

WINE News

New offers from Rhône, French Regional and Loire.



APRIL 24, 2017 FEATURES

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Rosé for Today and Côte-Rotie for Tomorrow

By Keith Mabry

Earlier this year, I added the buying duties for Loire Valley wines to an already full plate of Rhône and French Regional responsibilities.

It is an exciting opportunity, as many of my favorite whites and reds in the world come from the Loire. After a two-week journey beginning in the Rhône Valley and finishing in the Loire, there is much to discuss.

This is also the first newsletter where we will marry all those categories together for one expanded super newsletter! Our trip began in the Rhône for a vintage review of both 2015 and 2016—and it is an understatement when we say they are spectacular. After a week there we met some new producers in the Loire Valley, also visiting our favorite Direct Import

winemakers. Let's get right to it. First, let's get familiar with all those spectacular in-stock and ready-to-drink 2015 Rhône wines and take a look at some new highlights from the Roussillon. Then we take a deep dive into our 2015 Rhône Pre-Arrival campaign. Our Loire team introduces you to some classic finds in Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc, and we show you the versatility of Jura wines from our newest producer in the region. We finish with 2016's best and brightest new rosé arrivals. But first, some highlights from new arrivals.

Keith Mabry is K&L's Rhône, French Regional and Loire buyer.

2016 Franck Millet "K&L Cuvée" Sancerre Blanc Vieilles Vignes (\$16.99)

A special cuvée crafted exclusively for K&L by our dear friends Franck and Betty Millet, whom we first met in 1994. This 2016 has the classic tone and minerality that make this region so special. Where the 2015 was softer and more deeply fruited, this is racy and vibrant. Expect this to drink beautifully now and for many years to come.



2015 Château de la Negly "La Falaise"

La Clape (\$19.99) Negly is one of Languedoc's most revered producers. The 2014 was a smash success, scoring **92** points from Wine Advocate and loads of rebuys from very satisfied clients. We expect similar or better reviews this year. But why wait for a score? The wine is smoking delicious now with its rich, brambly black fruit and savory palate. This has incredible depth and weight.



2014 Domaine des Remizières "Cuvée Christophe" Crozes-Hermitage (\$23.99)

I was stoked to add this producer to our roster last year after our visit. The Christophe takes Syrah up a notch with some élevage in oak foudre and demi-muid (larger barrels). More select parcels and richer fruit lead to a sensational palate of blue and black fruit with harmonious baking spices. It is a delicious star from the 2014 vintage. **90 WS and 90 RP.**



"Roman" Through the Rhône...

By John Majeski

The wines of the Rhône are history in a glass: Gaze deeply into your glass of garnet-red wine and travel back almost twenty centuries to a lone centurion standing on a hillside in Gaul, sharp eyes beneath bronze helmet shielding the sun as he takes in a panorama of scrubby vines and walled terraces, and slowly lifts a battered wineskin to his parched lips, and drinks and drinks...

Now cast your eyes back to the future, to the present, and you will find much of that scene, sans centurion, unchanged, as many of those ancient stone terraces in the Rhône Valley have survived the onslaught of countless wars and erosion, beaten by time and circumstance, but hardly defeated. Thankfully, there exist men and women still passionately dedicated to restoring vineyards and growing grapes in this unforgiving landscape.

Keith Mabry, our dogged Rhône buyer, found a friendly, resolute couple, Isabelle Guillier and Henri Montabonnet, who in 1992 decided to renovate a forlorn, isolated property in Condrieu stone by stone and plant vines in the steeply sloped, decomposed granite soils, none of which had ever endured a whiff of chemicals. The fruits of their efforts were realized in the 2015 Rhône vintage, a rare year in which the gods, Roman or otherwise, ignored the vicissitudes of fate and shone favor on the vines. It was a classic vintage by any measure, with dramatic winter rains that buttressed the hot, drought-like summer months, chastened by cool nights that generated higher acidity, ending in a harvest of phenolically ripe fruit imbued with crisp freshness, finesse and consummate balance. Considered by many to be the finest vintage in the Rhône Valley in the last fifty years!

