



RHÔNE
EN PRIMEUR 2007

GOEDHUIS & CO
FINE WINE MERCHANTS

THE RHÔNE



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INTRODUCTION

We have said it before and we will say it again...the Rhône is one of our favourite areas. Its wines are wonderfully varied from elegant, ethereal Côte Rôtie, powerful, brooding Hermitage, friendly, appealing Crozes Hermitage to velvety, ample Cornas. In the south, there is zesty Gigondas, plump, spicy Vacqueyras and powerful, robust Châteauneuf du Pape. With all these styles, there literally is something for everyone. Even for white wine drinkers, choice comes in the form of perfumed Condrieu, noble Hermitage or voluptuous Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc.

In these challenging economic times, we cannot support the Rhône more. Year after year, they continue to produce wines that go far beyond their price points. And we are not alone in our thinking. Many merchants and 'those in the know' say the same thing: the Rhône offers excellent value. In the Northern Rhône, many domaines produce as little wine as those in Burgundy (and at the same quality level) but at a fraction of the price. Likewise in the south, their wines are constantly overperforming. Their yields are miniscule, most are artisanally made. Yet, they remain in the shadows of more obvious regions like Burgundy and Bordeaux. In the current climate, it makes sense to discover them at all their price points and from all their appellations - particularly since the Rhône benefited from some of the best growing conditions in all of France in 2007. In the current climate, it makes sense to discover them at all their price points and from all their appellations.

This is particularly true in 2007 since the Rhône benefitted from some of the best growing conditions in all of France. The vintage produced some wonderfully succulent wines in the North and amazingly powerful yet poised wines in the South. Robert Parker liked them so much that he named 2007 as a "vintage of a lifetime" in the Southern Rhône saying that they are the best wines he has ever tasted from the region in the past 30 years, describing them as fusions of 1990 and 2001 (his notes on the Northern Rhône are still to come).

We are delighted to offer some of the most exceptional producers from these two regions – producers who are conscientious in the vineyard and in the cellar, leading to superb clarity of fruit, well-balanced structure and discernable 'terroir'.

We continue to work with sought after pure traditionalists such as René Rostaing, Bernard Faurie, Domaine Cayron, and Jean-Paul Versino as well as the dynamic contemporaries who add a modern touch to their wines such as Stéphane Ogier, Pierre Gaillard, Stéphane Montez of Domaine Monteillet, and the Gonnet family from Font de Michelle. Then there are those producers who combine both styles magnificently well, such as Christophe and Patrick Bonnefond, Château de Beaucastel, Clos des Papes and Clos des Cazaux in Vacqueyras.

It is our third year working with the Roussets in Crozes Hermitage of which we are exclusive in the UK as well as Alain Voge, a highly coveted Cornas producer who produces consistently polished yet powerful wines.

This is the second year that we have branched out into surrounding areas by including a couple of domaines in the Languedoc including the renowned Mas de Daumas Gassac and Château St. Jacques d'Albas, an estate that we have worked with for several years which produces well-made and well-priced wines. Plus, we could not forget Domaine de Trévallon, the cult producer from outside Les Baux de Provence with whom we began working only recently. His handcrafted reds (from Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah) could blow many Bordeaux out of the water. Any claret lover who wants to try something just a bit different should seek them out.

Though most of the wines we are offering are 2007, some growers will not be releasing their wines from this vintage, even 'en primeur', until next year. For this reason, a few other vintages will be available in this offer.

THE VINTAGE

As with many vintages, the conditions in the Northern Rhône differed somewhat from those in the Southern Rhône, the valley after all is 165 km in length and has many different and macro and micro-climates.

In the north, the growers experienced early flowering (3-4 weeks ahead of its normal schedule). The spring was moderately rainy which helped replenish the water table. June and July were cool and interspersed with bouts of sun, overcast skies and rain. On June 20th, hail struck Côte Rôtie pelting down stones that damaged on average 20-30% of the crop. Some growers, however, got away unscathed. Beginning in the last week of August and throughout much of September, the weather turned for the better. The sun was prolific and the Mistral picked up and blew for weeks on end, drying out the vineyards and concentrating the berries. Nonetheless, the nights remained cool. All these elements combined to create perfect grape harvesting conditions – absolutely no rot, mildew or oidium was in sight. It also enabled the grapes to attain impressive sugar levels and retain their acidity. Due to the cool summer which prolonged ripening, they picked their grapes mid-late September approximately 120 days after flowering (a stretch beyond the normal 100 days).

The south, too, experienced early flowering. Unlike the north, it was more or less a dry season yet was also relatively cool (20-24°C) with a good amount of sun but with also some overcast skies. Similar to the north, the weather changed at the end of August and throughout September. The heat set in rising to 33-34°C and the winds picked up, though the nights remained cool. Furthermore, the mornings provided lots of dew which helped to invigorate the vines and to continue ripening the fruit. The grapes ripened quickly (particularly the Grenache) and growers began picking in early September approximately 100-110 days after flowering – the length of a normal growing season.

In both regions, initial yields were quite high (apart from some places in Côte Rôtie) and growers needed to carry out multiple green harvests in order to cut back their production. In the end, many growers produced around the same amount as 2006, though for some growers it was a bit less and for others a bit more.



THE WINES

As the growing season varied, so have the wines from both the north and the south. One thing they do share, though, is the intensity of their fruit. Many wines regardless of appellation show what the French call 'sucrosité' or a tender sweetness. This most likely has to do with the wonderfully temperate weather that August and September bestowed on both regions.

The wines from the Northern Rhône could be characterised as 'classic plus'. They have all the characters of a 'classic' vintage and then some - gentle sweet fruit, excellent freshness, wonderful balance and fine tannins. Albéric Mazoyer of Alain Voge in Cornas and Etienne Pochon of Crozes feel that their 2007s are like 2004 but more concentrated and riper. Bernard Faurie of Hermitage esteems his wines to be in between 2006 (very good fruit) and 2005 (excellent concentration and power). Stéphane Ogier feels his 2007s are richer than 2006 and will give much more pleasure than his 2005s. Many growers feel that they are much better than they originally anticipated despite the fickle weather. Much of the positives have to do with the longer hanging time which enabled the grapes to develop slowly. Despite some critics who have been touting the Southern Rhône as the better of the two, other savvy tasters feel that the Northern Rhône has the edge producing wines with a great fruity lushness that also have great finesse - a rarity in this sometimes challenging region.

Though Robert Parker has not yet reviewed the wines from the Northern Rhône, his view on the Southern Rhône could not be greater. In his most recent newsletter, he heralded 2007s as "wines of a lifetime" saying that in his 30 year-experience of the region, he has not tasted wines with such "unprecedented levels of quality". For many producers, we could not agree more. It was a year for Grenache and the late ripening Mourvèdre. This could not be more ideal for the majority of domaines as Grenache is king in this warm, enchanting region. Most growers felt that it was an easy vintage and this relaxed approach can be felt in their wines. According to Guillaume Gonnet at Domaine Font de Michelle, the only danger was letting the grapes get a bit too ripe in the sudden heat. Experienced growers, though, know how to manage their vineyards and were able to prevent this from happening. The wines on the whole are lush. Full stop. They have wonderful sappy fruit flavours and juicy cores. Tannins are fine and sweet. Some growers such as Jean-Paul Versino in Châteauneuf and Jean-Michel Vache of Clos des Cazaux in Vacqueyras think that their 2007s are similar to the 2000s and will be drinking earlier than other recent vintages. Other growers compare them to 2004, but richer and softer. Due to the cool nights, many also have amazing freshness. Château de Beaucastel is a prime example. All of their wines were superbly balanced with incredible power, focus and finesse. They rate the vintage as one of their highest comparing it to 1989 in terms of quality!

The whites...we could certainly not leave out the whites. Due to the cooler growing season in both valleys, 2007 is undoubtedly an excellent white wine year. Whether in Condrieu, Hermitage, St. Péray or Châteauneuf du Pape, the wines are unbelievably rich and complex yet also fantastically fresh, ethereal and mineral. For those drinkers who are not familiar with these wines, we could not recommend better ones than the 2007s.



NORTHERN RHÔNE

A narrow valley of approximately 70 km in length whose vineyards are perched off the steep hillsides facing the Rhône River. It encompasses 8 communal appellations: Côte Rôtie, Condrieu, Château Grillet (a unique appellation consisting of only one wine and one eponymous producer), Hermitage, Crozes Hermitage, St. Joseph, Cornas and St. Péray; and one regional appellation: Côtes du Rhône. Only a handful of varieties can be found - Syrah being by far the most planted, followed by the white wine grapes of Viognier, Marsanne and Roussanne. Stylistically, it produces dry red wines that tend to be focused and fresh due to its more northerly 'terroir' and continental climate. It also offers dry white wines, which are mineral-driven yet aromatic and rich, a smattering of traditional lightly sparkling wine from the St. Péray appellation and Vin de Paille, a sweet dessert wine produced from dried white Hermitage grapes.

