corbieres and to the east of the walled city of Carcassonne, lies Minervois. The appellation has equally diverse soils like Corbieres, but limestone and clay are its primary ones. This is a warm region with a very Mediterranean climate. The hills are covered with the local scrub, known as garrigue, forests and vineyards. Our newest producer from the region is Domaine Tour Boisée. The domaine dates back to 1826 and is still run by its descendants. Now

farming about 200 hectares of vines, the winery was recently certified organic. Some of the great value discoveries of our trips came from this winery. The **2013 Domaine Tour Boisée Minervois Rouge (\$9.99)** is equal parts Grenache and Syrah. The **2013 Domaine Tour Boisée Minervois Blanc (\$11.99)** is a blend of Marsanne, Vermentino, Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Macabeu and Muscat Petit Grain. The wine has lovely nectarine and yellow plum aromas, wet stone notes and a flavors of dried papaya and pineapple on the finish. The **2013 Domaine Tour Boisée "Marie Claude" Minervois (\$16.99)** is the more serious, workhorse wine. This is full-blown Minervois made with equal parts Grenache, Syrah and Carignan. It is rich with flavors of deep red cherry, raspberry coulis and garrigue. With some polished tannins, this wine is beautiful now but will age well for a couple more years. One of my favorite finds is the **2014 Domaine Tour Boisée "Plantation 1905" (\$12.99)**. It is field blend of 23 grape varieties from a single parcel planted in 1905. Everything is harvested at the same time and is all co-fermented. It has a beautiful nose of violets, currants and iron.

## Limoux

Limoux is a region that doesn't necessarily roll off the tongue, but is primarily famed for its sparkling wines. The appellation lies in the eastern foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains. It is unique among Languedoc regions because of the three broad climatic influences: the Pyrenees, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean. This confluence of climates and the higher altitudes create an ideal situation for sparkling wine production. One of the greats of the region is Jean-Louis Denois, and after a short hiatus, we couldn't be more pleased to have his wines back in the store. Jean-Louis is certified organic and has always had the rugged individualist reputation. Creating unique still wine blends as well as amazing bubbly, he has an unerring eye for detail and a flair for the dramatic. The **Jean-Louis Denois "Tradition" Brut Reserve (\$14.99)** is almost technically a Cremant de Limoux, but since J-L does his own thing, he blends 50% Chardonnay with 50% Pinot Noir, which doesn't conform to appellation rules. Always one of our best crowd-pleasers, it spends about three years on the lees, giving it a wonderful mousse with toasty biscuity notes. Another favorite is the **Jean-Louis Denois Pinot Noir Brut Rosé (\$14.99)**. I always connect with this wine, with its light red cherry notes, spices and hint of cinnamon. New for us is another sparkling rosé, the **Jean-Louis Denois "Bulles de Syrah" Brut Rosé (\$13.99)**. A terrific take on modern bubbles that captures some of the spicy Syrah notes but never overplays its hand. With its fresh take on rosé, you gotta try it! Finally, we finish with my own personal favorite, the **Jean-Louis Denois Blancs de Blancs Cremant de Limoux Extra Brut (Sulfite Free) (\$14.99)**. This blend of 80% Chardonnay and 20% Chenin Blanc qualifies for the appellation in name only. It is an amazing take on sparkling wine with its roasted apple, pear notes and grilled brioche flavors. J-L believes that the extra brut style, with its higher acidity, will act as the natural preservative the wine needs to develop with no need for any sulfite additions.

## Roussillon: No longer in Languedoc's Shadow

By Keith Mabry

For years, Roussillon seemed like the Garfunkel to Languedoc's Simon. Through some kind of French gerrymandering, Languedoc and Roussillon have always been lumped together as a political region. In part, this has carried over to wine culture, where we often refer to Languedoc-Roussillon as a singular entity. But the two couldn't be more different in geology, climate and culture. Roussillon is Catalan, sharing more in common with their cultural neighbors to the south in Barcelona than with their brethren to the north. Even the wines are more similar to Priorat and Montsant than to Languedoc. Roussillon is the warmest and driest region in France, with little disease pressure, making it ideal for sustainable and organic viticulture. The biggest influence in the region is the Pyrenees, adding altitude, drying winds and a host of geological diversity. Schist is the dominant soil type, although there are also pockets of limestone, granite and clay. Originally, it was more famous for its dessert wine appellations like Maury, Banyuls and Rivesaltes, but as the public turned towards drier wines, so did the region. Now, with the Côtes Catalanes, Côtes du Roussillon and Maury Sec (dry) appellations, the Roussillon is producing incredible values and world-class wines.

