



RHÔNE

EN PRIMEUR 2008

GOEDHUIS & CO

FINE WINE MERCHANTS

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R H Ô N E

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INTRODUCTION

We have always loved the wines from the Rhône. In November 2006, we decided to embrace them even further by becoming a leading dealer in the region and by holding an En Primeur tasting. This inaugural tasting was to feature the majority of our growers and to highlight the most recent vintage as well as a number of older vintages. This was not only to show these wines in their delicious youth but also how they age and evolve. We have not looked back. Our Rhône tasting has now become one of our biggest events and continues growing. It is a place where drinkers can discover everything the Rhône has to offer.

One of the things that we appreciate the most is how wonderfully varied its wines are. From a valley that is over 180 km long with 20 different appellations, over 20 different grape varieties and umpteen 'terroirs', the wine styles are endless. In the north, there is poised and aromatic Côte Rôtie, powerful, brooding Hermitage, friendly, appealing Crozes Hermitage to velvety, ample Cornas. In the south, there is zesty Gigondas, plump, spicy Vacqueyras and 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, fleshy yet mineral St. Péray or voluptuous Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc.

It is never easy following in the footsteps of a heralded vintage such as 2007. In the eyes of the critics, the elegance and fruit forwardness of the 2008s may fall into the shadows of the muscle and mass of the 2007s. But what people often forget is that wines of 2007's calibre (most notably from the southern Rhône) will take years to come around. Even when they do, they will still be big wines that will demand a bit of pomp and circumstance to be consumed. Classic vintages like 2008 remind us that refinement, balance and gentleness can go a long way, particularly in terms of food pairing. Is a 100-point Parker wine with 15.5% alcohol really the right thing to drink with a simple, yet delicious roast chicken?

We are delighted to offer wines from some of the most exceptional producers from both the north and the south – 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, Clusel Roch, Bernard Faurie, Domaine Cayron, and Jean-Paul Versino. Our portfolio also includes 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 of 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, Clos des Cazaux in Vacqueyras and Alain Voge in Cornas.

For several years now, we have included a couple of outstanding domaines from the Languedoc, the renowned Mas de Daumas Gassac and a Minervois gem, Château St. Jacques d'Albas. Finally, we could not forget Domaine de Trévallon, the cult producer from outside Les Baux de Provence. His handcrafted reds from Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah could blow many classified-growth Bordeaux out of the water. Any claret lover who wants to try something just a bit different should seek them out.

THE VINTAGE

Many growers have characterised 2008 as the 'Terroir Vintage' - that is, a vintage where the vineyards' unique soils, climates and aspects were capable of expressing themselves fully, producing wines that typify the variety and appellation.

As vintages go, it was a challenging one and because of this the soul of each vineyard was able to surface and express itself best. The spring was cool and rainy which caused irregular flowering and eventually lead to some uneven ripening. The summer was often overcast and mildew tried to spread thorough the valley which could only be curbed by watchful eyes, pre-empted treatments and high selectivity.

A deluge hit the northern Rhône in the beginning of September with Tain l'Hermitage receiving 300 ml of rain in 3 days. Other areas in the north received less, though it cannot be stressed enough that vines grown on steeper slopes and those on limestone or stony soils were less touched than those on the rolling valley floor or more clay-dominant soils. The south avoided the downpour. Luckily, the harvest was still several weeks away and the rain could be balanced out within the vine through natural drainage, the sun, wind and dry weather.

Starting the second week of September, the valley was dry and sunny. The cooler season prevented rot from forming and led to a late harvest with many growers picking into October. This enabled the grapes to concentrate following the previous wetter months. By the time the harvest commenced, the berries were generally small with a good juice-to-skin ratio.

Selection was of the utmost importance. Most of our growers produced 30% less wine than an average year, but certain domaines such as Beaucastel and Bois de Boursan in Châteauneuf du Pape were down by a whopping 50%. It was undoubtedly a sacrifice, but this enabled their high quality to remain intact.



THE WINES

There are many things to like about the 2008s, and it is these qualities that make them truly stand apart in their own right from more powerful, structured wines. Over the past 15 years, the combination of global warming, longer hang time, lower yields and scrupulous winemaking has increased overall quality and concentration. So when a great vintage comes along with its high degree days and sunny, dry weather, this combination of savoir faire and mother nature can easily produce full-throttle, high alcohol wines. These bottles will demand years in the cellar before softening and unveiling themselves.

A vintage like 2008 is very different. Vignerons took account of 2008's unique weather conditions, but they also took advantage of the same know how to produce wines of noteworthy balance and poise. The tannins are fine and soft, the fruit is sweet and occasionally opulent, the alcohol moderate and the acidity fresh and uplifting. They will not require a decade before they reach their sweet spot but will entice willing palates earlier on.

The majestic brawn of a grand vintage can appeal like the call of the brooding trumpet, but sometimes the gentleness of the clarinet is more melodic to the ear at a given time. Things do not have to be big to be beautiful, and this is exactly how we feel about the 2008s.

Many producers in the northern Rhône have compared their 2008s to 2004s but with less structure. They are fresh and fruity with a plump core. Bernard Faurie, who made an impressive 2008, compared it to 1994 in terms of style and vintage conditions, yet he also said - with a twinkle in his eye - that 1994's aged well, far better than people originally thought.