2015 Clos de la Bonnette "Roches d'Arbuel" Condrieu (\$49.99) In a concerted departure from the opulence and weight by which Condrieu is often measured, the Arbuel is organically grown and harvested from younger vines on the property and given minimal oak. Peach, apricot and citrus flavors are prevalent in this suave, elegantly polished version that will pair well with a variety of dishes. Saffron-scented, lightly grilled scallops should work!

2015 Saint Cosme Côtes du Rhône (\$12.99) Saint Cosme has planted vines in the Rhône since 1490, a worthy tribute to the land and what it will give back if you nurture it well. This mouthwatering Syrah defines the superb 2015 vintage, all the freshness, texture and intensity of the blueberry, blackcurrant fruit refined by exemplary tannins and a solid, nourishing-to-the-soul finish. The perfect complement to a hearty bacon and Swiss burger on any Wednesday night. **91 WS.**

2015 Domaine Viticole "Malmont" Côtes du Rhône (\$18.99) Winemaker Nicolas Haeni has much in common with the good folks to the north at Clos de la Bonnette, as his elevated, heavily terraced vines demand the same fervent energy and fortitude to achieve his vision of a quintessential Rhône red. This wine is a skillful blend of



Alex Pross navigating the terraced vineyards of Bonnette with the help of Isabelle and Henri's son Antoine.

Grenache and Syrah, with beautifully harmonious fruit that delivers structure, power and concentration without over-amping any element.

2015 Clos Bellane "Petite Bellane" Côtes du Rhône-Villages (\$12.99) "Wines are made in the vineyard," and perhaps that is why winemaker and owner Stéphane Vedeau devotes so much time to tasting the fruit he cultivates from vine to harvest through fermentation. As he recently remarked, "It's the best way to catch the nuances in the evolution of the wines." Such respect is reflected in every bottle of this youthful Syrah-based blend, flush with cool climate, savory black fruit and layers of spice and light toast, all held together by fine acidity.

2015 Caveau de Rasteau "Dame Victoria" Rasteau (\$13.99) This wine represents the efforts of over 180 loyal growers from a co-op founded in 1925 that continues to draw accolades year after year. Sourced from 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah and 10% Mourvèdre grown on sun-washed hillsides covered in glaciated quartz, this is a structured, full-bodied Rasteau resonating with bright, aromatic notes of raspberries and blackberries accented with licorice, garrigue and black tea leaf. Paired with a meaty casserole or root vegetable terrine, this personable, earthy wine will coax guests to your table.



Shaking It Up in the Roussillon

By Thomas Smith

The reputation of the Roussillon is getting a shakeup. Over the past two decades this sun-drenched corner of Southwest France has seen an influx of new winemakers. Drawn by its relatively inexpensive vineyards and intriguing soil types, everyone from Rhône juggernaut Michel Chapoutier to Orin Swift winemaker David Phinney has flocked to the region in search of undiscovered terroir. Their wines have focused on traditional blends of Rhône varieties, namely Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre, along with the regional specialty Carignan. Taking advantage of gorgeous ripening conditions and gusty winds blowing off the Mediterranean, these varieties consistently reach full ripeness with little disease pressure and exceptional harvest conditions.

Today, the Roussillon is beginning to shed its older reputation as a wine region “in flux.” These wines are gaining worldwide recognition for rich, concentrated and lusty reds. They express a consistent purity of fruit and intensity that can only be found here. Best of all, these wines are a spectacular value. From nowhere else can you find wines of such quality and richness at prices that make them so easy to buy for everyday enjoyment.

