

# WINE News

*All Rhône in the comfort zone.*



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## Slow and Steady, Rhône Wins the Wine Race

By Keith Mabry

**In good times and bad, comfort can be key.** And I can think of nothing better to wrap myself up in than a rich, ripe Rhône wine. Just such a Châteauneuf-du-Pape was one of the first wines that turned my head, some two decades ago when I started in the business. To this day, it remains for me a security blanket with which to wrap my palate in. We are fortunate at this time to be in the midst of a series of great Rhône vintages, from both the north and south. You would be hard pressed to go wrong by selecting any one of them, from a humble Côtes du Rhône,

to an emerging cru appellation like Vacqueyras. The northern Rhône is just as dynamic. Crozes-Hermitage is firing on all cylinders, making Syrah that is accessible and affordable. And the crus of Hermitage, Côte-Rôtie, and Cornas have seldom been better. Join us, in brief, for some of the best and brightest Rhône wines we have pursued, and take comfort that these wines, and our staff, are here to help you find that most cozy of blankets.

### 2017 Guy Farge “Harmonie” Cornas (\$34.99)

From my first taste out of the barrel, I was enchanted by this wine. Nearly two years later, it has arrived, and it is a benchmark wine from one of our most exciting producers. Made whole-cluster, this multi-layered Syrah hits all the right notes with its blackberry fruit, smoked bacon, and tapenade profile. The finish is long and persistent, with its perfume of currants and violets. It is pure pleasure in a glass. **92-94 JD, 92 RP, 93 DC**



### 2017 Moulin de la Gardette “Cuvée Ventabren” Gigondas (\$44.99)

If there was an MVP award for K&L's favorite winemakers, JB Meunier would be a “three-peat.” On the heels of the '15 and '16, the 2017 is another stunning effort from his oldest vines and best sites. A blend of Grenache, Syrah, and Cinsault, it's as classic and precise a Gigondas as you could hope for, with its Herbs de Provence, sweet strawberry fruit, framboise, and earthy aromatics. Another grand expression! **96 DC, 95 RP, 95 JD**



### 2018 Cellier des Dauphins “Réserve” Côtes du Rhône (\$12.99)

Hands down, this is one of our best sellers this year, and a superb wine for everyday drinking. The Cellier was one of the top Rhône wines at Decanter's World Wine Awards last year, and it is just as satisfying as you could hope. Made of 60% Grenache and 40% Syrah, this comes from top vineyards in the Rhône's village appellations. There is no better weeknight wine in the store right now! **97 DC**



## Rhône Specialists Are Standing By...

By Keith Mabry and K&L Sales Specialists

Each of our stores has its own personality, but one of our shared interests is our love of Rhône wines. For this newsletter, I solicited some of our in-store Rhône specialists' favorite picks. And, from north to south, their choices will help you to narrow the field from the wide range of our Rhône wine options.

### John Majeski, K&L San Francisco

**2017 Malmont Côtes du Rhône-Villages Séguret (\$24.99)** One of our direct import gems, this is an evocation of rich, dark fruits and black olive notes, expressive of the poise and power of Grenache and Syrah grown on steeply terraced vineyards in Séguret.

**2019 Chante Cigale Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc (\$29.99)** Enlivened by an attractive, open-textured melange of exotic tropical fruits and nuts, with apricot and lanolin tones on the palate, this has great depth and a long, flavorful finish.

**2016 Domaine Gourt de Mautens Vaucluse Rouge (\$59.99)** A virtual symphony of grape varieties, this opulent, biodynamic wine will seriously charm and seduce the palate with its dazzling, orchestral range of rapturous fruits, garrigue, and spice. **97 DC, 97 JD**

### Lauren Seward, K&L Redwood City

**2019 Château de Montfaucon Lirac Rosé (\$14.99)** This isn't a light, delicate sipper like many rosés from southern France. Montfaucon's 2019 Lirac Rose is fuller-bodied, intensely perfumed, rich in structure, and has that "wow" factor that draws you in with each sip. Contrary to the (often false) belief that darker rosés are sweet, this bottling is nothing but dry and will hold up to dinners all summer long.

**2018 Domaine de Verquiere Côtes du Rhône (\$11.99)** Verquiere is the *king* of value Côtes-du-Rhône! Estate-grown organic fruit (80% Grenache and 20% Syrah) comes together harmoniously in this aromatic CDR, showing notes of red fruit, wet rock, stewed strawberries, and rosehip oil. **91 JS**

**2017 Famille Perrin Les Cornuds Vinsobres (\$16.99)** A great go-to red for dinners and gatherings, this textured and aromatic Grenache-Syrah blend boasts notes of red and blue fruits, cola spice, and lilacs. I particularly enjoy the wet rock minerality and super lengthy finish. **92 WS**



Springtime blooms and buds. (Photo courtesy of Domaine Guy Farge.)