In the south too, there was a comparison with 2004. Eric Michel of Cros de la Mûre tasted the similarities, but for him 2008 is even more elegant and linear. Jean-Paul Versino of Bois de Boursan felt the comparison lies more with 1993 or 1997 in terms of its freshness and balance. Compared to the north, southern wines have slightly more concentration, but this is the land where fleshy Grenache has a significant role to play. Alcohols are more in check with levels hovering around 14%-14.5% (similar to 1998) instead of 2007's 15%-15.5% - a refreshing change. Many winemakers noted that they are like the wines of yesteryear in terms of their equilibrium.

Many vigneronns across the valley chose not to separate their top wines in order to produce the best straight cuvée. This had a significant part to play and the proof is in the pudding so to speak.

The stand out for the reds is Mas de Daumas Gassac. They have such an unusual micro-climate that 2008 is to them as 2005 was to Bordeaux. Everything fell into the right place to produce an incredible wine which is intensely concentrated and complex.

The whites are wonderfully fresh, mineral and pure. This is a perfect vintage for those who look for lighter styled wines. This includes all appellations whether they are Condrieu, Hermitage, St. Joseph, St. Péray or Châteauneuf du Pape.



NORTHERN RHÔNE

A narrow valley of approximately 70 km in length whose vineyards are perched on 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 fresh and focused and 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 valley 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 earlier drinking, though there are some wonderful exceptions. Its wine style can be traditional or modern depending on the producer. Many are particularly soulful. 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 usually make three Côte Rôties - the classic cuvée as well as two specific 'lieux dits', Côte Rozier and Les Rochains from the Côte Blonde and Côte Brune, respectively. 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.

In 2008, they decided to offer only two wines - the classic Côte Rôtie and Les Rochains because Côte Rozier was not showing its typical characters. It will, however, be integrated into the classic Côte Rôtie, giving this wine additional depth and complexity. Christophe describes the 2008s as "very fresh with lots of fruit which will be drinking earlier than the more structured 2007s".

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Côte Rôtie	£ 225.00	2011 – 2018

Produced from a blend of both Côte Brune and Côte Blonde, the 2008 Côte Rôtie displays a gentle nose of plump black currant, griotte cherries and clove. Notably fresh on the palate, this medium-bodied wine is refined and pure. Finishes on chocolate and red currants.

Côte Rôtie Les Rochains	£ 175.00 per 6	2012 – 2022
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Impressively deep in colour, the 2008 Rochains displays an appealing smoky nose and a fleshy palate of black cherry, cedar box and blood orange. Its firm tannins carry this pleasing wine to a long and fresh finish.



DOMAINE CLUSEL ROCH, Ampuis

One of the most sought after northern Rhône producers, the 3.5 hectare domaine of Clusel Roch began in 1989 when Gilbert Clusel of Domaine René Clusel married Brigitte Roch.

Traditional in many ways from their viticulture to vinification, they believe that Côte Rôtie should be smooth and elegant yet with enough structure to age well, gaining complexity over time. Their wines follow these principles to a tee. Yet in order to create the quality for which they have long been known, discipline and creativity are key. For example, they have been pioneers with massale selection – a technique where the best vines are chosen from within a producer's own vineyards. When needed, they then replant with these vines. The results are wines with better concentration, complexity and aromatics. Officially organic since 2002, the soil is tilled by hand and medicinal herbs are used to treat the vines.

Brigitte was elbow deep in 2009 harvest preparations when we dropped by to taste her 2008s. They were the first of our growers to begin picking as she explained that they have some early ripening parcels. We can also imagine that picking slightly earlier than others allows them to carry on their house style which is always refined, pure and ethereal – Côte Rôtie at its traditional best. Brigitte compared their 2008 to their 2004 but with a bit more freshness and less alcohol. A rigorous selection forced them to produce slightly under 30% less but enabled them to retain only their best fruit.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Côte Rôtie	£295.00	2011 – 2018
<i>Aromatic with notes of red currant, raspberry and underlying spice, this medium-bodied wine is elegant and discreet with silky tannins and a tinge of rusticity that adds character and charm. It finishes with uplifting minerality.</i>		
Côte Rôtie Grand Places (very limited)	£245.00 per 6	2012 – 2020+
<i>Brigitte and Gilbert's Grandes Places is produced from a mere 0.7 hectares and from the domaine's oldest vines. Robert Parker categorises this single-vineyard cuvée as one of the greatest of the appellation and tasting it over the years, we have to agree. Their 2008 was in cracking form. Its 'terroir' insisted on showing through delivering a deep, rich ruby colour, fleshy fruit and exotic spices.</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. He obtains this by cooling the must before fermentation so that the fruit is steeped in its own juices, slowly releasing its natural sweetness and rich colour. He then ferments at a warmer temperature of 35°C to liberate the grapes' velvety tannins before aging the wine in oak barrels, some of which are new. 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.