2015 Domaine de Bila Haut “Les Vignes de Bila Haut” Côtes du Roussillon Villages (\$10.99) Aromas of berries, spice and violets rush out of the glass. There is an incredibly rich palate, filled with blackberry fruit that goes on and on. Complex and focused, this is a wine perfect for drinking on a summer’s evening. **91–93 RP, 90 WS.**

2014 Château Saint Roch “Kerbuccio” Maury Sec (\$15.99) Phenomenal body and texture. A dark and concentrated core of fruit opens up to more enticing floral notes. The fruitiness and savory elements of the Mourvèdre and Carignan really shine through in this wine, culminating in a drinking experience that is distinctive, sleek and modern. **90–93 RP.**

2014 Domaine Lafage “Tessellae Vieilles Vignes” Carignan Côtes Catalanes (\$12.99) This 100% Carignan from 70-year-old vines has soaring red fruit—think sour cherries and raspberries with a touch of dried herbs. Powerful acidity and nimble tannin result in exceptional balance for a wine of such power, and at an unbelievable price. **92 RP.**



Roussillon is Rockin’ at Mas Karolina

By Keith Mabry

Rejoice! The Mas Karolina wines have returned and they couldn’t be better! Caroline Bonville, whom we met through her cousin Olivier Bonville of Champagne Franck Bonville, is making some of the Roussillon’s most under-the-radar reds and whites.

Bonville is a native of Bordeaux, but when she founded her own property she looked to the Roussillon and Maury. We killed it with her wines last year and the new **2015 Mas Karolina Côtes Catalanes (\$12.99)** has just arrived. The 2015 vintage is pure and deep, landing some of the highest critical praise to date. Caroline’s wine is a blend of Grenache and Carignan and shows the vintage’s hallmark qualities by delivering a deep, satisfying richness with flavors of raspberry coulis, dark chocolate and exotic spices. The wine is saturated and long on the palate.



Caroline Bonville with her vines.

In support of this new release, we also received a limited supply of her **2015 Mas Karolina Côtes Catalanes Blanc (\$13.99)**, a blend of Grenache Blanc and Gris, Macabeu and Carignan Blanc. The wine spends about 10 months in a mix of stainless steel and primarily used

300-liter and 500-liter oak (about 10% new). The orchard fruit erupts from the glass with notes of peach, nectarine and yellow plum. A light note of fennel resides in the background. It all comes together with a pinch of baking spice that makes me think of a stone fruit cobbler. This is ripe and ready for spring and summer drinking.

As a first, we also brought in a little bit of Caroline’s traditional Roussillon wines. Her **2014 Mas Karolina Muscat de Rivesaltes (500ml \$13.99)** is a gorgeously pure expression of this traditional style. The Muscat is from the granitic soils of the Lesquerde village, and shows the freshness and beautiful floral and tropical aromas of the grape. During fermentation the wine is fortified, leaving some residual sugar. Sitting at about 120 grams per liter, it is similar to a Muscat Beaugues de Venise. Its pretty, perfumed aromas make it an ideal foil for fruit and tart pairings. But don’t think this has to be an after-dinner wine—add a splash of soda and a little mint and you have one of the finest spring and summer aperitifs out there.

Probably the most historic wine from the region is the **2013 Mas Karolina Maury Vin Doux Naturel Vieilles Vignes (\$19.99)**. Maury was long a fortified, sweet wine-producing appellation before dry wines became *en vogue*. This deeply colored and flavored red is 100% Grenache Noir, similar to the Banyuls of the neighboring region. Deep and dark, there is no better wine to go with a little dark chocolate. Santé!



2015 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Knocks It Out of the Park

By Alex Pross

Keith Mabry and I hit the ground running in Châteauneuf-du-Pape this year. After spending a night in the beautiful town of Avignon, we traveled a short distance north to the town of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where we eagerly set out to preview the greatly anticipated 2015 vintage. Keith and I wanted to taste through these wines and divine the quality for ourselves, after hearing so much hype about the potential greatness of the vintage. With a jam-packed schedule of top producer after top producer, the true quality of the vintage became apparent pretty quickly.