### Sharon Kelly, K&L Hollywood

**2017 Domaine de la Ganse Vacqueyras (\$19.99)** Trying this new vintage, I am reminded why the Ganse been one of my top picks since I was introduced to it a few years ago. What a scrumptious bottle of wine. Roasted plums, ripe blackberries and raspberries, a hint of black licorice, and spice and herbal notes. This is expressive and bursting with so much flavor and depth, it's a surefire hit at any dinner table. Enjoy with garlic-heavy dishes—the Grenache fruit soars. Let's Ganse! **91 JD**

**2017 Cécile Chassagne Gigondas (\$24.99)** Cécile really knows how to express the graceful side of Gigondas, which is often a full-bodied, lush, spicy wine. Hers is light on its feet, bright, and perfumed with fresh raspberry and garrigue notes, balanced with vibrant acidity. This really is a beautiful and pleasant wine. **92-93 VN**

**2018 Guy Farge "Bouquet de Syrah" Ardeche (\$16.99)** This is prime "Saint-Joseph-adjacent" Syrah, made with fruit from vines that grow in the same granitic soils but are just a stone's throw outside the appellation. My nose keeps returning to the glass to take in the aromas of black currant, raspberry, and cracked pepper, with traces of crushed stone that unfold with some breathing time. There is great complexity here, with just the perfect amount of acidity and tannic presence. A fantastic Syrah from the northern Rhône that will knock your socks off in flavor and value. I can't get enough of this wine!



## What's Not to Lirac? (Or, a Rudi Runs Through It)

By John Majeski

What better way to explore the Rhône than with one of our favorite producers, the irrepressible Rodolphe de Pins of Château de Montfaucon in Lirac? The poetry and promise in every bottle that Rudi creates is a summoning of all that the southern Rhône offers, from idyllic town squares shaded from the summer heat by plane trees, to picturesque vineyards deeply rooted to the terraced hillsides, to wafting breezes that carry scents of lavender, wild herbs, and acacia. And rising above the town of Montfaucon, the massive, impressively restored castle he inherited holds within its walls the vaulted seventeenth-century wine cellar where the real treasure lies.



Rodolphe de Pins takes the measure of his old vines.

Let's begin our tour with the **2017 Château de Montfaucon Clairette "Vin de Mme la Comtesse" Lirac Blanc (\$34.99)**. This silky and stylish white is a tour de force blend of ancient vine Clairette Blanche and Clairette Rose, with a whisper of Grenache Blanc. Grown on sandy-silty soils and fermented in second-year Château d'Yquem barrels, this is a strong candidate for the finest Lirac white wine I've tasted, revealing serious pedigree in the complex array of rapturous

flavors ranging from Asian pear, peach, and aniseed to buttery ghee and ginger. This could easily be three times the price. **91 WS**

Lirac is predominantly red wine country, and Montfaucon's reds, sourced from diverse soils and slopes, are a master class in blending. Blessed with one among a string of recent, superb vintages, the **2016 Château de Montfaucon Lirac (\$15.99)** depicts a panoramic aquarelle by the young Victor Hugo. An embellishment of red plums, cherries and potpourri spice, this textbook Lirac is a harmony of texture, suppleness, and charm. Serve with hachis Parmentier, a casserole of ground beef, potatoes, and Emmentaler cheese. Delicious!



Why not turn back the clock to taste the **2006 Château de Montfaucon "Baron Louis" Côtes du Rhône (\$34.99)**, a wine of superb age and supple texture, imbued with mature, inspired aromas and flavors of dried cherries and plums, rose petal, earth, and well-worn saddle leather. **90 JD, 90 WS**

And don't forget the **2017 Château de Montfaucon Côtes du Rhône (\$12.99)**, a medium-bodied, inspired blend of estate grown fruit imbued with attractively rustic notes of damp earth, wildflowers, boysenberry and roasted plums. Uncork and enjoy today with your favorite Mediterranean fare, and remember, "a Rudi runs through it!"



## Domaine des Rémizières Continues to Raise the Bar!

By Keith Mabry

The Desmeures family is now on its fourth generation, and under the direction of brother-sister team Christophe and Emilie Desmeures, things could not be better. The wines have grown in depth and complexity, even more so in the few years since we began working directly with them. Crozes is their signature region. I've been fortunate enough to taste several back vintages at the winery, and they have always delivered.



Christophe Desmeures of Domaine des Rémizières.