Last September, Pierre was off to his other domaine in the Languedoc as harvest was well underway there. So, we were received amicably by his eldest daughter Jeanne who helps her father in the winery as well as makes her own wine. She was obviously pleased with the results in 2008. With a big smile, she stated that the wines have turned out far better than they thought. Like Stéphane Montez, they used a new sorting machine called Le Mistral which helped them obtain noteworthy results. Their top wine, Rose Pourpre, was not produced in 2008. Rather, these parcels have been blended into their straight Côte Rôtie.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
St Joseph Clos de Cuminaille Rouge	£159.00	2011 – 2018
<i>Clos de Cuminaille is produced from two specific parcels, the oldest of which was planted in 1981 – Pierre's first St. Joseph vineyard. The 2008 offers up spicy blackberry fruit, juicy plum and underlying liquorice notes. This wine has very good potential and should age nicely over the years to come.</i>		

Côte Rôtie	£299.00	2012 – 2018+
<i>Always a crowd pleaser, Pierre's 2008 delivers a poised nose and an ample palate of fleshy sweet fruit that is gently supported by Rhône spice and a touch of wildness. It finishes fresh with firm yet fine tannins.</i>		



DOMAINE DE MONTEILLET, Chavanay

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

From his sheer slopes, Stéphane produces renowned Condrieus, perfumed St. Josephs and excellent 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.

In typical fashion, Stéphane was one foot out the door as we arrived. Luckily, there was room in his 4x4 to crawl over and into his rocky (and steep!) vineyards. Back on flat land and with a bit of relief, we tasted through his 2008s which were particularly rich for the vintage. This year, he began using a 'bionic-man' type of sorting machine called Le Mistral that uses multiple types of vibration and an intense wind-infused vacuum to remove unhealthy berries. It is apparently used at top Bordeaux châteaux and as Stéphane puts it, the combination of his excellent fruit, winemaking skills and now this machine, should make him dastardly competition for Bordeaux's best. He just may be on to something...

	€/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Condrieu Les Grandes Chaillées	£260.00	2010 - 2014

This Condrieu is produced from three different villages – Chavanay for aromatics, St. Michel for minerality and Vérin for richness. The 2008 is spicy with notes of apricot, peach and lemongrass. This is very fresh and poised for Condrieu which should make it completely appealing to those people who think of this appellation as too rich or heavy.

St Joseph Cuvée Papy	£159.00	2011 – 2018+
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We really like Stéphane's Cuvée Papy. It offers all the St. Joseph's wildness yet with Stéphane's appealing touch. The 2008 offers lots of crunchy red fruit, zesty black pepper and garrigue herbs. Its notable freshness and savoury undercoat carry it through to a pretty finish.

Côte Rôtie Fortis	£295.00	2012 – 2022+
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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. It is one of our favourites for this reason. It has a lifted, ethereal and complex quality which makes it notably appealing. The 2008 delivers fresh, plump red and black cherries, secondary layers of leather and cedar and a core of pure minerality.

Pre-Releases:

Côte Rôtie Grandes Places 2006 (limited)	£275.00 per 6	2013 – 2024+
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Recently bottled, the 2006 still showed incredible youthfulness in its tightly wound aromatics. But its exoticness, really shined through on the palate delivering toasted spices, sweet leather, dried figs and ripe damson plums. A smattering of Viognier (3%) adds to its complex character. Excellent length.

DOMAINE MICHEL OGIER, Ampuis

Like others in 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, the domaine 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 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 was very open about discussing the vintage conditions as they were some of the most rigorous that he has ever seen. But he also highlighted October's sunny, dry weather and their constant vigilance and strict vineyard practices. All of this contributed to make the best possible 2008s.

We felt that they truly succeeded as the various barrels displayed incredible precision and finesse. Like other winemakers, Stéphane will not be producing either Lancements or Belle Hélène. These top cuvées will be integrated into his straight Côte Rôtie, adding richness and complexity. He describes his 2008s as a year with loads of fruit.

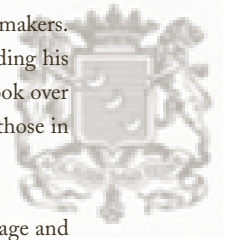
	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Syrah, La Rosine, VDP Collines Rhodaniennes	£65.00	2010 – 2014
<i>La Rosine is a mini Côte Rôtie that offers the style of the appellation but at a more affordable price. Stéphane's 2008 displays upfront fruit flavours of strawberries and cherries that are supported by earthy minerality and zesty black pepper. Easy and well-balanced.</i>		

Côte Rôtie	POA	2011 – 2020
<i>Aromatic with notes of crunchy red cherries and sweet bramble fruit. On the palate, this 2008 is darker and more mysterious with exotic spice, brown sugar and chocolate. Smooth and fine, this will make for very pleasurable drinking. Produced from various vineyards from both Côte Brune and Côte Blonde.</i>		



DOMAINE RENÉ ROSTAING, Ampuis

Réné 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 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 staunch 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 'terroirs'. 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.

Due to the tricky harvest conditions, René decided to not produce his Condrieu as it just did not obtain its normal breathtaking complexity. Nonetheless, all reds will be bottled. As René says, "Grand terroirs dominate grand cuvées." In other words, great terroir can neutralise less than advantageous weather to some extent so that soulful, enticing wines can still be produced - a concept that is shared with other excellent properties such as Château Margaux.