We began at Domaine du Pegau, followed by Marcoux, then off to Roger Sabon, which is only a short drive to Domaine de la Janasse, which naturally led to Vieux Télégraphe, Château de Beaucastel and finally Domaine Giraud. This grueling day allowed us to come to one simple conclusion: 2015 is a fantastic vintage in Châteauneuf-du-Pape! Top to bottom the wines excelled. Great fruit, full-bodied, excellent balance and fine tannins are the hallmarks of this must-own vintage. Below are a few of the wines from places we visited that we have available for pre-arrival purchase (wines are due late October to early November 2017).

Domaine de Marcoux

This wonderful estate seamlessly blends Old World style and modern winemaking to fashion two outstanding wines. We were blown away by the 2015 wines—both the entry-level offering and Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes. Each wine displayed gorgeous fruit, impeccable balance and fine tannin.

2015 Domaine de Marcoux Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$44.99)
92-94 VN, 90-92 RP

2015 Domaine de Marcoux Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes (PA \$129.99) 96-98 VN, 94-96 RP

Domaine Roger Sabon

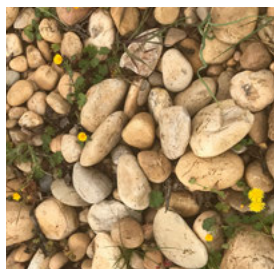
We were met by winemaker Didier Negron, who is the son-in-law of the late Jean-Jacques Sabon (one of three sons of founder Roger Sabon) and was kind enough to give us a quick tour of the cellars before tasting. To be honest, in the past I have found the Roger Sabon wines to be a tad overextracted, but today the 2015s we tasted were sublime. The wines displayed a beautiful, tightly wound fruit core and were perfectly balanced. This was an eye-opening appointment.

2015 Roger Sabon “Les Olivets” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$29.99)
90-92 RP, 90-92 VN

2015 Roger Sabon “Réserve” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$39.99)
93-95 RP, 91-93 VN

2015 Roger Sabon “Prestige” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$59.99)
93-95 RP, 91-93 VN

2015 Roger Sabon “Secret de Sabon” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$149.99) 94-96 RP, 93-95 VN



All about the rocks in CdP.

Domaine de la Janasse

This estate was founded in 1976 by Aimé Sabon and is now run by his children Christophe and Isabelle. On this day we were lucky enough to be met by Isabelle who poured us through the entire range of wines. Janasse is known for Grenache-dominated wines, and as luck would have it, in 2015 Grenache excelled and the wines were definitely singing this day!

2015 Domaine de la Janasse “Tradition” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$44.99) 90-92 RP, 90-92 VN

2015 Domaine de la Janasse “Chaupin” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$64.99) 94-96 RP, 93-95 VN

2015 Domaine de la Janasse Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes (PA \$89.99) 94-96 RP, 94-96 VN



Historical scene from the Giraud family in Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

Domaine Giraud

This was easily my favorite visit of our appointments in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Domaine Giraud was founded in 1974 by Pierre and Mireille Giraud. Today their children run the estate, with François responsible for the vineyards and Marie responsible for the vinification. We were met by Marie Giraud, who was kind enough to share the family history with us as well as take us on a quick trip to see the famed Les Grenaches de Pierre vineyard, where her father Pierre happened to be directing a few workers. Again and again in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, we were greeted by the younger generation, but while walking around we inevitably would bump into the “retired” founders, still working at the winery in some capacity. And when we got the chance to walk the vineyards, it was obvious why the wines performed as they did. Domaine Giraud has access to some of the best vineyard sites in all of Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

2015 Domaine Giraud “Tradition” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$36.99) 91-93 VN, 90-93 RP

2015 Domaine Giraud “Gallimardes” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$79.99) 95-97 RP, 92-94 VN

2015 Domaine Giraud “Les Grenaches de Pierre” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (PA \$89.99) 94-96 RP, 93-95 VN



Plowing the hill of Hermitage.