CÔTE RÔTIE

Côte Rôtie is the most northern of all Rhône appellations. It produces red wine from Syrah, although Viognier may be added to the blend. Its 'terroir' is composed of multiple 'lieux-dits' (single vineyards) which are divided into two general categories - Côte Brune and Côte Blonde. Côte Brune's soil is mostly comprised of iron-entrenched granite giving the soil a rich red-brown colour. As a result, it creates wines of notable power and concentration that usually need time in the cellar to soften and develop. The second is Côte Blonde, which is located further south down the slope towards Condrieu. It is an area mainly composed of decomposed schist and mica that is lighter in colour and which tends to produce elegantly styled wines for earlier consumption (most of the area's Viognier is grown here). Many traditional producers feel that their best wines are a blend of the two.

CONDRIEU

A white wine appellation, Condrieu is produced uniquely from Viognier to make both dry and sweet wines. Its best vineyards are grown on shards of decomposed mica often lending a pronounced minerality to its wines. Though Condrieu has a famous past, its more recent history has been modest and its bottlings were virtually unknown outside its region until the 1980s and 1990s. It was during this time when aficionados began to discover its unusual balance of intense aromatics of peach, apricot and honeysuckle with a bone-dry palate. In particularly warm vintages, their wines are notably rich and hedonistic.

ST. JOSEPH

The longest appellation which extends along the western banks of the Rhône River from St. Péray to Condrieu. It produces both red wine from Syrah and white wine from Marsanne and/or Roussanne. Its wines also tend to be for early drinking, though there are some wonderful exceptions. The wine style can be traditional or modern depending on the producer. Created only in 1956, it is a young appellation by French standards and has seen extensive expansion of its vineyard area over the last 25 years. As a result, many producers feel that there is great potential in the quality of its 'terroir' which has yet to be discovered. Due to its lesser known status, these wines often provide excellent value for money.

DOMAINE PATRICK & CHRISTOPHE BONNEFOND, Ampuis

Hidden in the hills above Ampuis lies the domaine of Patrick and Christophe Bonnefond. The climbing and twisting road pulls one easily away from the sloped vineyards surrounding Ampuis into the wild blue yonder of picturesque rolling hillsides and forests. The two brothers took over the 3 hectares of family vines when their father retired in 1990. At that time, they sold off their grapes to 'négociants'. They began slowly building up their domaine to 7 hectares and bottling their wines under their own label. Their wine style lies somewhere between modern and traditional in that they believe in cultivating the healthiest fruit possible which is rich and dense, yet which also expresses its unique 'terroir'.

They make three Côte Rôties - the classic cuvée as well as two specific 'lieux dits', Côte Rozier and Les Rochains. They use oak barrels to age their wines - 40% are new for the classic bottling and 100% for the single vineyard wines. The wood flavours are barely discernible due to their amazing fruit concentration and velvety structure.

Christophe was particularly pleased with his 2007s. He feels that they have a wonderful fruitiness and notable concentration (even more than 2006). He further thinks that his 2007s may give less immediate pleasure than other vintages, but they should develop into real beauties with a bit of age. Like other growers in the area, they too were hit by hail, diminishing their production by 20-30%. This no doubt had a good impact on their quality due to the lower yields.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Côte Rôtie	£225.00	2010 – 2018
<i>Impressively deep in colour, this wine displays dark berry fruit and black cherry. It is really juicy and sweet on the palate with no hard edges in sight, though cellaring would definitely coax its complexity out of the glass a bit more. Produced from a blend of both Côte Brune and Côte Blonde.</i>		

Côte Rôtie Côte Rozier	£165.00 per 6	2011 – 2020
<i>Aromatic with a ripe blackcurrant and smoky bacon nose, this 2007 opens up to a sweet, solid core of fruit and impressive concentration. It has ripe, chewy tannins yet is amazingly tender as well. A full-throttle Rozier that gives its all.</i>		

Côte Rôtie Les Rochains	£165.00 per 6	2011 – 2022
<i>A bit brooding on the nose, but fantastically mouthfilling on the palate. Plump with superfine tannins, it is rich and ample with blackberry, plum and subtle liquorice. Finishes fresh and remarkably light for such a big, complex wine. A seducer that is hard to resist.</i>		




DOMAINE PIERRE GAILLARD, Malleval

Nestled in the hills above the picturesque medieval village of Malleval stands Pierre Gaillard's contemporary cellar. After years of working for other producers such as Vidal Fleury and then Guigal, Pierre decided to create his own domaine wines in the mid-1980s to almost instant acclaim.

A modernist of sorts, he relishes pure, vibrant fruit that for years was backed with new oak structure and spice. Several years ago, he decided to step slightly away from his renowned style and move towards a more classical approach, still endorsing excellent fruit concentration but with better oak integration. The results are nothing less than sumptuous with wines of wonderful complexity that are often approachable young. This balance has created some of the most 'user friendly' wines of the region, pleasing both the keen novice as well as the most particular connoisseur.

It was mayhem in early September when we visited the domaine. The night's storm disrupted the electricity on their hilltop and the barrel room was masked in darkness. Luckily, his charming daughter, Jeanne, was very knowledgeable and graciously dipped into the barrels extracting the right wines for us to taste. She felt that 2007 started out as a difficult year but finished beautifully as the grapes were harvested in the sun. She feels that they will not be as expressive as 2006 right away. But with a bit of time, they will make appealing, soulful wines.

Due to very low yields, no Rose Pourpre will be made in 2007. On the upside, it will be added to Pierre's straight Côte Rôtie which will enhance this cuvée's concentration and intensity.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
St Joseph Clos de Cuminaille Rouge	POA	2009 – 2016
<i>Soft, deep and rich might be the best way to describe their 2007 Clos de Cuminaille. Notes of black cherry, red currant and dark chocolate expand on the palate and lead to its notable finish. An element of earthy clay gives it focus and a sense of 'terroir'. Its fine tannins reveal themselves on the finish. A tender but powerful St Joseph.</i>		

Côte Rôtie	POA	2009 – 2020+
<i>Like most producers in the appellation Pierre makes his straight Côte Rôtie from various parcels which vary in 'terroir'. His 2007 is poised and pretty with both red and black fruits and underlying spice. A small percentage of Viognier adds to its attractive aromatics and flavours. Finishes on a salty tang.</i>		



DOMAINE DE MONTEILLET, Chavanay

The dynamic and young Stéphane Montez marks the 10th generation of vignerons in the Montez family. Planted upon the stony and rugged, brush-covered hills of Chavanay, his family domaine is reminiscent of a Mediterranean paradise.

From his sheer slopes, Stéphane produces his renowned Condrieus, perfumed St. Josephs and exceptional Côte Rôties from vineyards comprised of decomposed granite soils. Like many people in the valley, he believes in the new order of Rhône winemaking, that is producing wines reductively (with little exposure to air) in order to preserve all the fresh aromatics from his grapes. He is not fearful of using new oak to age his wines – depending on the concentration of the must – but prefers demi-muids to ensure that it never dominates, yet adds warmth and texture to his handcrafted wines.

Stéphane described his 2007 reds with a gleam in his eye and a smile on his face as peppery and spicy with fine tannins and good concentration. His 2007 whites were notably rich though wonderfully fresh and light – the perfect combination.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Condrieu Les Grandes Chaillées	£225.00	2009 – 2013

This Condrieu is produced from three different villages – Chavanay for aromatics, St. Michel for minerality and Vérin for richness. The 2007 was immediately appealing on the nose with its inviting aromatics of peach, mineral and a touch of fennel. On the palate it was gently smoky with superb focus and delineation. A fine Condrieu.

St Joseph Cuvée Papy	£149.00	2010 – 2018+
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Stéphane's 2007 Cuvée Papy seems to have it all – attractive sweet fruit, zesty spice and even wild violet. It is plush yet focused, concentrated yet elegant and fresh. An appealing, friendly wine that will be truly delicious in 2-3 years time.

Côte Rôtie Fortis	£315.00	2011 – 2020+
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This Côte Rôtie comes from the last hillside in Ampuis. Due to its Côte Blonde 'terroir', Stéphane adds 15% Viognier which gives this wine a particular elegance and femininity. Yet, it never loses site of its brawn and this is particularly apparent in 2007. Aromas of crushed bramble, sweet black cherry, dark chocolate and subtle pink grapefruit lead to a silky yet powerful palate with fine tannins and a long finish.

Pre-Release :

Côte Rôtie Grandes Places 2005 (limited)	£295.00 per 6	2010 – 2022+
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The 2005 vintage is still a hallmark for the Rhône in terms of sheer power, ripeness and concentration. Luckily for a handful of producers like Stéphane who releases longer aging cuvées a little later, a few wines are still (unbelievably) available. This wine will be shipped at the end of 2009

"The brilliant 2005 Cote Rotie Les Grandes Places (aged in small oak casks for 33 months and co-fermented with 3% Viognier) is a blockbuster. The tannins are very high but velvety. The wine reveals beautiful sweetness in the mid-palate, with a fragrant nose of scorched earth, black cherry and berry fruit, hints of cassia, licorice, and pain grille. It is full-bodied, opulent, but structured and long. This wine should be accessible in 2-3 years and last for 12-15. 93 points." Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate, Feb 2008



DOMAINE MICHEL OGIER, Ampuis

Like many people of the region, the Ogier family were polycultural farmers for generations. Included in their repertoire were exceptional grapes planted on the steep slopes of Côte Rôtie. For years, they sold off their production to local winemakers until the day that Michel Ogier decided to eliminate the other crops in order to make and bottle his own wine. Now 20 years later, he has established a reputation that rivals even the grandest, most established producers in the region.