	€/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Côte Rôtie (limited)	POA	2011 – 2020+
<i>A true 'vin de terroir', this 2008 is northern Rhône Syrah through-and-through, delivering wild black currant notes, exotic spice, and notable minerality. Crunchy and pure, René used 30% stems (slightly less than usual) to add complexity and character. A year or two in bottle will allow this wine to open up and soften.</i>		
Côte Rôtie La Landonne (limited)	POA	2012 – 2026
<i>René's La Landonne is always the most masculine of his wines. The 2008 is wonderfully aromatic with sweet violet, brown sugar and spice. Roasted coffee and chocolate surface on the palate. An intriguing wine.</i>		
Côte Rôtie Côte Blonde (limited)	POA	2011 – 2024
<i>René's Côte Blonde is always the pinnacle of Côte Rôtie and could easily rival the region's best (including Guigal). Pretty and delicate on the nose, the 2008 opens up onto the palate with sweet raspberry, cinnamon and gentle black pepper. There is always a feminine lacy touch to this wine which carries it through to its notable length.</i>		



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. It has both red and whites and in many ways the wines are similar in their flavour profile to Hermitage, though are less concentrated, structured and complex. Because the soils are predominantly sandy, the wines are plump, silky and smooth and as a result 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, shy 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 in between racking.

He makes some of the best traditionally 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 seasoned wood some of which are large oak foudres. As a result of his non-interventionist style, his wines are elementally pure, complex and incredibly elegant. Some have even been 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.

He produces 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 tiny, particularly in challenging vintages when less is made.

His 2008 Hermitage was the best wine of the day when we tasted it. It left us speechless from its impressive concentration and complexity. Not only did Bernard carry out a draconian selection, but he has genuine faith that his wines will be the best they can be. Year-after-year, he is spot on. Bravo.

	€/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Hermitage	£375.00	2012 – 2022
<i>This 2008 is just fabulous. Sweet and aromatic with notes of brown sugar, juicy griotte cherry and violets. Fleshy and round yet with notable purity and focus, this is curvaceous and wonderfully fresh. Carnal yet elevated. Sublime.</i>		

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 original family 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 makes them particularly user-friendly and excellent value for money.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Crozes Hermitage 2008	£75.00	2010 – 2013
<i>An aromatic nose and gentle palate of crushed red bramble fruit, red cherries and fennel seed. Soft tannins make this 2008 notably approachable, and it will be ready to drink upon release. A refined and pleasant Crozes with no hard edges in sight.</i>		



DOMAINE DU COLOMBIER, Mercurol

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 barrels that are more concentrated and age worthy. In addition, he makes 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.

Florent was really impressed with the quality of his wines in 2008. He feels that they have turned out much better than anything he could have anticipated. “Far from being catastrophic”, they are actually very delicious.

	<i>£/cs in Bond</i>	<i>Drinking Dates</i>
Hermitage Blanc (limited)	£215.00 per 6	2010 – 2016

Excellent poise and freshness are present in this noble white wine. Ethereal to the touch, it displays notes of pear, citrus zest and underlying minerality.

Crozes Hermitage Cuvée Gaby	£155.00	2010 – 2018
Crozes Hermitage Cuvée Gaby Magnums	£165.00 per 6	2011 – 2019

Named after Florent's father, Cuvée Gaby is this domaine's 'tête de cuvée' Crozes. It is produced from the first pressing of the grapes which contains the richest and sweetest juice. It is no slacker in 2008 as it reveals a deep colour and a plump palate of sweet blueberry, crunchy red currant, toasty spice and zesty black pepper.

Hermitage	£399.00	2011 – 2020
Hermitage Magnums	£409.00 per 6	2012 – 2022

Dark and brooding, this 2008 was a bit on the shy side at the time of tasting, but the palate revealed a dense sweet core, chewy tannins and a fresh, crisp finish. Bittersweet chocolate and brown sugar interlace for added complexity and length.



CORNAS

This most southerly appellation of the Northern Rhône for reds 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 most 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.

ST. PERAY

St Péray is probably the least known (and understood) appellation of the Rhône Valley. Like Condrieu, it is only for white wine but instead of Viognier, Marsanne is queen here. Its lady-in-waiting is Roussanne which contributes approximately 10% to the vineyard area. Unique to the region, it has been historically known for its sparkling wines which make up 90% of the production. For many years, their esoteric wines were largely ignored by the drinking public apart from local consumption. But recently, there has been a renaissance in the area with good producers harnessing the region's and grape's innate qualities and creating excellent still wines. This new focus has attracted the likes of Robert Parker who has given wines such as Alain Voge's 2007 Fleur de Crussol an impressive 92 points, calling it "brilliant" and describing the region as having "undeniable potential". This is a far cry from how he described the region's wines in 1997 as "dull, somewhat odd, uninteresting" (Wines of the Rhône Valley, 1997). It just goes to show that a bit of imagination, passion and hard work can go a long way.



DOMAINE ALAIN VOGÉ, Cornas

Alain Vogé 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. 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, control vinification and help 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, whites from 100% Marsanne. Though St Péray used to be renowned for sparkling wines, today, most winemakers produce still wines and Vogé's is "one of that appellation's finest" according to Robert Parker who further describes it as a "Chablis look-alike".

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
St Péray Fleur de Crussol	£225.00	2010 – 2015

This is the second time we have offered Alain's Fleur de Crussol en primeur. Produced from 70 year-old vines, the 2008 is incredibly floral with succulent pear, honey and citrus zest. Incredibly fresh, it is already delicious though a short time in bottle will allow it to open up and express its potential.