The Secret is Out! 2015 Ferraton Père et Fils

By Alex Pross

Ferraton was established in 1946 by Jean Orens Ferraton. Initially, Ferraton was merely a vigneron growing grapes and selling them to the local cooperative in Hermitage. When Michel Ferraton, son of Jean Orens, came on board he decided they'd make their own wine under the Ferraton name instead of selling the grapes. With substantial holdings in Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage and Saint-Joseph, Ferraton was poised to capitalize both on their vast holdings as well as the quality of vineyard sites they owned. Michel Ferraton enlisted the help of his friend, mentor and champion of Biodynamic farming Michel Chapoutier. By 2000 the vineyards were being farmed Biodynamically and Michel Ferraton was preparing to turn over the operation to his son, Samuel Ferraton, who would run things with the help of his father and Chapoutier. Unfortunately, Samuel had a motorcycle accident that left him paralyzed, and a heartbroken Michel Ferraton decided to sell his holdings to longtime friend Michel Chapoutier.

Michel Chapoutier decided to honor the Ferraton family by keeping the name, winery and wines separate from his Chapoutier holdings. The Ferraton wines come from separate holdings but are farmed and vinified exactly the same as the Chapoutier wines.

Keith and I were lucky enough to taste through the entire range of 2015 offerings (about 30 wines). They were spectacular, easily comparable to the Chapoutier offerings and about 25–50% less expensive. 2015 is an amazing vintage in the Northern Rhône and these are some of the best examples you are going to find when looking for Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage and Saint-Joseph.

2015 Ferraton—You Need to Buy These Wines!

All these wines are Pre-Arrival, due April 2018.

2015 Ferraton “Les Calendes” Crozes-Hermitage (PA \$22.99) 92-94 RP

2015 Ferraton “La Source” St-Joseph (PA \$22.99) 92-94 RP

2015 Ferraton “Le Grand Courtil” Crozes-Hermitage (PA \$29.99) 92-94 RP

2015 Ferraton “Les Grand Muriers” Cornas (PA \$39.99) 93-95 RP

2015 Ferraton “L'Eglantine” Côte-Rotie (PA \$54.99) 94-96 RP

2015 Ferraton “Les Miaux” Hermitage (PA \$54.99) 93-95 RP

2015 Ferraton “Lieu Dit Montmain” Côte-Rotie (PA \$69.99) 94-96 RP

Christophe Billon Côte-Rotie Pre-Offer

By Keith Mabry

One of our great new finds this year came from our visit to Christophe Billon in Côte-Rotie. Residing in the lieu-dit of Côte Rozier, Billon has flown under the radar for far too long.

While working at Guigal, Christophe and his wife Maryline began this side project in 1991. He left Guigal in 2008 to dedicate his full time to their estate vineyards. Christophe now makes three Côte-Roties along with an entry-level Syrah, Viognier and a beautiful Condrieu. When we visited, he took us on a little cellar tour, climbing up and down barrels to pull tasting samples with his wine thief.

His **2015 Christophe Billon “Les Elotins” Côte-Rotie (PA \$44.99)** will bottle in September. The fruit all comes from their Côte Brune vineyard. The wine has a gorgeous core of concentrated cherry fruit. Persistent on the palate, it finishes with a panoply of baking spices. **93-95 RP.**

The **2015 Christophe Billon “Côte Rozier” Côte-Rotie (PA \$59.99)** is the first vintage this wine has been bottled as a single lieu-dit (designated vineyard site). It is everything one could hope for in a Côte-Rotie with its aromas of grilled meats and crushed rocks. The wine is superbly complex but will require a little patience with its firm tannins. **94-96 RP.**

We finished the round of 2015s with a peek at the **2015 Christophe Billon “La Brocarde” Côte-Rotie (PA \$69.99) 94-97 RP.** Coming from his most select parcel in Côte Brune, the young tannic structure was present but it could not conceal the aromas of blueberry, potpourri and leather. It was highly expressive and an exceptional way to finish this round. We left the cellar incredibly smitten with the Billon wines and we cannot stress enough that it's time to get on board before this train leaves the station.