His son, Stéphane, began taking over winemaking responsibilities from his father in the late 1990s after finishing oenology school in Burgundy. Following his father's philosophy, he has relentlessly taken great care to produce the best wines possible. This is no more apparent than by a visit to the domaine. He believes in glacial temperatures throughout the winery, whether in the ageing cellar which is faintly scented of crisp, clean apples (a storage facility of yesteryear) or in his recent state-of-the-art barrel room. The ambiance is cool, calm and collected, and his wines turn out in the same way.

Stéphane is very honest, so we thoroughly believed him when he said that he loved his 2007s. Once we tasted them, we could see why. As he says, they are focused, pure and even richer than his 2006s. Wonderfully layered, they revealed excellent complexity and depth. Though he was not hit by hail as badly as some other growers, he made sure that he kept yields low by rigorous green harvesting.

For his top cuvées from 2005, well, what can we say? We have been waiting for these bad boys for the last 2 years to finally come out, so we were thrilled, ecstatic, surprised (you name it) at our luck that he has finally decided to let them go. It seems that masterpieces take some time to perfect and knowing Stéphane, he wanted them just right.

Côte Rôtie

£/cs in Bond

Drinking Dates

POA

2010 – 2019

Stéphane produces his straight Côte Rôtie from multiple parcels on both Côte Brune and Côte Blonde. His 2007 was tasted by various parcels as he will not blend the wines until much later. All were fabulous – some displaying finely tuned, crunchy red fruits, some sweet black fruits with dark chocolate, zesty spice and vanilla. Some exuberantly punchy with personality while others pensive and relaxed. Once we finished, it was like we had finished listening to a symphony. Brilliant.



Pre-Releases:

	<small>£/cs in Bond</small>	<small>Drinking Dates</small>
Côte Rôtie Lancements 2006 (limited)	POA	2010 – 2024+

A single-vineyard within the area of Côte Brune, Lancements is not made every year, but only when Stéphane feels that the vineyard can express its true terroir.

A beautiful 2006, this wine offers sweet, crunchy plum and blackberry compote spiced with cloves and cinnamon. Its superfine, velvety structure coat the palate in ripe tannins while its wonderful freshness adds lift. Finishes on blood orange and violets. A complex and intriguing wine.

Côte Rôtie Belle Hélène 2006 (limited)	POA	2011 – 2025+
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Produced from the oldest vines of the domaine from the Côte Rozier 'lieu dit', this exceptional cuvée was named after Michel Ogier's wife, Hélène. Only a few barrels of this wine are produced making it a rarity.

A bit meatier and dark than the 2006 Lancements, the 2006 Belle Hélène is broad and brooding with notes of damson plums, smoky spice and minerals. Despite its pensive style, it finishes succulent and long.

Côte Rôtie Lancements 2005 (limited)	POA	2011 – 2025+
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"The 2005 Cote Rotie Lancement is superb, and a more seductive wine than the Belle Helene in this vintage...the 2005 possesses a deep ruby/purple color, a wonderfully sweet, expressive nose of violets, bacon fat, black cherries and raspberries, followed by a medium to full-bodied, luscious wine that is classic Cote Blonde. With its silky texture, sweet tannin, opulence and length, this wine is hard to resist. I assume one could drink it now, but I suspect it won't be at its best for at least another 3-4 years and last for 10-15 years. 94 points. Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate, Feb 2008."

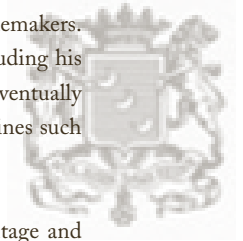
Côte Rôtie Belle Hélène 2005 (limited)	POA	2015 – 2035+
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"The 2005 Cote Rotie La Belle Hélène, from the schist soils of the Cote Brune, probably needs 8-10 years of bottle age, and should keep for 30 or more years. It is made in a style very much like 1998, 1995, or even 1983. Tannic and backward, as those vintages were, this deep ruby/purple-colored wine possesses notes of damp earth, truffle, smoke, asphalt, black cherry, and brooding roasted meat and animal notes. The wine seems to absorb its new oak beautifully, and is powerful, rich, and concentrated, but still tannic and foreboding. This is a wine for the patient connoisseur. 94+ points." Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate, Feb 2008.



DOMAINE RENÉ ROSTAING, Ampuis

René Rostaing is a man of many words. Insightful and measured, he is the Socrates of winemakers. In his reasoned search for truth, he was able to learn from such Rhône Valley greats including his father-in-law, Albert Dervieux and uncle, Marius Gentaz. Upon their retirements, René eventually took over the majority of their vineyards giving him superb parcels of exceptionally old vines such as those in La Vallière and La Landonne in Côte Brune.



A pure traditionalist, he uses 50-60% stems during fermentation depending on the vintage and employs Burgundian barrels (228 litres) and demi-muids (600 litres) - of which very few are new - so that his wines express the soul of their unique 'terroir's. In his words, "They are the way Côte Rôties should be."

Over the years, his natural winemaking methods have earned him an excellent reputation and have created such a loyal following that disciples from all over the world seek out his unique bottlings...The Rousseau of Côte Rôtie.

René called 2007, "a miraculous vintage which was saved by September." The warming sun set in ripening the grapes very quickly. As a result, he feels that his wines are notably exuberant and flashy. We couldn't have agreed more.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Condrieu La Bonnette	£295.00	2009 – 2013

Aromatic and poised on the nose, the 2007 La Bonnette is hedonistic on the palate with sweet, juicy peach, linden blossom and ripe apricot. Exotic and opulent. Its fresh acidity cuts through all the glycerol giving it a fresh, dry finish.

Côte Rôtie (limited)	£295.00	2011 – 2020+
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Zesty with notes of crushed sweet raspberry, dark chocolate and lush pink grapefruit. The palate is soft and plump yet with underlying structure and complexity. Its intensity kicks in on the finish hinting that it will need a bit of cellaring before it truly opens up.

Côte Rôtie La Landonne (limited)	£275.00 per 6	2012 – 2028+
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Despite being the domaine's most powerful cuvée, René always prefers to taste it before his Côte Blonde – perhaps muscle before finesse. Dark, brooding and opaque, the 2007 La Landonne seems a wine to be reckoned with...at first. Its palate, though, is thoroughly seductive with notes of super sweet black cherry, brambles and brown sugar. The structure rears its head on the finish. A feisty yet sexy wine.

Côte Rôtie Côte Blonde (limited)	£290.00 per 6	2011 – 2025+
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René's favourite cuvée for its consistently silky yet profound palate. He inherited this vineyard from his maternal grandfather who also used to work its ancient, rocky soil. It is true to form in 2007. Linear and elegant, it has a gentle, sweet core of blackberry, blueberry and a touch of black pepper and brown sugar. Its fine tannins are silky yet present. Finishes on a touch of tomato confit. Intriguing and delicious.



HERMITAGE

Hermitage is a region that produces both red and white wines. Its famous red is made from 100% Syrah while the white is produced from Marsanne and/or Roussanne. A sweet and very rare white dessert wine, Vin de Paille, is also produced from grapes that have been dried on straw before being pressed. A slightly warmer micro-climate enables its red wines to have more ripeness and structure than Côte Rôtie which adds additional power and longevity. As a result, they are usually the most powerful and bold reds in all of the northern Rhône.

CROZES HERMITAGE

The northern Rhône's largest appellation producing approximately 8 times more than its more distinguished neighbour, Hermitage. In addition, it has both red and whites similar to Hermitage and in many ways its wines are similar in style, though less concentrated, structured and complex. Plump, silky and smooth, they are usually made for early consumption; however, certain producers have been known to make some examples that need to be cellared for several years and can be kept for up to a decade.

DOMAINE BERNARD FAURIE, Tournon

Modest and warmly welcoming, Bernard Faurie is always a pleasure to visit. His cellar, possibly the smallest in all of the Rhône Valley, is tucked away underneath his house. Resembling a hobbit's lair rather than an actual cellar, it is replete with an earthen floor, small lamps that beam soft warmth on the bottles, foudres and barrels and a small library of books for perhaps the occasional literary dip.

He makes some of the best Old World-styled wines. No de-stemming is carried out and the grapes have 2-3 weeks of skin contact during and after fermentation before they are pressed. The wine is then aged in old wood some of which are large oak foudres. As a result of his non-interventionist style, his wines are so elementally pure, complex and incredibly elegant that some have described as 'sauvage' or 'wild'. Like most great wines, they are not designed for immediate drinking but are intended to reward those who are patient.