The entry-level **2017 Domaine des Rémizières Crozes-Hermitage (\$16.99)** is pure pepper and spice. It's a delightful Syrah rendition that will make the perfect complement to your everyday dining. For well under \$20, this bottling has always over-delivered. **90 WS**

One of the best dollar-for-dollar northern Rhône's every year, the **2017 Domaine des Rémizières "Cuvée Christophe" Crozes-Hermitage (\$29.99)** is meant for the cellar, but with its exuberant black fruit, it's a hard wine to resist now. Lush, roasted plum and chocolate tones are what make this wine a standout each year. I always put a few of these away, but they don't often last long in my cellar—I can't keep my hands off them. **93 JD, 92 RP, 92 JS**

As Rémizières has mastered the Crozes appellation they have started to expand their holdings into other parts of the northern Rhône. They recently added some amazing St-Joseph vines to their estate. The **2017 Domaine des Rémizières St-Joseph (\$29.99)** is deeply fruited with blackberry and blueberry tones on the nose. The sweet palate is lusty with cherry fruit and exotic spices, and has a rich, full-bodied persistence. The peppery presence of Syrah is fully on display, though, rounding out this sexy new offering and giving the wine its true sense of place. **93 RP, 91 JS, 91 VN**





## Châteauneuf-du-Pape: No Better Place to Be

By Keith Mabry

Coming off the heels of two outstanding vintages in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, 2017 might be too easy to overlook. But that would be a mistake. Following the great 2015 and 2016 vintages, 2017 Châteauneuf-du-Pape is indeed, yet another classic. Though met with challenges early in the growing season, and severe drought during the summer, those producers with older vine parcels delivered outstanding wines with great richness of fruit and accessibility. Jeb Dunnuck recently commented that the 2017s have “incredibly Provençal styles that are already hard to resist.” So, do yourself a favor, and grab a mixed pack of these following gems. You’ll be thankful you did for years to come.

**2017 Chante Cigale Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$29.99)** Winemaker Alexandre Favier has a hat trick of great back-to-back vintages under his belt. The 2015 was classic with meaty, floral tones and perfumed, peppery fruit. The 2016 was exotic and explosive, with deep red and black fruit on the palate. The 2017 falls somewhere between the two with that rich, fleshy fruit, while still boasting those floral and meaty tones. It is out-of-the-gate sexy right now, offering real accessibility. It should drink brilliantly for a decade plus. At the price, you would be hard-pressed to find a better value in the category. **92-94 JD, 91-92 VN**

**2017 Château de Beaucastel Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$74.99)** Beaucastel is always the “yardstick” in any vintage for all CDP wines. The wines have incredible longevity and develop all the hallmark flavors of Provence: dried herbs, leather, and brambly, spiced fruit. You can never go wrong with a few of these in your cellar. **95 WS, 95 JD, 95 DC, 93-95 RP**



**2017 Château Vaudieu Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$44.99)** The Brechet brothers have a multitude of top-tier properties, including Plateau des Chênes in Lirac and Domaine des Bosquets in Gigondas, but Château Vaudieu is their ultimate expression of the region. Château Vaudieu is in one of the best growing areas (literally right next door to Rayas) and has some of the sandiest subsoils, with galets (riverstones) over the top. This leads to perfumed and exotic expressions of CDP. If you want to explore further, check out their benchmark single vineyard wines, as well. This is top-notch! **94 JD, 92 WS**



**2017 Domaine de Marcoux Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$39.99)** In any vintage, Marcoux ranks as my favorite “Tradition” bottling. Perfumed with potpourri and red fruits, it’s a spot-on classic, and shows well in its youth. Josh Reynolds of Vinous Media agrees, saying of the 2017: “Once again, this bottling is, perhaps, the top ‘basic’ Châteauneuf of the year.” **94 VN, 93 RP, 93 JD**

**2017 Domaine de Giraud “Tradition” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$49.99)** Francois and Marie Giraud make exuberant and overt Châteauneuf. There is never a shortage of fruit in these wines, and they are both delightful to drink in their youth, and also evolve beautifully with some bottle age. This is an ample and generous style that will cross over to a multitude of palates. **93 RP, 93 WS, 93 JD**

**2017 Domaine Pierre Usseglio “Cuvée Mon Aïeul” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$69.99)** The Cuvée Mon Aïeul is all Grenache in this vintage, and has suffered from some of the lowest yields this cuvée has ever seen. In 2017, they were down to six hectoliters per hectare — Châteauneuf allows up to 36 hectoliters per hectare. It is no surprise that this is as deep and concentrated as you could imagine. This is an evocative wine that will linger on your palate for days. **97 JD, 94 RP, 94-95 VN, 93 JS**

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