Cornas Vieilles Vignes	£299.00	2010 – 2017
Cornas Vieilles Vignes Magnums	£309.00 per 6	2011 – 2019

Typically our favourite cuvée due to its sheer balance and charismatic personality. Notably mineral, the 2008 is plump with ripe damson plum, sweet blackberry and crunchy red cherry. Particularly appealing and pretty, it finishes on its finesse and freshness. Like 2007, they will be incorporating the Vieilles Fontaines (the oldest and best vines of the domaine) into the 2008 Vieilles Vignes for further concentration and complexity.



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, Beaufort 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

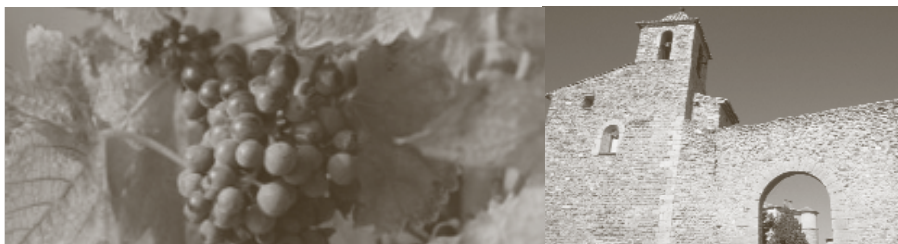
Promoted from Côtes du Rhône Villages in 1990, Vacqueyras is one of the newest and least known appellations to emerge from the southern Rhône. Stylistically, its wines are rich and plump with more complexity and concentration than Côtes du Rhône, but perhaps with slightly less concentration than its 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 – but 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 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 style. Its hierarchy begins with the fruity and light Côtes du Rhône Primeur, before continuing onto the plump and friendly Côtes du Rhône, the more concentrated 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, age worthy 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 a depth of Mediterranean beauty – the rambling hillsides, the warm colour of the earth, the delicate and enchanting scents of the countryside. At such moments, one may think that life could not get much better, until one tastes at Clos des Cazaux. Very few people are familiar with Vacqueyras, and it is unfortunate for this appellation makes 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.

They are particularly popular with the locals as well as the tourists who return every year. Most of the time when we arrive, their tasting room is full of people who are eager to buy their current releases. And who can blame them? Their wines are delicious year-in and year-out and this includes their balanced and appealing 2008s.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Vacqueyras Cuvée St. Roch	£89.00	2011 – 2017

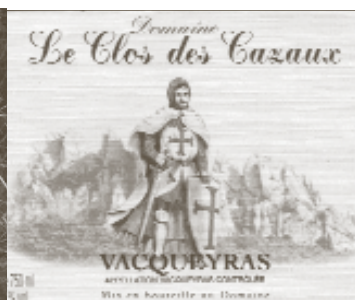
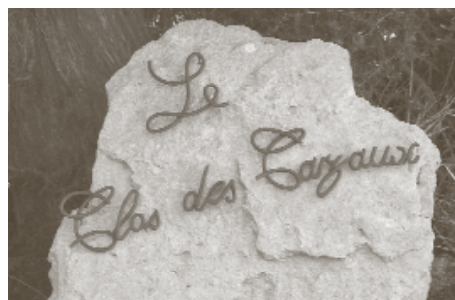
One of our favourite southern Rhône wines for its sheer likeability, the 2008 Cuvée St. Roch delivers a pretty and aromatic nose of ripe red raspberry, strawberry and gentle black pepper. Its delicious sweet core makes it particularly charming.

Vacqueyras Cuvée des Templiers	£99.00	2012 – 2018
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While Grenache dominates the St. Roch, this cuvée is always produced with a high percentage of Syrah which gives it a much more brooding, masculine and darker style. On the nose, it displays a wildness with its 'garrigue', meaty notes and black bramble fruits. It finishes mineral, focused and pure.

Gigondas La Tour Sarrazine	£119.00	2011 – 2019
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Produced from well-draining slopes on the Dentelles de Montmirail, this Gigondas was a bit coy on the nose but more expressive on the palate offering red cherry, strawberry and underlying savoury notes. A fine, characterful Gigondas. Produced from blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre.



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.

Eric was very optimistic about his 2008s despite having 30% less than a normal year. Like elsewhere, super selection was key and this attention to detail enabled Eric's wines to shine. He describes them as fine, ethereal and linear. Similar to 2004 but even more elegant.

	<small>£/cs in Bond</small>	<small>Drinking Dates</small>
Côtes du Rhône	£75.00	2011 – 2016+

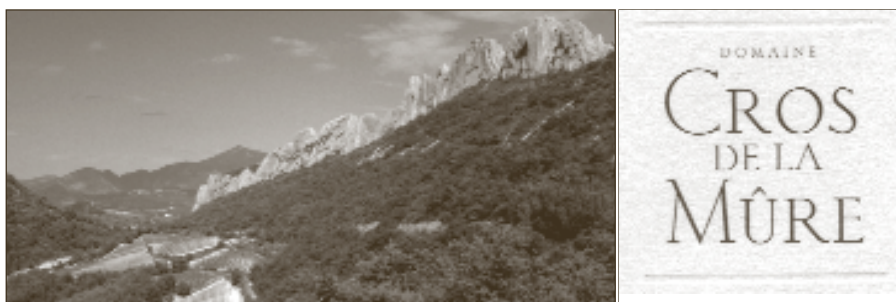
Eric produces one of the grandest Côtes du Rhône we know. The 2008 offers a wonderfully perfumed nose of violet, Szechuan pepper and sweet raspberries. Yields were miniscule in 2008 – a mere 12 hl/ha – which contributed to its richness. For even further complexity and concentration, Eric decided to blend in his 08 Massif d'Uchaux, a wine that is normally produced from a single vineyard of 80-100 year-old vines.