Though we have been in Bernard's cellar many times, we never noticed how meticulous and fastidious he was until recent trips. Despite having an old fashioned cellar, he is the king of cleanliness rinsing his pipette between each barrel tasting. Spitting on the floor is an absolute no-no and one can never put unused samples back into the barrel. As he says, "Everything must be 'nickel'". It is this kind of dedication that enables him to produce some of the most enticing and soulful wines of the Rhône Valley, if one can find them, that is. As one can imagine, his production is one of the most minute.

Bernard spoke modestly of his excellent 2007s. He feels that they are between 2005 and 2006 in terms of quality. No doubt the extra long growing season and the 3 weeks of Mistral helped develop their tremendous flavours.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Hermitage	£325.00	2011 – 2022+
<i>Bernard's 2007 straight Hermitage is a blend of Bessard and Méal, the same combination as in 2005. Though its nose is discreet, its palate is much more forthcoming and offers sweet, juicy blackcurrant, blueberry and cherry. Its core is tender yet ample and its silky tannins carry it forth to a long, long finish. Wonderfully soulful, this wine is a rare breed of what excellent traditional Hermitage should be.</i>		

DOMAINE ROUSSET, Erôme

Robert Rousset is a quiet, modest man who has a penchant for making wonderfully silky Syrah in Crozes Hermitage. Wine runs in his blood. His uncle was Raymond Roure, a famous winemaker and vineyard owner in the 1960s and 1970s who had the highest quality parcels within the appellation of Crozes Hermitage. He sold many of them to Jaboulet who to this day makes a special cuvée out of his vines. However, the best parcel, Les Picaudières, was purchased by Robert. This steep plot of profound, decomposed granite is planted mostly with old vines (dating from the 1930s) and produces some of the most expressive Syrah of the appellation.

Virtually unknown to the English market until we offered his wines last year, Robert Rousset is a gem of a winemaker that we stumbled upon. His style is traditional and almost Burgundian - stylish and well-balanced with velvety fruit blending into earthy notes. Pure delights for lovers of old world, terroir-driven wines. He still continues with minor polyculture (apricots are part of his fruit portfolio) while an 18 year-old mare tills the soil on the flatter terraces up to 5 times a year. A Goedhuis exclusive.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Crozes Hermitage 2006	£89.00	2009 – 2014

Plump, fruity, and particularly quaffable, this soft textured wine is full of appeal offering up ripe red and black berry fruit, lightly toasted spice and pepper. Robert uses 10% new French oak barrels for ageing to add a bit of depth and complexity.

Crozes Hermitage Les Picaudières 2006	£125.00	2010 – 2018
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Earthy with pronounced aromatics of granite, maple syrup, blackberry and cassis. This medium-bodied wine has velvety tannins that deliver a round, plump palate with only polished edges in sight. Finishes on clean cut mineral overtones and dark chocolate. Sumptuous.



DOMAINE BARRET, Chanos Curson

Soft spoken, serious and gentle, Etienne Pochon is at the helm of this family domaine. For many years, he and his father sold off their grapes to the Cave de Tain, the local cooperative, but in the late 1980s, they broke away in order to produce their own wines.

They work 11 hectares of Syrah plus 4 hectares of Marsanne and Roussanne dispersed throughout various parcels. In order to ensure the best quality of their fruit, they gently handpick their grapes and ferment them in temperature-controlled stainless steel vats. All of this fanfare takes place at their home, Château Curson, a beautiful old stone farmhouse.

Particularly consistent year-in and year-out, their wines are plush, fruity and upfront. This style combined with their fine balance and concentration make them particularly user-friendly and excellent value for money.

Like many growers, Etienne felt that his 2007s were even better than the 2004s with more concentration and ripeness. They nonetheless also have wonderful freshness that makes Crozes Hermitage so appealing.

	€/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Crozes Hermitage	£75.00	2009 – 2013
<i>Its aromatic nose reveals plump black cherry, raspberry and a touch of tar. It's velvety on the palate and has gentle spiciness adding depth. Though Etienne feels that its structure needs to soften, he feels that it will be drinking earlier than his 2006. Good news for the impatient.</i>		



DOMAINE DU COLOMBIER, Mercuriol

If Florent Viale had not become a winemaker, he may have had success in America as a player for the NBA. Fortunately for us wine lovers, his interests were not in basketball, but rather in winemaking. Since his first vintage in 1991, his wines have gone from strength-to-strength capturing the attention of international wine critics and collectors alike.

Very clean and pure, his style falls halfway between traditional and modern. Valuing fresh flavours, he destems all of his grapes before vinification and prefers larger demi-muids for the ageing of his more prestigious wines. For him, oak should never dominate but rather integrate nicely, emphasizing the natural fruit quality.

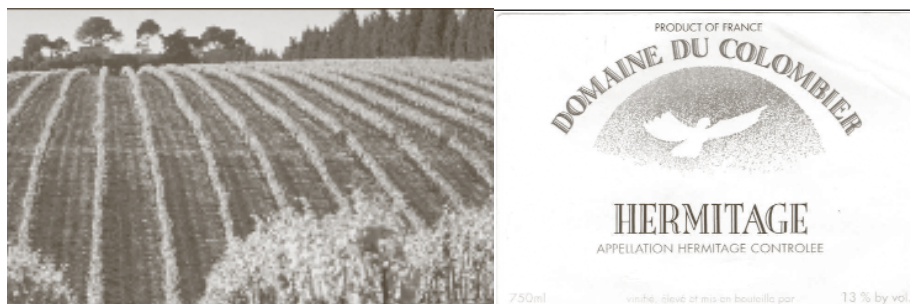
He produces two Crozes Hermitages including Cuvée Gaby, a blend of the top Crozes Hermitage barrels that are more concentrated and age worthy. In addition, he produces a small amount of red Hermitage, and a minute quantity of white Hermitage – a wine he began making in the 2004 vintage and which he produces from a recently purchased parcel of 60-year old vines.

Like 2006, Florent really made an effort to cut back on the yields in 2007. As they say, the proof is in the pudding as his wines were fragrant, full of character and wonderfully concentrated.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Hermitage Blanc (limited)	£185.00 per 6	2009 – 2019
<i>Its delicate toasty nose opens up to an unbelievably mineral palate that is fleshed out by its ripe pear, peach and caramelised almonds flavours. Its wonderful precision and freshness makes this complex wine notably ethereal and clean. Finishes long, linear and pure.</i>		

Crozes Hermitage Cuvée Gaby	£135.00	2010 – 2019
<i>Cuvée Gaby is this domaine's 'tête de cuvée' Crozes which is named after Florent's father. It is produced from the first pressing of the grapes which contains the richest and sweetest juice. His 2007 is nicely concentrated and wonderfully refined. Its ample flavours of red currant, blackberry and pink grapefruit enliven the palate while adding a fresh lift. Finishes on a light dash of zesty pepper.</i>		

Hermitage	£355.00	2011 – 2022+
<i>Smoky and smouldering, the 2007 Hermitage opens up onto the palate with sweet juicy fruit, dark chocolate and a hint of molasses. Its ultra fine tannins coat the palate and lead this wine to its impressive fresh finish. Wonderfully approachable yet with all the complexity for which this wine is known.</i>		



CORNAS

This most southerly appellation of the Northern Rhône has long been lost in the shadows cast by the limelight of its more glamorous neighbours. It has suffered from an archaic (and entrenched) reputation of producing tannic, dense wines that need many years to come around. Yet for a long time, this has not been the case as winemakers have polished their viticulture and vinification techniques. Many of its wines are produced from slopes of excellent historic reputation which benefit from the well drained steep soils and sheltered exposures from cold northern winds. Due to this micro-climate, it usually produces riper wine than the more northern appellations in colder vintages. It is one of the most underestimated appellations which can at times challenge Hermitage.

DOMAINE ALAIN VOGUE, Cornas

Alain Voge has been making wine for over 40 years. After his military service in Algeria, he returned to help his father at the family domaine. However, grapes were only part of his responsibilities; they also grew various fruits and wheat and raised pigs and goats for cheese. They were even the local distillers. But as time passed, grapes became more and more important until they became their only focus.

Like most growers in Cornas, they do not destem completely but use about 20-30% of the stems to gently extract structure and to control vinification and drainage while the juice is run off the skins. As a result, the wines have a definite Old World feel that adds character and charm, but without any harshness or rusticity. Though their reds are all aged in oak barrels, only 10-20% of them are new which enables the wine to retain its purity of fruit while softening its structure.

They make several reds including Cornas Vieilles Vignes, a blend of parcels from vines that are mostly between 50 – 60 years old. They also produce several St Pérays, white wines made from 100% Marsanne. St Péray used to be an appellation renowned for sparkling wines. But as times and tastes changed, so did the wine. Today, most winemakers produce still wines and Voge's is "one of that appellation's finest" according to Robert Parker who further describes it as a "Chablis look-alike".