### Mas Karolina

Mas Karolina is the project of Caroline Bonville. Originally from the Entre-Deux Mers part of Bordeaux where her family owns property, in 2003 she struck out on her own and settled on a vineyard just outside the town of Maury. Here she could make the wine she wanted to make. Now, with 17 hectares of plantings, Caroline makes spectacular reds as well as a lovely white and some killer dessert wines.

The **2013 Mas Karolina Côtes Catalanes Blanc (\$13.99)** is a blend of 60% Grenache Gris, 30% Macabeu and 10% Carignan Blanc. The wine is like walking into a stone fruit orchard, with a nose of nectarine and peach. Light apple blossom with crisp, crunchy acidity round out the palate. A real refresher. The workhorse red and one of my favorite value wines in the store is the **2013 Mas Karolina Côtes Catalanes (\$13.99)**, a blend of 35% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 40% Carignan. It has deep notes of boysenberry, cocoa and black pepper, with nice minerality. From some of the younger vines, this has an openness and freshness that makes it immediately accessible.



Caroline Bonville inspects her Grenache vines.

The **2012 Mas Karolina Côtes du Roussillon-Villages (\$17.99)** is a blend of 55% Grenache, 30% Syrah and 15% Carignan. This is the flagship wine capturing the essence of great Roussillon. The wine has wonderful fruit extraction, with notes of ripe cherry heering, wild berries, licorice and spice box. Never heavy, just full and complete. A great throwback to the fortified wines of old is the **2013 Mas Karolina Maury Vin Doux Naturel (\$18.99)**. As a port-style wine, this has rich, deep cherry notes with polished tannins.



The ruins of Château de Quéribus, seated high above the village of Maury.

### Domaine Cabirau

Domaine Cabirau is the project of importer Dan Kravitz. His vineyards are in the village of Maury and his primary site is on the black schist of Maury. This fractured schist is abundant and difficult for planting but yields amazing Grenache. The 2013 vintage has become somewhat of a legend in the surrounding areas. The **2013 Domaine Cabirau Côtes du Roussillon (\$12.99)** is a blend of 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah and 10% Carignan. The Grenache sees no oak and the Syrah and Carignan are matured for six months in two-year-old French oak barrels. Classically meaty with some opulent black fruit tones, this wine has a strong thread of minerality giving it good balance. 91 points RP.

Planted entirely on black schist, the **2012 Domaine Cabirau "Serge & Nicolas" Maury Sec (\$17.99)** captures the essence of the region. It has copious black fruit, but there is an underlying quality of lavender and violets that emerge as the wine opens. 91 points RP.

### Domaine Bila Haut

You know a region is on the rise when a heavy hitter like Michel Chapoutier moves into the neighborhood. Chapoutier is famous for some of the northern Rhône's greatest Hermitage wines. After seeing the potential in Roussillon, Chapoutier began acquiring vineyards in 1990 and now has around 100 hectares of plantings. They farm biodynamically, and all the domaine's vineyards are certified organic. The **2013 Domaine Bila Haut "Les Vignes de Bila Haut" Côtes du Roussillon-Villages (\$11.99)** is a blend of 40% Syrah, 40% Grenache and 20% Carignan. It has deep rich flavors of blueberry, Moroccan spices, currants and cocoa intermingled with notes of brushy garrigue and minerals. 91 points RP.

The truest expression of their terroir is the **2013 Domaine Bila Haut "Occultum Lapidem" Côtes de Roussillon-Villages (\$29.99)**. Deeply savory, with an incredibly complex nose of potpourri, roasted blackberry and incense, this is a keeper. Long on the palate but still youthful, a couple of years down and you will be rewarded with a show-stopper of a wine. 94 points RP.

## Duck and Uncover the Wines of Savoie

By John Majeski

In 1739, in the beautiful alpine town of Grenoble, there appeared a gentleman named Vaucanson and his pet duck. So, you might ask, what of it? Well, this duck was quite unlike any other, in that it was constructed of gold-plated copper and possessed the most fantastic internal contrivances that enabled it to not only quack like a duck, flap its elegant wings and move about, but also open its beak, drink spring water and readily gulp grain from its master's extended hand and proceed to fully digest it. Monsieur Vaucanson was an extraordinarily gifted inventor of highly complicated, lifelike automata, perhaps the first "cyberneticist," and his famous gastronomic duck was undoubtedly the original android foodie, as it were. Not sure if he liked wine, though—fortunately for us, as the felicitous wines of the Savoie region were too good to share with even the finest geese and quackers.