Gigondas	£195.00	2011 – 2022+
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An incredible Gigondas that does not lose sight of its typicity, this 2008 is wonderfully aromatic with black currant, cinnamon, 'garrigue' and sweet black pepper. Enticingly wild. The palate displays a slight rusticity that adds charm and character. This was such a joy to taste. We can only imagine the pleasure it will deliver if it accompanies a steak or a wild boar stew.

Châteauneuf du Pape Le Bois Pointu (limited)	£425.00	2012 – 2022+
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The 2008 is Eric's second vintage of this wine. It is produced from two parcels of very old vines in exceptional locations. La Croix de Bois is situated behind Vieux Télégraphe and is composed of Châteauneuf's ubiquitous galet stones and deep red, iron-rich clay. It produces wines that are masculine and powerful. Its other half, Le Pointu, is firmly placed next to Château Rayas with a saliceous sandstone soil that produces aromatic, fruity and elegant wines. The 2008 shows all the focus and refinement that the vintage has to offer with pretty red cherry, tomato confit and floral notes. This just melts on the tongue.



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 unsuspecting 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, Cendrine 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 prevent 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.

Their 2008 thoroughly reflected the vintage – poised, pure and perfumed.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Gigondas	£159.00	2011 – 2019
Gigondas Magnums	£169.00	2012 – 2021

A very pretty 2008 that is a touch on the wild side with its aromatic notes of garrigue and game. But its impressive fruit comes out on the palate as wild blackberries, black cherries and cassis. Not a powerhouse like the 2005 or 2007, but its sheer elegance is noteworthy and admirable.



CHÂTEAUNEUF DU PAPE

The emperor of southern Rhône appellations. Created in 1936, Châteauneuf du Pape was the first A.O.C. in France. 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 Papes are master examples of wines that can be approached 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 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 as also permitted. Many people consider it to be the most 'northern' of the southern Rhône appellations due to its higher altitude (400 metres above sea level) and geographic location (30 km north of Châteauneuf du Pape). These factors enable its wines to retain freshness and focus, notably in warmer vintages.

DOMAINE CLOS DU 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 late father Paul in the early 1990s. Traditional producers with a modern twist, Vincent uses no stems in vinification and ferments in large ceramic-lined vats, but he does age his red varieties in large, old foudres in a humidity-controlled cellar. In addition, his is 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.

His fruit comes from multiple parcels that span the appellation which include the esteemed, La Crau. As a result, he has become a master of matching specific varieties with 'terroir' and microclimates that best suit his domaine's style. Needless to say, he has one of the longest harvests in order to pick the grapes at the peak of perfection.

The 2008 vintage tried to be a bit difficult for Vincent, but he remained undeterred. He fought back with miniscule yields of 16.8 hl/ha (the region's general average is 33hl/ha) and a notable 12 organic treatments on the vines (they will be officially certified in 2010). All this work produced wines that are poised and elegant with lots of minerality. 'Très digeste' as the French say.

Quantities are down by 20% compared to last year. Please note that previous purchasers will be given priority when allocating these wines.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc	£325.00	2010 – 2016
<i>Clos des Papes' white wine is produced from all 6 Châteauneuf du Pape white varieties – Roussanne, Marsanne, Grenache Gris, Bourboulenc, Clairette and Picardan. Particularly refreshing, the 2008 is aromatic with notes of ripe pear, honeysuckle and crunchy minerals. This is a wonderful wine for those who generally find Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc too heavy.</i>		

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Châteauneuf du Pape	£ 410.00	2011 – 2022+
Châteauneuf du Pape Halves	£ 420.00 per 24	2011 – 2020+
Châteauneuf du Pape Magnums	£ 420.00 per 6	2012 – 2024
Châteauneuf du Pape Jeroboam	£ 175.00 each	2013 – 2026

A delicious and refined wine, the 2008 offers a core intense blackberry fruit, sweet spice, red cherries and ripe, round tannins. Very pretty and silky. The vintage conditions allowed for less alcohol – 14.5% compared to its more recent 15.6% which makes a refreshing change. Vincent compares the 2008 to the 2001, a beautifully poised wine that we showed at our 2005 vintage tasting and all loved.

CHÂTEAU DE BEAUCASTEL, Châteauneuf du Pape

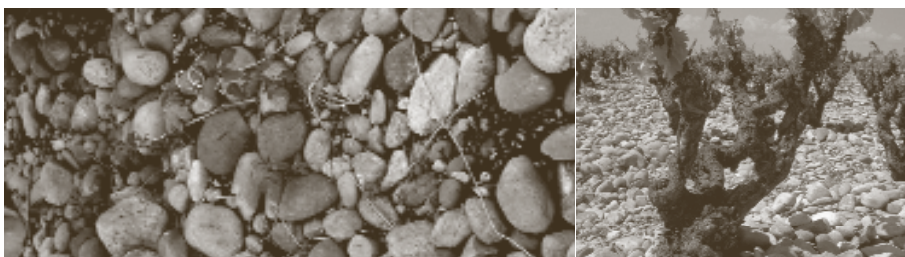
Château de Beaucastel is undoubtedly one of the most famous domaines in the southern Rhône and probably the most recognisable Châteauneuf du Pape. Created in the early 1900s, this domaine has passed down through several illustrious pairs of hands including those of the dynamic and philosophic Jacques Perrin and now to those of his two sons, Jean-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. Their uniqueness comes from various factors including 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%) which contributes notable aromatics of roasted game and chewy, powerful tannins.