Albéric Mazoyer, the domaine's manager and co-owner, compares 2007's quality to 2004 but with more concentration. That was like music to our ears as his 2004 Vieilles Vignes is just superb.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
St Péray Fleur de Crussol	£185.00	2010 – 2017

This is the first time in the history of Goedhuis & Co. that a St. Péray has made it onto an offer. But Alain and Albéric's is just too delicious not to. Produced from 70-year-old vines, this 2007 is rich with a sweet core of fruit, which displays attractive notes of ripe pear, light smoke and superb minerality. On the palate, vibrates with energy and freshness. Only 4000 bottles of this delicious wine have been produced. Worth discovering.

Cornas Vieilles Vignes	£245.00	2010 – 2020
Cornas Vieilles Vignes Magnums	£255.00 per 6	2011 – 2022

Typically our favourite cuvée due to its sheer balance and charismatic personality. With all this in mind, the 2007 does not disappoint. Damson plum with a dash of pepper linger gently on the nose. A sweet core of fine tannins with flavours of blueberry and smoke further enhance its complex personality. To further excite fans of Vieilles Vignes, Albéric will be incorporating all the fruit from from Vieilles Fontaines (their tiny ancient parcel which produces their top wine) due to its miniscule crop. This looks to be one fantastic wine.

SOUTHERN RHÔNE

Unlike the svelte and steep contours of the northern valley, the southern Rhône is broad, hilly and occasionally flat, particularly in Châteauneuf du Pape where large galet stones are widely dispersed in the vineyards. The climate is warm and enriched by the great Mediterranean sun. Though the famous Mistral wind begins in the northern Rhône, it actually hits the southern areas the hardest, cooling down the grapes – an effect which allows these robust wines to retain their freshness. There are multiple appellations reflecting all wines styles and colours. They include Châteauneuf du Pape, Gigondas, Vacqueyras, Tavel, Lirac, Beauges de Venise, Rasteau, the newly created Vinsobres, and Côtes du Rhône. They are made mostly from a base of Grenache and Syrah and are fleshed out with other meridional varieties such as Mourvèdre, Carignan and Cinsault. Many of the reds are rich and spicy with ‘garrigue’ notes, a term used to describe the aromatic blend of wild herbs such as rosemary, lavender and thyme that are prominent in the region.

VACQUEYRAS

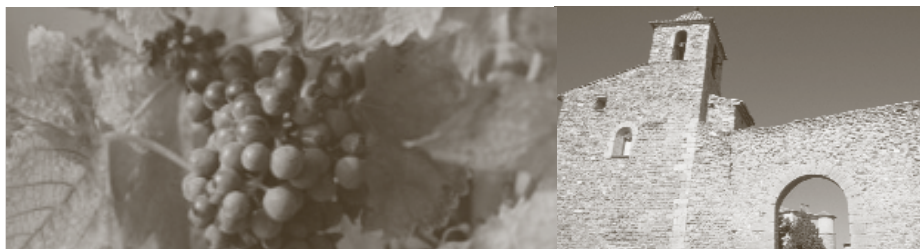
One of the newest and least known appellations to emerge from the southern Rhône, it was promoted from Côtes du Rhône Villages in 1990. As a result, it is also one of the least known. Stylistically, its wines are rich and plump with more complexity and concentration than Côtes du Rhône, but perhaps with slightly less concentration than its neighbouring appellation, Gigondas. Though, this depends on the producer and vintage. It makes all three colours – red, white and rosé, mostly from 4 varieties – Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault and Carignan - though red is by far the most dominant. Due to its lesser known reputation, they usually offer excellent value for money.

GIGONDAS

Gigondas has been an appellation in its own right since 1971. Both red and rosé wines are produced; however, it is the red that has taken centre stage. Though its wines can occasionally be more rustic, they are often considered a miniature version of Châteauneuf du Pape. Part of this may have to do with the same limited yield restrictions and minimum alcoholic strength (12.5%), but they also share some of the same varieties including Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre. Certain bottlings can be approached shortly after release, but many benefit from several years of cellaring. Like Châteauneuf du Pape, aged bottles take on appealing gamey and forest floor aromatics which make them particularly enjoyable with roasted meats.

CÔTES DU RHÔNE

The largest of the Rhône appellations, it also has the greatest variety in its styles. Its hierarchy ranges from the fruity and ultra light Côtes du Rhône Primeur, to the plump and friendly Côtes du Rhône, to the more concentrated versions of Côtes du Rhône Villages and the crème de la crème, Côtes du Rhône Villages from one of 16 specified villages. It is generally known for its fruit forwardness and easy drinkability, though there are some producers who are making impressively concentrated, ageworthy wines. Most of the vineyards are found in the southern valley whose main variety is Grenache; however, there are smaller areas in the northern valley that uniquely grow Syrah, thereby producing a very different wine.





DOMAINE CLOS DES CAZAUX, Vacqueyras

Every year, we descend upon the southern Rhône valley, and regardless which season it is, we are always greeted with such depth of Mediterranean beauty – the rambling hillsides, the warm colour of the earth, the delicate and enchanting scents of wildness. At such moments, one may think that life could not get much better. Until one tastes at Clos des Cazaux, that is. Their only flaw is their appellation. Very few people are familiar with Vacqueyras, and it is unfortunate for they make some of the most sumptuous, balanced and well-priced wines in the southern valley.

Clos des Cazaux is run by Jean-Michel and his brother Frédéric Vache. They are passionate and friendly. Their winemaking and vineyard management philosophy blends 'lutte raisonnée' (addressing issues as they arise to avoid unnecessary chemical treatments) with organic and biodynamic methods. Low yields and late harvesting are also critical as they want their wines to be as expressive and harmonious as nature will allow.

Jean-Michel said that his vines produced some "extraordinary fruit" in 2007 - even more than the highly coveted 2006. A dry and warm (not hot) growing season with cool nights produced grapes with notable complexity and freshness. We had to agree. Their wines were some of the most sumptuous that we've tasted from them.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Vacqueyras Cuvée St. Roch	£79.00	2010 – 2017
<i>Plump, soft and silky, this 2007 offers attractive flavours of raspberry, cherry, black currant and zesty black pepper. On the palate, its tender, sweet tannins are particularly mouthfilling yet not heavy. Its notable length just keeps going on-and-on.</i>		
Vacqueyras Cuvée des Templiers	£85.00	2010 – 2018+
<i>Its high proportion of Syrah in this cuvée gives it a dark and wild personality. Intriguingly aromatic, the Cuvée des Templiers offers notes of meat, 'garrigue' and rich, ripe black fruits. It has more noticeable structure than the St. Roch yet still remains fresh. It finishes on gamey flavours. Different, but enticing.</i>		
Gigondas La Tour Sarrazine	£115.00	2010 – 2020
<i>A touch of tar and violet open up onto the medium to full-bodied palate of this 2007 Gigondas. Its sweet core displays velvety fruit buttressed by cedar and spice flavours. Jean-Michel uses no oak, however. These earthy characters come naturally from the vineyard's proximity to an old oak forest.</i>		



DOMAINE CROS DE LA MÛRE, Derboux

Domaine Cros de la Mûre is located in Derboux, a small hamlet in the southern Rhône valley. Surrounded by lavender fields and sweeping, untamed brush and forests, it is easily one of the most beautiful landscapes in the valley. The domaine is run by Eric Michel, a passionate and determined winemaker who took over his family's vineyards holdings in 1990 after finishing his studies at Bordeaux University.

Many of Eric's vines are situated high up on the Massif d'Uchaux, an area that creates profound yet silky wine. Its soil is made predominantly from two distinct types: clay/limestone around Derboux and lighter, sandy soil around the village of Uchaux which is hotter and produces wine that is notably fruity and ripe.

A believer in late harvesting, he picks his grapes at the height of ripeness enabling his fruit to be as rich and expressive as possible. To further maintain its purity, he ferments and ages his wines in concrete vats using no oak. The results are often explosive cornucopias of fruit which are rich and long lived on the palate.

When visiting him, the quiet and shy Eric basically lets his wines speak on his behalf. Needless to say, they were just brilliant. With each passing year, we become more and more impressed with him as a winemaker.

	<i>£/cs in Bond</i>	<i>Drinking Dates</i>
Côtes du Rhône	£69.00	2010 – 2014
<i>Always an excellent value wine, the 2007 is brimming with blueberries and liqueur-like red bramble fruit. Unbelievably rich, it is fine and focused with no hard edges in sight. A miniscule 18 hl/ha of fruit was used to make this wine (as with all his vintages) which explains its extraordinary density.</i>		

	<i>£145.00</i>	<i>2011 – 2022+</i>
Gigondas		
<i>Grenache struts its stuff yet again in Eric's 2007 Gigondas. Aromatics of crushed blackberry, damson plums, granite and bittersweet cocoa coat the palate in this delicious, enticing wine. Despite its richness, there is an energy to it which gives pronounced lift and length.</i>		



DOMAINE CAYRON, Gigondas

Unusual in this multi-wine region, this well-established domaine makes but one wine...Gigondas. No single vineyards bottlings, no special barrel selections just one clean cut cuvée. Its small cellar is inconspicuously located behind a large door off a residential winding road that leads to the hilltops overlooking the valley below. Once opened, its porthole transports the unexpected to yesteryear – somewhere in the 1950s for its vinification room and perhaps the late 19th century for its ageing chamber. Traditional is an understatement.