Jura for Dinner with Domaine Baud

By Olivia Ragni

Tucked in between Burgundy and Switzerland lies the region of Jura. Although the climate and terroir are similar to Burgundy, the wines from this region's remote hillside vineyards are entirely unique. Until recently, Jura was one of France's best-kept secrets for wine and culinary delights. Now the region is trending among sommeliers and wine novices alike. The wines of the Jura should have a place on everyone's table, not simply those in the know. Thanks to our new direct relationship with Domaine Baud, we can offer some of the great wines of the Jura at price points so low, it takes some of the risk out of being adventurous!

Domaine Baud has been making wine in the Jura since 1742, perfecting their craft for nine generations. We are lucky to receive an allocation of their wine, considering around 75% of their production is consumed locally. Clementine Baud and her brother now run the estate. They have chosen to certify their farms sustainable (Terra Vitis), working in favor of the environment while creating wines with a sense of place. Baud's ode to the region's native variety, Trousseau, is the **2013 Domaine Baud "Ancestral" Côtes du Jura Rouge (\$16.99)**, a Trousseau blend that embodies the distinct earthiness the wines in this region can exude. This wine is aromatic, like walking through a forest, with aromas of crunchy berries, pine and fallen leaves. With one sip you can taste cherry, clove, cured meats and graphite while enjoying bright acidity, a medium body and soft tannins. Pair this unique red with roasted duck or game bird.



Being so close to Burgundy and indeed sharing similar terroir, Jura producers have been making Chardonnay to rival Burgundy, but with unmistakable Jura character. The **2014 Domaine Baud Chardonnay l'Etoile Blanc (\$16.99)** is clean and bright with notes of lemon, apricots and honey. While Jura terroir still shines through with notes of almonds and apple skins, it drinks like high-end white Burgundy for a fraction of the price.

The most distinctive wine of the region comes from the appellation Château Chalon, the grand cru of Jura. Château Chalon is a designated site where the vines are all planted on blue marl, a type of soft, friable soil derived from compressed clay. The native grape Savagnin thrives here.

These wines must be made in the *vin jaune* style, aging for six years in barrel, which requires a veil of surface yeast to develop. This style of winemaking lends the wine its hallmark characteristics. The **2008 Domaine Baud Vin Jaune Château-Chalon (620ml \$44.99)** is complex and layered with savory suggestions of macadamia nuts, raw mushrooms, sea salt and cider. It's expressive in its youth, with the potential to age longer than white Burgundy. Grab a bottle for your next Japanese or Korean dinner and another to slip into the cellar.



Domaine des Remizières

By Keith Mabry

The Desmeures family of Domaine des Remizières are fourth-generation winemakers who originally sold grapes to the local cooperative. After completing their winery in 1974, the family began production at their new property. The estate is now managed by Phillipe Desmeures, his daughter Emilie and son Christophe. They have expanded to 30 hectares with vineyards in Crozes-Hermitage, Saint-Joseph and Hermitage. Emilie now oversees the winemaking, with her brother Christophe tending to the vineyards. We were excited to add them to our lineup of Direct Imports last year, especially once Jeb Dunnuck of Wine Advocate proclaimed, "This estate needs to be on every reader's short list." We visited them on this past trip to do some 2015 and 2016 barrel sampling, and there is going to be a lot to like. We'll focus on those wines once they are finished, but we did just receive some of their beautifully drinking new releases. The **2015 Domaine des Remizières Crozes-Hermitage (\$14.99)** has been a smash success since it landed late last year. It is composed of 100% Syrah and continues to represent one of the best cost-to-quality Syrahs in our stores.

Also just in are the **2014 Domaine des Remizières "Cuvée Emilie" Hermitage Rouge (\$49.99) 94 PR, 92 WS** and **2015 "Cuvée Emilie" Hermitage Blanc (\$49.99) 93 RP.** Entirely destemmed, the rouge captures the purity of Hermitage. It is deep and profound and requires just a short time in your cellar or maybe a long decant before consumption. The blanc is a true revelation. This sexy northern Rhône white shows the epitome of stone fruit flavors with an oily, unctuous palate that lingers. It has an almost deeply Grand Cru Burgundian feel but with Rhône varietal aromas. This also requests a short time in the cellar, or if decanted will reveal gorgeous roasted apple aromas with honeycomb and peach melba flavors on the palate.