The Perrins are some of the nicest people in the Rhône. They are also incredibly modest. Despite having a mini-empire, each year they personally greet us as if we were their most important client. This past September was no different as Marc Perrin warmly welcomed us with an array of samples. Instead of the usual 20, there were only 7 bottles. Though all producers had less wine in 2008, the Perrins were down by an incredible 50% overall. Their draconian selection not only produced less Beaucastel; they also produced fewer appellations. For example, they will be making no Hommage à Jacques Perrin. Rather, they have added these excellent grapes to their straight Châteauneuf du Pape. This dedication to perfection was transparent in their wines' incredible quality.

Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc £ 210.00 per 6 2010 – 2018

A poised and pretty white that is plush yet thoroughly uplifting. Its perfumed nose of honeysuckle and peach blossom draws one into its fresh and tender palate. It finishes long and pure on aromatic spice.



	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc Vieilles Vignes Roussanne	£ 350.00 per 6	2010 – 2020

Beaucastel's Vieilles Vignes Roussanne is produced from a majority of vines that are over 100 years old. The 2008 is a beautiful Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc with leesy notes, loads of fruit and fresh almonds. Its palate is rich and complex with a delicious sweet core. It offers layer-upon-layer of complexity. Its lower alcohol of 13.6% contributes to its wonderful freshness and balance.

Châteauneuf du Pape	£ 210.00 per 6	2012 – 2022+
Châteauneuf du Pape Halves	£ 440.00 per 24	2011 – 2022+
Châteauneuf du Pape Magnums	£ 440.00 per 6	2013 – 2024+
Châteauneuf du Pape Jeroboam	£ 175.00 each	2013 – 2026+

Meaty with a plethora of ripe, sweet red and black fruits, the 2008 is particularly easy to like. Beyond its hedonistic fruit intensity, it is sleek and smooth offering lots of freshness and minerality. Beaucastel is one of the few Châteauneuf du Papes produced from all 13 varieties. Its 2008 contains more Mourvèdre than usual (40% vs. the normal 30%) due this variety's excellent quality in 2008. Very impressive.

DOMAINES PERRIN

Over the years and with the addition of Jean-Pierre's sons, Marc, Pierre and Thomas to the family business, they have developed a separate range of wines. This range includes their well-known Côtes du Rhône Réserve as well as various 'crus' which embody the individuality and character of each of their appellation areas. It also includes the most recent Rhône appellation, Vinsobres. Using the same savoir faire as Beaucastel, these wines always provide excellent value.

Vinsobres Les Cornuds	£75.00	2010 – 2015
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Over the past few years, this wine has won various titles such as Best French Value Wine and Top Rhône Valley Value from Robert Parker, Decanter and numerous others. Marc Perrin is adamant in saying that Vinsobres provides the best terroir in the Southern Rhône for Syrah. Each vintage we have tasted has proved his theory. Their 2008 is just as delicious as ever with aromatic notes of violets, strawberry and subtle pepper spice. Very polished. Produced from 50% Syrah and 50% Grenache.



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-1980s. 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.

Like the Perrins, Jean-Paul was down 50% in his production due to his incredibly meticulous selection. As a result, no Cuvée Félix was produced. He preferred to make one cuvée only – the best one possible. We were delighted with the results. Due to its freshness, opulent fruit and notable balance, he compares his 2008 to vintages such as 1993 and 1997.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Châteauneuf du Pape Bois de Boursan	£179.00	2012 – 2020
Châteauneuf du Pape Bois de Boursan Magnums	£189.00 per 6	2013 – 2022
Châteauneuf du Pape Bois de Boursan Jeroboam	£89.00 each	2013 – 2024

Lush and extrovert, this 2008 is a charmer. Aromatic with notes of ripe blackberry, blueberries and cassis. On the palate, it is opulent, round and concentrated with lots of curvaceous fruit and underlying minerality. Finishes fresh and long. A seductress.



DOMAINE FONT DE MICHELLE, Bédarrides

Font de Michelle is owned and operated by Jean and Michel Gonnet, 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.

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

Guillaume, Michel’s son, has been working closely with his father for over the past 5 years. He was in good spirits regarding the 2008 vintage. Despite having the quality to produce Etienne Gonnet, they decided to forego bottling it separately as they preferred to create a very good straight Châteauneuf du Pape instead.

	<i>£/cs in Bond</i>	<i>Drinking Dates</i>
Châteauneuf du Pape	£189.00	2011 – 2019+
Châteauneuf du Pape Magnums	£199.00 per 6	2012 – 2020+

The 2008 opens up beautifully with a nose of violets, dried fruits and savoury notes. It offers notable concentration and focus with lots of crunchy freshness and subtle liquorice flavours to add additional lift and purity. Guillaume feels that the 2008's palate will retain its fruit character as it evolves rather than becoming spicy as other vintages have done. Its sweet core supports its firm tannic structure to its long finish.