Now Michel Faraud has more or less retired and the domaine is under the watchful eyes of his three daughters, Delphine, Sandrine and Rosaline. They produce one of the most old-styled Rhône wines available – a rarity these days. The grapes are pressed in an old horizontal basket press. The juice is then fermented in cement vats with indigenous yeasts before being aged in large old oak foudres. The Farauds also include the stems as they feel they help in preventing fermentation temperatures and the final degree of alcohol from rising too high. They are neither filtered nor fined. In the end, the results are extraordinarily pure and balanced. Jancis Robinson in “Oxford Companion to Wine” describes them as an “overachieving producer” showing that we are not alone in our admiration.

The Faraud sisters explained that 2007 produced very healthy grapes, so it was a vintage where “the wine made itself”. Delphine explained that their 2007 was so appreciated by those who tasted it that people were already lining up to reserve it. Luckily, we have our place in the queue.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Gigondas	£135.00	2011 – 2022
<i>One word...Spectacular. This may be the best Gigondas that we have yet tasted from the Farauds. Powerful, penetrating yet superbly poised, this 2007 offers an abundance of fruit including damson plum, black cherry and raspberry. Its structure and pure concentration make this a contender for serious longevity. A wine with the 'it' factor. Sheer brilliance.</i>		



CHÂTEAUNEUF DU PAPE

The emperor of southern Rhône appellations, Châteauneuf du Pape was the first A.O.C. in all of France, created in 1936. Their bottle is unique, embossed with the papal coat of arms. Thirteen varieties (14 if Grenache Blanc is counted separately) can be incorporated in the blend. The reds include: Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Carignan, Cinsault, Terret Noir, Picpoul, Vaccarèse, Counoise, Muscardin, while the whites are Roussanne, Bourboulenc and Clairette. Only a handful of producers use all 13, Grenache often being the highest percentage of the blend. This enables each producer to highlight the varieties that are the ripest and most interesting in any given year. Many Châteauneuf du Pâpes are master examples of wines that can be approachable within the first few years of release yet able to develop superb complexity during many years of cellaring.

VINSOBRES

Made up of 1300 hectares, Vinsobres is the newest AOC in the Rhône Valley, moving up from a Côtes du Rhône Villages to a cru (like Vacqueyras and Gigondas) in November 2005. According to appellation rules, it must be 50% Grenache and at least 25% of either Syrah or Mourvèdre, though Carignan and Cinsault are also permitted. Many people consider it the most ‘northern’ of the Southern Rhône appellations due to its higher altitude (400 metres above sea level) and more northerly position (30 km north of Châteauneuf du Pape) which enable its wines to retain freshness and focus, notably in warmer vintages.

DOMAINE FONT DE MICHELLE, Bédarrides

Font de Michelle is owned and operated by Jean and Michel Gonnet, Guillaume, third and fourth generation winemakers who work their various parcels of vineyards mostly located around La Crau, one of the best sites in the entire appellation (other parcels are owned by Vieux Télégraphe and Henri Bonneau for his Réserve des Céléstins).

Freshness and fruit forwardness are key to their modern-styled wines. They harvest their grapes only when optimally ripe after which they are immediately pressed. The wines are aged in oak barrels some of which are new for 6 to 12 months depending on the cuvée. Their reds receive no fining or filtration allowing them to retain all of their natural flavours and textures.

We offer their two red Châteauneuf du Papes – their straight cuvée Etienne Gonnet, a special wine created in 1988 and named in honour of their late father, which is only produced in the very best vintages and made predominantly from 90+ year-old Grenache.

Michel’s son Guillaume was in excellent spirits during our tasting. He concurred that the 2007 vintage was excellent saying that it was rich and “every variety gave its all.” Luckily, we were able to confirm this through tasting the separate varieties as well as the eventual blends. Though they too pushed for ripeness, their wines remain fresh and balanced.

	<small>£/cs in Bond</small>	<small>Drinking Dates</small>
Châteauneuf du Pape	£169.00	2010 – 2018+

Though the nose was closed on this 2007, its core displayed a coy sweetness with a focused, mineral core. Its ripe red and black berry fruit was juicy yet refined. A perfect balance between lipsmacking and mouthfilling.

Châteauneuf du Pape Cuvée Etienne Gonnet	£295.00	2011 – 2022+
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In a Grenache year, one looks forward to tasting cuvées such as this which is made with an impressive 70%. Aromatic with notes of crushed raspberry, subtle black pepper and sweet vanilla, this 2007 explodes onto the palate with its ripe, chewy tannins. It remains fresh and unbelievably ‘crunchy’ so that it finishes long but not heavy.

CHÂTEAU DE BEAUCASTEL, Châteauneuf du Pape

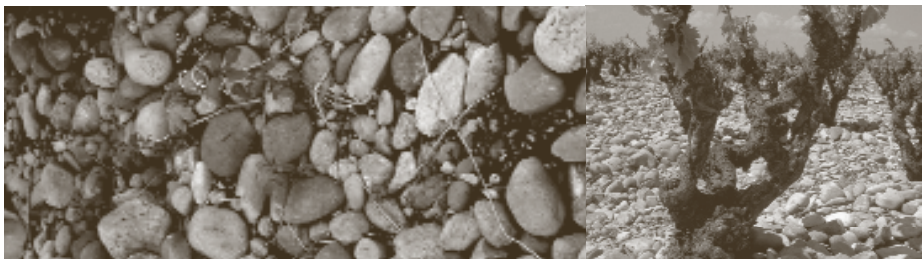
Château de Beaucastel is undoubtedly one of the most famous domaines in the southern Rhône and possibly the most recognisable Châteauneuf du Pape. Created in the early 1900s, this domaine has passed down through several illustrious pairs of hands including those of the dynamic and philosophic Jacques Perrin and now to those of his two sons, Pierre and François. Since its début, their vineyards have grown to over 110 hectares to create their various cuvées – all of which are grown according to strict organic methods.

Through the Perrin's creativity, ingenuity and pioneering spirit, their wines are also some of the most atypical for the region. For example, they designed and mastered a winemaking technique called 'vinification à chaud'. This unusual method heats incoming grapes to 80°C for just over one minute after which they are immediately cooled to 20°C. The benefits are tri-fold: extracting colour and aromatics, slowing down fermentation and preventing the natural oxidation of the grapes. It has no doubt greatly contributed to the longevity of their wines for which they are known. In addition, their red Châteauneuf du Papes contain the largest percentage of Mourvèdre in the region (usually a minimum of 30%) creating notable aromatics of roasted game and chewy, powerful tannins.

Marc Perrin, the eldest of Jean-Pierre's son, kindly greeted us at the domaine. Like usual, there were an uncountable amount of bottles. Yet, even among this normal array, we noticed a few more. It appears that the malolactic fermentations had been long-lived (the sign of an excellent year) and as such they had not yet blended the Coudoulet or the Châteauneuf du Pape. So, away we went tasting a majority of single variety wines. Within several minutes, we were in a frenzy. This was the most impressive tasting at Beaucastel in recent memory. Not only did the wines show tremendous complexity but also amazing freshness which is not always easy to find in Châteauneuf. Marc agreed stating that they had not seen the same high quality in their grapes since perhaps 1989, one of the most celebrated vintages ever at this domaine.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc	£195.00 per 6	2009 – 2018
<i>Delicate yet entrancing, the 2007 Blanc was almost perfume-like. On the palate, it is wonderfully silky and poised with its flavours of fresh pear, honeysuckle and even truffle. It finishes on almond notes, minerality and superb freshness. Sublime. A must have for those who love ethereal, complex wines.</i>		

Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc Vieilles Vignes Roussanne (limited)	£320.00 per 6	2010 – 2020
<i>The 2007 Vieilles Vignes Roussanne is produced from a majority of vines that are over 100 years old. It is more discreet on the nose than the straight Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc. On the palate, however, it's another story. Racy, penetrating yet refined, this wine is unbelievably smooth and seductive. Undoubtedly, it's one of the best Châteauneuf Blancs we ever had. It is a thoroughbred through-and-through. 97+ Parker Points.</i>		



DOMAINE VERSINO, Châteauneuf du Pape

Jean-Paul Versino is the magic behind this domaine (which is also known as Bois de Boursan). After years of making wines from rented vineyards, the Versino family, third generation Piedmonteses in Châteauneuf du Pape, bought 40-100+ year-old-vines from retiring owners in the mid-80s. As a result, their vineyards resemble something of a patchwork quilt, comprising 27 different parcels with various soils and microclimates. With all the subtle nuances that are innate to each plot, Jean-Paul has become an expert on harvesting schedules making sure that each variety is at its utmost ripeness when picked.