All of the Remizières wines are available in limited quantities, so get these on your "short list" or you may end up on the waiting list.





Farmland and vineyards of Sancerre.

Gitton Up in Sancerre

By Mahon McGrath

Pascal Gitton is the current scion at the helm of Domaine Gitton.

The estate began life as a 1.5-hectare parcel near Ménétréol-sous-Sancerre that his grandmother farmed in addition to running a bistro and épicerie. From these beginnings, the total of the family's various holdings is now close to 27 hectares. Having grown to 3.5 hectares, the foundational site, whose calcareous soil is known as "Caillottes" locally, contributes the fruit for the Les Montachins bottling.

The **2015 Gitton Père & Fils "Montachins" Sancerre (\$27.99)** shows a sleek, understated sweetness. Make no mistake, this is not a "fruity" wine. Quite mineral, the acidity has a razor-fine edge, but in this

vintage the fruit makes a gentle, velvety backdrop to that steely glint. Focused and taut, the aromatics run to kiwi, lime and herb, joined by crushed rock and a hint of petrol.

The **2009 Gitton Père & Fils "Galinot" Sancerre (\$56.99)** shows another side of the region. If most of what we sell is the fresh, bright, and green take that gets drunk up more or less immediately upon release, there are more serious, age-worthy examples, which the Galinot demonstrates brilliantly.

There is something of virtue-in-necessity to the vineyard's story. Planted in 1959, this hillside site is less than a hectare of flinty, silex soil, which makes this plot far more difficult to work than the softer, chalky limestone soil downslope. It was, however, all that was affordable when Pascal Gitton's father, Marcel, was initially looking to expand the domaine's holdings. The extra trouble paid a handsome dividend: the wines from Galinot were the best in the cellar!

Despite its bottle age, the 2009's best years are still ahead of it. It is a white wine of noble stature, intensity and nuance. It buries the region's minerality underneath layers of extract, has nothing herbaceous about it, and doesn't traffic in new oak accents, either. What's on display here is very much what the site and its old vines bring to the table. If you are into Grand Cru Chablis, say, you ought to know this too. It's that good.



The Diversity of Cabernet Franc

By Lilia McIntosh

Cabernet Franc is an enigmatic and fascinating variety. It's a major red grape in the Loire Valley, predominantly grown in the Saumur and Touraine regions. What amazes me about Cabernet Franc is that it can be so drastically different in its youth and its older stage—but it's not easy to find aged versions of Cab Franc. Fortunately we have a few wonderful, classic examples from the Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil appellation, which is located within the larger Bourgueil AOC. This area contains old silt deposits with deep soil made of sand and gravel, and the wines produced here show distinctive minerality and earthiness.

Domaine Les Pins and Joël Taluau are both small, family-run wineries that practice sustainable viticulture and focus on quality. If you enjoy older wines, this is a rare opportunity to taste old Cabernet Franc and even compare it to younger wines from the same producer.

2014 Domaine Les Pins "Les Rochettes" Bourgueil (\$11.99) Aged in concrete tanks for at least 10 months, this has everything young Cabernet Franc should have, starting with aromas of fresh red berries and floral notes. On the palate it is medium-bodied, fruity and supple with moderate acidity and a long finish. Flavors of blackberry, wild cherry and black raspberry dominate the palate but light earthiness is coming through nonetheless. It's a beautiful Bourgueil to enjoy now with mushroom dishes or a rack of lamb. **92 WE.**

2015 Joël Taluau "Expression" St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil (\$12.99)

Another great expression of young Cabernet Franc. It's fruit forward and cherry scented with a touch of black peppercorn. Thanks to the great conditions of the 2015 vintage, this wine has a lovely concentration of black currants and sweet Bing cherries with low tannins and just a touch of minerality.