Savoie lies within the scenic heart of French Alpine skiing, and it is not uncommon to find restaurant terraces bedecked with jubilant tourists toasting the magnificent vistas with a refreshing glass of Jacquère or Altesse, two signature white varieties native to this mosaic of mountains, lakes, valleys, soils and microclimates. Most vines are planted in isolated islets on lower slopes and valleys between ranges, and usually receive generous sunlight and surprisingly little snowfall. Wines labeled under the appellations Vin de Savoie or Roussette de Savoie can be found in scattershot fashion over a wide area, often followed by the names of their delineated crus, like Jongieux, Apremont or Abymes. Yes, it can get pretty complicated, but the wines themselves are, by contrast, essences of purity, clarity and precision.

### 2014 Veronique Anne Perret "Le Minéral" Vin de Savoie (\$11.99)

Founded in 1927 in the village of Jongieux, the Perret family has worked with many of the same seasoned growers for four generations to create premium wines that reflect the harmony and diversity of

the region. Jacquère is a highly productive, mid to late-ripening grape, well-suited to rocky, thinner soils that limit its growth. Pale yellow with metallic tinges, this ultra-clean and youthful white is delicately scented with citrus and honeysuckle floral elements, but picks up a defined mineral zing on the mid-palate. Altogether a tremendously affordable value in a delightful summer aperitif.

### 2014 Veronique Anne Perret Vin de Savoie

**Apremont (\$14.99)** Disaster struck this lovely village in the mid-thirteenth century when the limestone mountain overlooking it collapsed and tragically demolished the entire town and its inhabitants. Today it is renowned for its ability to grow finely scented, full and flavorful Jacquère, and this charming wine possesses an aromatic nose of white peach, apricot, citrus flowers and lemongrass, with an expressive mineralized character balanced by delicious acidity and a persistent finish. Do me a favor, duck down to your nearest fine deli, buy a crusty baguette and a wedge of Tomme de Savoie, and have at it!

**2014 Veronique Anne Perret Roussette de Savoie (\$16.99)** Roussette is the local name for Altesse, a favorite dry white grape that finds itself in my personal wine glass with astounding frequency. Wondrous balance married to a generous dose of vibrant acidity, which sounds like a strange pair of ducks, er, paradox, but this wine manages to contain both while revealing aromas of lemony fruit, paraffin, blanched almonds and crisp apples on the exotic palate. You could even age this for a few years, but then again... just quack it open and enjoy today! Enough.



## Bubbling Over with New Arrivals from Antech

By Andrew Whiteley

If you're not already familiar with the bubbles of Antech, you need to find something to celebrate immediately. This Limoux estate makes a full lineup of bubbly using just the right combination of old school technique and state-of-the-art technology to bring you eminently affordable sparkling wine choices for any occasion.

The **2013 Antech "Cuvée Eugénie" Cremant de Limoux (\$13.99)**, named for the matriarch of the house and one of the first female vineyard managers in the Languedoc, shines like a crystal in the glass. Bright gold with radiating effervescence and a fine combination of honeyed toast and floral aromas, it is wonderfully refreshing. It is the perfect cuvée to beat the heat on a hot afternoon.

Seeking more refinement? Try a bottle of the **2013 Antech "Grande Cuvée" Cremant de Limoux (\$13.99)**. A splendid blend of Chardonnay, Chenin Blanc, and Mauzac makes for a very subtle wine. The nose conveys blooming citrus flowers and a very mellow biscuit note. Grapefruits, apples, and pears compose the mid-palate,

but the wine remains tightly focused throughout due to a crisp acid structure. The finesse of the wine continues throughout the long finish, rich with apples and pears.

Sometimes when the weather is good and you're feeling festive, you just need a bubbly rosé, but you may not want to shell out \$30 or more on Champagne. Enter: **2013 Antech "Emotion" Cremant de Limoux Brut Rosé (\$14.99)**. Stunning salmon color, made up of ripe cherries and tart strawberries on the bouquet and pear and toast on the palate. It is fun and delicious.

And if you need a wine so fresh and crisp you feel like you're stepping out of the car into a mid-winter's Tahoe day, grab a bottle of the no dosage, **Antech "Brut Nature" Blanquette de Limoux (\$12.99)**. It is lean, focused, and remarkably fresh.