He makes two Châteauneuf du Pape reds – Bois de Boursan and in top years, Cuvée Félix, a special bottling made from the best parcels and the oldest vines, which includes a larger percentage of Mourvèdre.

Unusual for the area these days, he uses 100% stems in all of his vinifications, which he believes allows his wines to age for longer and to retain an authentic and traditional Châteauneuf du Pape feel. As paradoxical as it may sound, they also give his wines a notable elegance separating them from the more brawny examples of the region. This may be one reason why Robert Parker compares them more to Burgundy than to the wines of the Southern Rhône.

Jean-Paul explained that in 2007, the grapes concentrated quickly and as a result produced rich and silky wines that should be pleasurable at an earlier age than his 2005s or 2006s (thank goodness as these two still have years ahead of them). He compares them mostly to 2000, a vintage that is drinking beautifully now (and one that Parker scored highly). They were absolutely delicious and the essence of what the French call 'digeste' which might be translated to 'melts on your tongue'.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Châteauneuf du Pape Bois de Boursan	£155.00	2010 – 2020+
Châteauneuf du Pape Bois de Boursan Magnums	£161.00 per 6	2011 – 2022+

Aromas of sweet leather, blackberries and brown sugar make it easy to delve into this 2007. Its wonderfully ripe palate adds succulent sweetness and fine, chewy tannins. It finishes on dark chocolate but also a bit of freshness. Admirably balanced, this should make for fabulous drinking.

Châteauneuf du Pape Cuvée Félix (limited)	£139.00 per 6	2011 – 2022+
Châteauneuf du Pape Cuvée Félix Magnums (limited)	£149.00 per 3	2012 – 2024+

Cuvée Félix is produced from a selection of vines from his best and oldest parcels (some are 85-90 years) whose yields are a mere 20 hl/ha. These small yields could not be more apparent than in the 2007. Wonderfully expressive, it offers juicy red cherry, plump blackberry, lightly roasted spice and treacle. Its mouthfeel is tender yet beautifully complex and elegant. A lovely 2007. If it is anything like his 2000, hold onto your hat because that wine got 96 points.

CLOS DES PAPES, Châteauneuf du Pape

One of the oldest winemaking families in Châteauneuf du Pape, the Avrils began their vinous adventures in the early 17th century. Today, the domaine is run by Vincent Avril who took over from his father Paul in the early 1990s. Traditional producers with a modern twist, the Avrils no longer use stems in vinification and ferment in large ceramic-lined vats but do age their red varieties in large, old foudres in a humidity-controlled cellar. In addition, they are one of the few domaines in Châteauneuf du Pape to use all 13 recommended regional varieties in their red and all 6 varieties in their white.

Their fruit comes from multiple parcels that span the appellation which include the esteemed, La Crau. As a result, they have become masters of matching specific varieties with 'terroir' and microclimates that best suit them. Needless to say, they have one of the longest harvests in order to pick the grapes at the peak of perfection.

Unfortunately, our visit occurred during the Avrils' harvest preparations, and we were unable to taste through the wines. Luckily, Robert Parker was able to stand in for us. He thinks that their red is the best ever he has tasted from them giving it a whopping 98-100 points. He usually only gives this type of score to legendary Châteauneuf du Pape which can often cost as much as First Growth Bordeaux. These 2007's are no doubt wines to be reckoned with which will make for exceptional drinking.

Please note that previous purchasers will be given priority when allocating these wines.

	€/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc	POA	2009 – 2018

"The 2007 Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc, which includes equal percentages of all six authorized white varieties, exhibits notes of licorice, poached pears, honeysuckle, and citrus. Deep and full-bodied with good acidity as well as surprising length and richness, it is one of the top whites of the appellation". 91 points. Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate, October 2008

Châteauneuf du Pape	POA	2012 – 2030+
Châteauneuf du Pape Magnums	POA	2013 – 2035+
Châteauneuf du Pape Jeroboam	POA	2015 – 2035+

"The 2007 reveals all the characteristics that make Clos de Papes so special, including extraordinary elegance, remarkable complexity in the black raspberry, kirsch, truffle, meaty, Provençal herbaceousness, full-bodied palate, voluptuous, silky tannins, and mind-boggling richness and length. Nothing is out of place, and there are no hard edges in this beautiful Châteauneuf du Pape. The vintage's cool growing conditions have given the wine a freshness to go along with its substantial size and power. This monumental Châteauneuf is a tour de force in winemaking. It should be relatively accessible in 3-4 years, and evolve along the lines of the 1978, only the 2007 has more to it, so expect it to last at least 30 years. Not to be missed!" 98-100 points. Robert Parker, The Wine Advocate, October 2008

LANGUEDOC

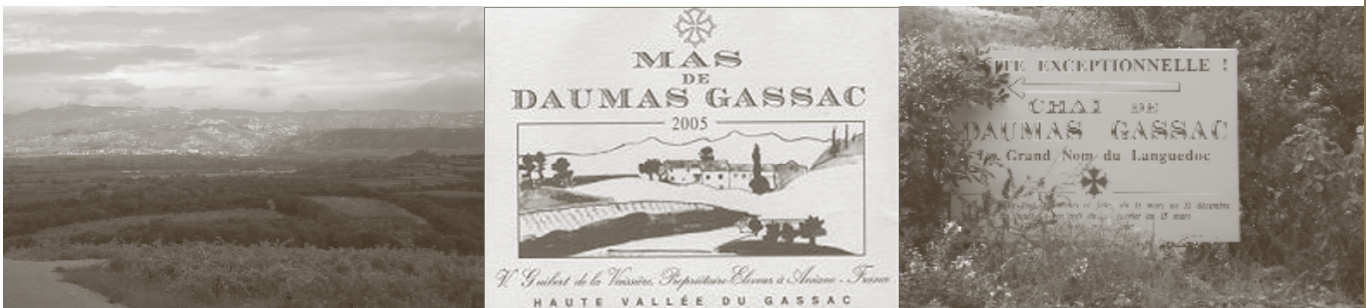
France's largest producing wine region which extends along the Mediterranean Sea from just west of Costières de Nîmes to Fitou. It is often attached in name to Roussillon which extends further south to the Spanish border. It is most famous for producing varietal wines in the form of Vins de Pays d'Oc but also contains the regional appellation of Coteaux de Languedoc (with or without a village attached) as well as various 'crus' such as Faugères, Minervois, St Chinian and Corbières. Due to the Languedoc's reputation for producing inexpensive wine as well as general advances in viticulture and vinification, it tends to offer some of the world's best wine values. Indeed, handcrafted wines that are well-made and beautifully balanced can cost a fraction of the price of those produced in more sought-after regions.

HÉRAULT

Hérault is a departmental Vin de Pays covering the region surrounding Montpellier on the Mediterranean coast of France. It largely produces red wines from the classic southern grape varieties (Grenache, Syrah, Carignan, etc), yet a few rosés and whites can also be found. Originally intended to denote simple country wines that showed broad regional characteristics, the Vin de Pays category now includes many shining stars that fall outside the strict appellation regulations. The most celebrated wines from the area, both with a cult following, are Mas de Daumas Gassac and La Grange des Pères.

MINERVOIS

This Languedoc cru takes its name from the spectacular village of Minerve, steeped in Cathare history, in the western Languedoc. Since gaining appellation status in 1985, quality in the region has been steadily increasing, with the finest wines coming from around the village of La Livinière. Syrah and Mourvèdre must make up at least 20% of the blend while other traditional Languedoc varieties (including Carignan, Cinsault and/or Lladoner Pelut) must make up the balance. All the usual suspects make up some interesting blended whites - Bourboulenc, Grenache Blanc, Rolle, Maccabeo, Marsanne & Roussanne.



MAS DE DAUMAS GASSAC, Aniane

In the 1970s, a Parisian glove manufacturer named Aimé Guibert was looking for a calmer life. He purchased property at the bottom of a valley that was once an ancient Gallo-Roman settlement. Surrounded by thick, garrigue scrub and glacial, mineral-rich earth, it seemed a perfect site for viticulture...that is, to Bordeaux oenologist Henri Enjalbert. He convinced Aimé to plant grapes and with the help of oenologist extraordinaire, Émile Peynaud, he began producing wine.

Despite their southern France location, they have a markedly unique micro-climate. Housed in a deep valley, cool air is drawn down from the mountains, particularly in the summer evenings, creating extraordinary, daily temperature swings ranging from 0 - 30 C. As a result, they are able to grow a plethora of varieties successfully from both cool and warm areas including Chenin Blanc, Chardonnay, Viognier and Petit Manseng for the small amount of white they produce and Cabernet Sauvignon, Nebbiolo, Tempranillo, Pinot Noir and Tannat for the red – all the while attaining excellent ripeness yet retaining the varieties fresh acidity.