1996 Joël Taluau St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil Vieilles Vignes (\$26.99)

This starts to show what Cabernet Franc turns into with age. It still has quite high, juicy acidity, but the tannins are well developed and the texture is earthy, with subtle black cherry, tobacco, dry herb and slight mushroomy notes. Structured and firm, this has a lot of vibrancy for a 20-year-old wine.

1989 Joël Taluau St-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil Vieilles

Vignes (\$34.99) Showing even more aged Cab Franc characteristics, this is all earthiness and subtle savory *sous bois*. The bright red fruit that is so typical for younger Bourgueil is gone, and the palate is heavily dominated by mushrooms, slight herbaceous flavors and soft tannins with light cherry notes. A great example of perfectly aged Cabernet Franc—elegant and serene.





A taste of late summer from the vineyards of Les Valentines—for your spring sipping enjoyment!

Rosé Gets Real! The New Crop of Provençal Rosés for Spring

By Keith Mabry

Each year, the demand for rosé rises—and just in time to meet that demand, the 2016 Provençal rosés arrive! An exceptional vintage for the region, 2016 started with a pretty severe drought, with little to no water during the growing season. This led to very concentrated berries on the vines, high in extract but also acidity. Fortunately a little rain arrived just before the end of the growing season, keeping the vines from shutting down and allowing the grapes to reach their phenolic ripeness. For those who felt 2015 was a little too much on the soft and fruity side, you will find a lot to like in 2016. The wines are showing more lifted fruit and fresh acidity. Here are some of our favorite new arrivals:

The **2016 Domaine la Colombe Coteaux Varois en Provence Rosé (\$11.99)** is our favorite daily drinker. It is hard to beat this exceptional value for its fleshy flavors of strawberry, Pink Lady apples and fresh-cut watermelon. Its expressiveness says, I can drink rosé with anything from Tuesday night tacos to a classy Niçoise salad to a roast chicken from my favorite rotisserie place. The Colombe is easily their best release yet with its expression of fruit and lovely structure.

Some of the benchmark wines we receive every year are the coveted Peyrassol rosés. These are always limited production and disappear quickly. The **2016 Château de Peyrassol “Commanderie” Côtes de Provence Rosé (\$19.99)** is a serious wine as always. Showing light red currant and stone fruit notes, this is just getting started. Beautiful texture and weight lead to a long finish.



Showing even more weight and intensity is the gorgeous **2016 Château de Peyrassol Côtes de Provence Rosé (\$27.99)**. It has spectacular flavors of white peach and a glycerol texture that persists on the palate.

The **2016 Château Les Valentines “Le Caprice de Clemantine” Côtes de Provence Rosé (\$15.99)** has been one of our best sellers over the last five years. The Caprice is full on fruit, with a classic nose of strawberries and lemon zest. It is supple on the palate and lingers beautifully. Perfect for light salads and roasted vegetables. The all-estate bottling is the certified organic **2016 Château Les Valentines Côtes de Provence Rosé (\$22.99)**. A more serious rosé, this will develop beautifully over the season, showing notes of white cherries, wet stones and fresh thyme. It is the consummate Provence rosé that will pair beautifully with grilled fish. For fans of Domaines Ott (Ott’s Clos Mireille property happens to be just down the road) this is a great crossover.

When we first brought in Clos Beylesse, I questioned the distinctive blue bottle format they used. The winery uses this special UV bottle to protect the wine from any light degradation and increase its longevity. Having tasted a couple of back vintages, freshness is definitely preserved. Now, completely on board, the **2016 Clos Beylesse Côtes de Provence Rosé (\$24.99)** is functionally one of the most distinctive rosés each year (and not because of the bottle). The wine has expressive aromas of ruby grapefruit, kumquats and Seascape strawberries. A long thread of minerality and acidity unite the flavors, making for one of our top rosés in this or any season.



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