# Living in Equilibrium Time: Villa Symposia

By John Majeski

Let's face it: in between the talking heads and the walking dead on our flat screen TVs, we're still here, the everyday ordinary people, the ones who never get much hear time because we're forced to listen to silly debates about hairlines. Enough already, take a break—flee to the south of France, where the air still breathes the fragrances of wild thyme, lavender, fennel, aioli and acacia blossoms.

During his recent rollicking jaunt through the Coteaux du Languedoc, Keith Mabry, our Rhône and French Regional expert extraordinaire, uncovered a superb gem: Villa Symposia, the consummate vinous realization of former footballer-turned-winemaker Eric Prisette, who was convinced that this area, known primarily for white wines, held great promise for organic/biodynamic red wine production.

**2012 Villa Symposia “Equilibre” Languedoc (\$15.99)** Sourced from 30-year-old vines farmed organically on clay and limestone soils, this personable, beautifully balanced wine is a savory blend of mostly Syrah and Carignan, with small amounts of Grenache and Mourvèdre. No mystery about its pedigree, as the nose is redolent with spices, garrigue, mature dark fruits and earth, leading to an impressive weight on the palate of black cherry, cassis, crushed olives, licorice and fig paste, held together with supple, integrated tannins that only enhance the superlative, classic finish. This polished wine will continue to evolve for several years, and can accompany most grilled meats or stews with ease. A beauty. 90-92 points RP.



Eric Prisette overlooking the limestone soils of Villa Symposia.

**2011 Villa Symposia “L’Origine” Languedoc (\$29.99)** The bolder, brawnier big brother to the above wine, this comes from organic hillside plots, made from 95% Syrah and 5% Grenache and aged for up to 18 months in older oak foudres. Concentrated, pure stuff here, with aromas of meat, blackberries, roasted spices and plums, and an amalgam of dark velvety fruit, damp earth, floral and garrigue flavors on the kaleidoscopic palate. Altogether a virtuous, soulful effort. And since no braised wildebeest is available, why not pair with a splendid rack of lamb? 92 points RP.

## In Pursuit of Perfection, the Rosés of Provence

By John Majeski

“When he had set aside a large enough pile of good acorns he counted them out by tens, meanwhile eliminating the small ones or those which were slightly cracked, for now he examined them more closely. When he had thus selected one hundred perfect acorns he stopped and we went to bed.” —Jean Giono, *The Man Who Planted Trees*.

Those fortunate to have read this deeply moving work by the French writer Jean Giono will have a good grasp of what it takes to create enduring life and beauty out of nothing but a handful of acorns, and the will to go out every morning for fifty years and plant them in the hard ground. Men and women who minister to grapevines are engaged in the same silent, meditative conversation with the earth as they reflect upon the shape of things, the degree of sunlight penetrating the canopy, the véraison, or change in color of the fruit, the bite into the flesh of a ripened grape prior to harvest that announces “yes!” There are few spots on earth that have been as welcome and generous to those who cherish both wine and food than Giono’s native Provence—where, for over 26 centuries, grapes have been grown, the sunlight has shone, and wine has been created, making one almost believe that wine and civilization are one. And no style of wine is as indigenous to Provence and its natural, carefree insouciance than its rosés.

**2014 Domaine la Colombe Coteaux Varois en Provence Rosé (\$11.99)** A delightful, highly drinkable, terroir-driven rosé, with stone-inflected fruit—strawberry, peach, acacia blossom and Cavaillon melon—from grapes sourced from rocky hillside vineyards. You can almost smell the mistral wafting through the grapes, but let’s not get too carried away. This is for enjoyment now, with a few slices of prosciutto and butter on a crusty baguette.

**2014 Domaine Dragon Côtes de Provence Rosé (\$11.99)** To avoid the “game of thrones” that can challenge a busy Saturday visit, stop by our shop on a quiet weekday to tame this lovely Dragon. Caressed by all the signature varieties—Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre and Cinsault—this lithe and winsome rosé unravels fruity and floral aromas and flavors from strawberry to crisp citrus to hibiscus blossom, with a mineral undertone. Refreshing and subtle, it would pair well with a platter of fried prawns or calamari.

**2014 Domaine la Chapelle Saint Victor Coteaux d’Aix en Provence Rosé (\$13.99)** A remarkably silky wine at this price point, with salmon-colored tints, a beautiful cut and expressive, crystalline fruit showcasing white raspberry, cherry and grapefruit on the palate, replete with the wonderful acidity that characterizes the finest bone-dry rosés from this region. Serve with a warm leek and mushroom tart or crisp salad. Perfection!