When visiting Samuel this past September, he was very enthusiastic about the 2007 vintage. Unlike other regions of France which had extra long or even normal length growing seasons, they picked earlier than they normally would, yet when the grapes were nonetheless at their optimum ripeness. Their unique micro-climate sets them apart from any other major wine region. Their 2007s show wonderful freshness yet with a true depth of character. Their 2008 white is still fermenting away, but Samuel esteems that it will be one of the greatest vintages that they have ever produced – ranking it alongside the 1978, 1988 and 1998. Could there be a theme here? You just might want to buy some before the Chinese take the lot for good luck!

£/cs in Bond

Drinking Dates

Mas de Daumas Gassac Blanc, Vin de Pays de l'Hérault 2008 £99.00 per 6 2009 - 2014

This aromatic white is produced from no less than 20 varieties including Viognier, Petit Manseng, Chenin Blanc and Chardonnay. Samuel Guibert ensured us that the 2008 vintage was looking to follow their other 'great vintages' which also were curiously in '8' years – 1978 (their first vintage), 1988 (the greatest wine they've ever done according to Samuel) and the excellent 1998. Samuel states that the 2008 has 'incredible finesse' with 'hugely rich aromas'.

Mas de Daumas Gassac Rouge, Vin de Pays de l'Hérault 2007 £99.00 per 6 2010 - 2019+

Mas de Daumas Gassac Rouge,
Vin de Pays de l'Hérault 2007 Magnums £105.00 per 3 2011 - 2020+

Though predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon (75-80%), this wine also contains a smattering of others – 10 to be exact. As a result, depending on the vintage a wine can take on very different aromatics that are not necessarily characteristically Cabernet. Tasted from barrel, the 2007 offers an enticing nose of ripe, spicy brambles, damson plum and freshly crushed black pepper. Its impressive palate reveals lots of chewy fruit and notable structure and complexity, yet it remains wonderfully fresh and uplifting. Incredible length.

CHATEAU ST JACQUES D'ALBAS, Laure Minervoïs

Though its ancient lands have long been imbued with Roman history and viticulture, Château St Jacques d'Albas was not an official wine estate until the early 19th century. For many years, it sold its fruit to the local co-operative, until the late 1990s when Graham Nutter, a former investment banker from the UK, and his French wife stumbled upon its exceptional location. Shortly thereafter, he created what we know today as Château St. Jacques d'Albas.

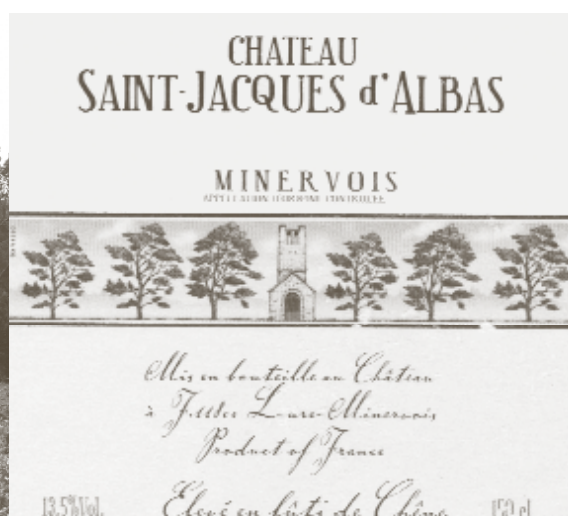
He invested heavily in the vineyards and in the incredibly modern cellar – a facility that could easily pass for a classified growth Château in Bordeaux. In addition, he hired only the best consultants and oenologists including Jean-Pierre Cousinié who established a dynamic method of viticulture which is based on 'lutte raisonnée' (addressing issues as they arise to avoid unnecessary chemical treatments) and which also incorporates organic and biodynamic principles. Graham's goal was to encourage his various parcels of to express their unique 'terroir' naturally.

His work has paid off. Multiple wine critiques including Jancis Robinson and Bettane & Desseauve, the wine guide for France, have reviewed his wines highly and described his property as "a domaine to watch" (Bettane & Desseauve). But he has not stopped there, each vintage he pushes himself further for even better quality of fruit and lower yields. He is just that devoted and passionate.

Graham is delighted with his 2006s, a vintage that has it all - purity of fruit, wonderful concentration and freshness. We loved them too.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Minervoïs Château St Jacques d'Albas 2006	£79.00	2009 - 2013
<i>Graham's flagship cuvée, the 2006 Château is produced from 50% Syrah, 45% Grenache and 5% Carignan. Deep and rich in colour, on the palate it is fleshy, ample and ripe. A touch of pepper and minerality add a bit of focus and lift. This should drink well in a year's time and age nicely.</i>		

Minervoïs La Chapelle 2006	£135.00	2011 - 2018+
<i>Named after a 10th century chapel built amongst the vines, Graham's La Chapelle is predominately Syrah which gives it unbelievable colour and extract. The 2006 is attractively plump and mouthfilling with a sweet blackcurrant core, dark chocolate and toasty oak. Its tannins are mouthcoating and chewy which finishes long and sappy.</i>		



PROVENCE

Certainly one of the most beautiful wine regions in France, Provence begins with the French Riviera and its vineyards to the west of Nice and includes those encircling St. Tropez and those that extend to the beginning of the Languedoc. This is the region where one finds the everlasting sun, chanting cicadas and the tantalising scents of wild herbs. There are various Vins de Pays and regional wines including Côtes de Provence, which is undoubtedly the most famous. It is here where rosé is king as it accounts for 4/5 of the appellation's production. In addition, there are some sought after 'crus' including Bandol, its most famous, followed by Cassis and Palette. Some of the most sought after producers are Domaine de Trévallon located outside of Les Baux de Provence and Domaine Tempier in Bandol.

DOMAINE DE TREVALLON, St Etienne du Grès

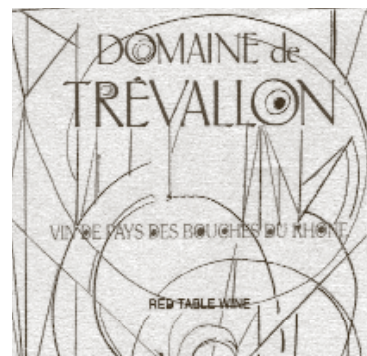
As a specialist merchant who seeks out smaller winemakers with vision and passion, we could not be more delighted to have begun working with Domaine de Trévallon. A cult wine producer located in the rolling hills west of St Rémy de Provence, this domaine was originally created by Eloi Dürrbach in 1973. An architect student at the time, he decided to toss aside his protractors to roll up his sleeves and start planting vines in the craggy limestone rock soil surrounding his parents' holiday home. His instincts told him that the domaine's well-draining, mineral-rich soil, arid micro-climate and glorious sun would be capable of producing exceptionally powerful and expressive wines...and he was right.

After an initial (and unsuccessful) planting of local varieties, Grenache and Carignan, he planted 15 hectares of Syrah and Cabernet which he then followed with a smattering of Marsanne, Roussanne (from cuttings at Beaucastel) and Chardonnay.

Besides using organic viticultural methods, his winemaking is notably natural as well. After handpicking, he ferments the bunches whole without de-stemming, with indigenous yeasts and without temperature control. After 2 weeks or so of maceration, the wine is pressed and then matured in large oak foudres for around 2 years before being bottled.

Due to the addition of Cabernet, appellation rules insisted in 1993 that his wine must be labelled as a regional Vins de Pays rather than the local AOC, Côteaux d'Aix. Despite the controversial ruling, he never looked back. Now, his wines are some of the most sought after in France regardless of their appellation. We cannot recommend them enough to claret lovers who want something just a little different.

Eloi will release his 2007s En Primeur next spring. While waiting, we recommend the 2000 and 2004 which are currently in our cellars.



	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Domaine de Trévallon Rouge 2004	£255.00	2009 – 2022+
Domaine de Trévallon Rouge 2004 Magnums (limited)	£131.00 per 3	2009 – 2022+

As with all his reds, this wine is a lovely blend of 50% Cabernet and 50% Syrah. Dark and opaque, this brooding and rich wine is fresh and dense with notes of sweet black cherry, blueberry and cinnamon. Profound and pure, its palate is powerful but still exceptionally balanced. It finishes pure and focused. An excellent 'classically' styled, velvety wine that will develop nicely over the years to come.

Domaine de Trévallon Rouge 2000	£275.00	Now – 2019+
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We recently re-tasted this wine on several occasions and it is drinking fabulously well. Full-bodied and aromatic, this wine opens up with inviting and gently evolved aromatics of sweet leather, earthy spice, black truffle and plump plum. On the palate, it is sumptuous and round and utterly mouthfilling. Excellent lift on finish with notable power and complexity. Superb.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All wines are offered In Bond England (i.e. all shipping and bottling charges are included). We will arrange shipment in autumn 2009. On arrival your wines can either be delivered directly to you or stored Under Bond at our independent storage company, Private Reserves, at a cost of £8.95 ex Vat per case per annum.

When you decide to take delivery, Duty and Vat become payable. These charges are at present £17.49 and 17.5% respectively. Delivery will be charged at cost.