# Pre-Arrival Rhône Valley Wines

## The Wines of Château de Beaucastel

There may be no finer example of great aging Châteauneuf-du-Pape than Château de Beaucastel, and the kicker is that many of the older vintages are still very affordable! Beaucastel makes their wine in an understated, classical style that appeals to the traditionalist while being forward enough to please the New World palate. Below is a list of wines available via pre-arrival:

**2005 Château de Beaucastel Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$99.99)** 96 points *WS*, 95 points *RP*, 94 points *ST* and 92 points *W&S*.

**2007 Château de Beaucastel Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$89.99)** 96 points *WS*, 96 points *RP*, 94 points *ST*, 94 points *W&S* and 93 points *WE*.

**2010 Château de Beaucastel Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$69.99)** Best Buy! 96 points *WS*, 96 points *WE* and 95 points *RP*.

**2012 Château de Beaucastel Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$79.99)** 96 points *RP*, 95 points *WS* and 93 points *ST*.

**2013 Château de Beaucastel Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$69.99)** 92-95 points *RP* and 92-94 points *AG*.

**2013 Château de Beaucastel “Hommage a Jacques Perrin” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$399.99)** 97-100 points *RP* and 94-96 points *AG*.

**2013 Château de Beaucastel Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc (\$74.99)** Rare! 94 points *RP* and 93 points *WS*.

**2013 Château de Beaucastel “Vieilles Vignes” Roussanne Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$129.99)** 97 points *RP* and 96 points *WS*.

## 2013 Southern Rhône Pre-Arrivals: Stunning Values!

The 2013 vintage in the Rhône was incredibly successful: not only was it a good vintage, but thanks to the weakening euro, the pricing is fantastic!

**2013 Bosquet des Papes “Tradition” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$39.99)** 91-93 points *RP* and 90-92 points *AG*.

**2013 Domaine du Pegau “Cuvée Réservee” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$39.99)** 92-94 points *AG*.

**2013 Domaine Grand Veneur “Les Origines” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$44.99)** 92-94 points *RP* and 90-92 points *AG*.

**2013 Bosquet des Papes “Chante le Merle Vieilles Vignes” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$59.99)** 93-95 points *RP* and 92-94 points *AG*.

**2013 Olivier Hillaire “Les Petits Pieds d’Armand” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$69.99)** 92-94 points *RP*.

**2013 Clos des Papes Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$74.99)** Great deal! 91-93 points *RP* and 93-95 points *AG*.

**2013 Domaine Grand Veneur “Vieilles Vignes” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$79.99)** 93-95 points *RP* and 91-93 points *AG*.

**2013 Domaine du Clos du Caillou “Reserve les Clos du Caillou” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$99.99)** 93-96 points *RP* and 92-94 points *AG*.

## 2013 Northern Rhône Pre-Arrivals

The Northern Rhône in 2013 had a great vintage, probably on the whole superior in overall quality to the Southern Rhône, with M. Chapoutier, the leading producer in the Southern Rhône, leading the pack!!

**2013 M. Chapoutier “Les Varonniers” Crozes Hermitage (\$34.99)** 88-90 points *RP* and 92-94 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “Les Granits” St-Joseph (\$39.99)** 91-93 points *RP* and 91-93 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “Les Granits” St-Joseph Blanc (\$49.99)** 96 points *RP* and 91-93 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “Le Clos” St-Joseph (\$69.99)** 93-96 points *RP* and 92-94 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “La Mordoree” Côte-Rôtie (\$89.99)** 93-95 points *RP* and 92-94 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “Les Greffieux” Ermitage (\$89.99)** 92-95 points *RP* and 93-95 points *AG*.

**2013 Paul Jaboulet Aine “La Chapelle” Hermitage (\$159.99)** 92-94 points *RP* and 93-95 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “Le Meal” Ermitage (\$179.99)** 95-98 points *RP* and 92-94 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “le Pavillon” Ermitage (\$199.99)** 96-98 points *RP* and 93-95 points *ST*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “L’Ermitage” Ermitage (\$229.99)** 96-98 points *RP* and 93-95 points *AG*.

**2013 M. Chapoutier “L’Ermitage” Ermitage Blanc (\$379.99)** Rare! 100 points *RP* and 93-95 points *AG*.

Key: *RP* Robert Parker’s Wine Advocate *WS* Wine Spectator *ST* Steven Tanzer’s International Wine Cellar *WE* Wine Enthusiast *W&S* Wine & Spirits *AG* Antonio Galloni’s Vinous

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