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. The Languedoc tends to offer some of the world's best wine values. This is due to its reputation for producing inexpensive wine combined with state-of-the-art advances in viticulture and vinification. 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. Though the Vin de Pays category was originally intended to denote simple country wines, it 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 in the western Languedoc, an area steeped in Cathare history. 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 comprise 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 create 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 French 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.

For the last twelve months, Samuel Guibert has been telling us that the 2008 was incredible and to be compared with their 1998 the greatest wine they've ever made. So on our last trip, we were extremely excited about tasting the 2008. It is fabulous and undeniably the best wine we've ever tasted from them. Their unusual micro-climate produced conditions that were exceptional and created perfectly ripe grapes with fresh acidity and sweet, refined tannins. The 2008 is a vinous powerhouse which is nonetheless notably elegant and balanced.

	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Mas de Daumas Gassac Blanc 2009	£109.00 per 6	2010 - 2016
Mas de Daumas Gassac Blanc 2009 Halves	£119.00 per 12	2010 - 2015
Mas de Daumas Gassac Blanc 2009 Magnums	£119.00 per 3	2011 - 2017

Unlike other domaines, Mas de Daumas offers their white wine really En Primeur. That is, before it's even been completely finished. But their quality is always excellent and the 2009 looks to be a very good vintage which will deliver lots of fruit and concentration. Stylistically, they feel that it will most likely have the fleshiness of 2006 with the refined precision of 2008.

Mas de Daumas Gassac Rouge 2008	£109.00 per 6	2012 - 2024
Mas de Daumas Gassac Rouge 2008 Halves	£119.00 per 12	2011 - 2022+
Mas de Daumas Gassac Rouge 2008 Magnums	£119.00 per 3	2012 - 2024+
Mas de Daumas Gassac Rouge 2008 Jeroboam	£109.00 each	2014 - 2026+
Mas de Daumas Gassac Rouge 2008 Methusaleh	£215.00 each	2015 - 2028+

Tasted from barrel, the 2008 is seriously impressive with a glorious nose of sweet bramble fruit, aromatic spices and pencil lead. The palate is concentrated and powerful with pronounced complexity and velvety, ample tannins. Just delicious. This could easily be a top notch Bordeaux. All Claret collectors take note!

CHATEAU ST JACQUES D'ALBAS, Laure Minervois

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 belong to a classified growth Château in Bordeaux. He also 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) which further incorporates organic and biodynamic principles. Graham's goal was to encourage his various parcels to express their unique 'terroir' naturally.

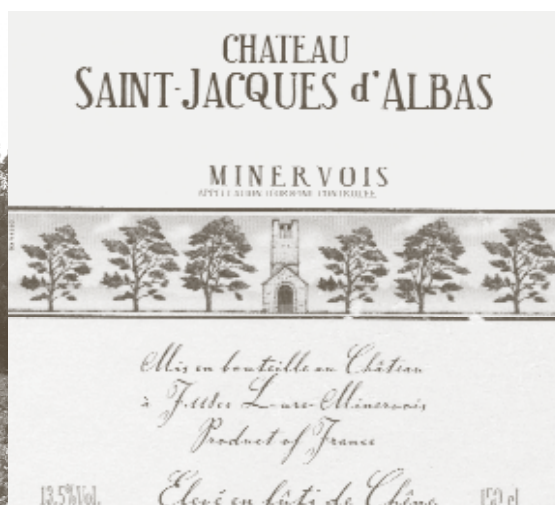
His work has paid off. Multiple wine critiques including Jancis Robinson and Bettane & Desseauve, *the* wine guide for France, have reviewed his wines highly and described his property as "a domaine to watch" (Bettane & Desseauve). But he has not stopped there. Each vintage he pushes himself further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

	<small>£/cs in Bond</small>	<small>Drinking Dates</small>
Minervois Château St Jacques d'Albas 2008	£65.00	2011 - 2017

Graham's Château St. Jacques d'Albas is the estate's flagship wine that we feel best exemplifies their style – plush and pure with notable character and southern charm. It is produced with a majority of Syrah though a good smattering of Grenache fleshes it out while a dash of Carignan adds spice, structure and freshness. The 2008 offers a ripe and uplifted palate of freshly crushed bramble fruit, aromatic spice and underlying savoury notes.

Minervois La Chapelle 2008	£135.00	2012 - 2020
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Produced from the domaine's best Syrah grapes, this powerful, full-bodied wine is aged in oak barrels for 18 months before being bottled. The result is a mouthful of lush fruit, vanilla, roasted coffee and 'garrigue' flavours that integrate nicely into the wine's velvety tannins. A pinch of Grenache is added for extra depth and fleshiness.



PROVENCE

Certainly one of the most beautiful wine regions in France, Provence begins at the French Riviera with 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 renowned 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 architecture 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 the local Grenache and Carignan, he planted 15 hectares of Syrah and Cabernet which he then followed with a smattering of Marsanne, Roussanne (from cuttings at Beaucautel), Chardonnay and most recently Grenache Blanc.

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 and barrels 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 Vin 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 describes his 2008s as a pretty vintage that offer wonderful balance between sweet fruit, structure and freshness. His 2008 Rouge will be drinking earlier (and providing much pleasure) before his incredibly massive 2007. We think this is a good thing.



	£/cs in Bond	Drinking Dates
Domaine de Trévallon Rouge 2008	£250.00	2013 – 2022
Domaine de Trévallon Rouge 2008 Magnums	£260.00 per 6	2014 – 2024
Domaine de Trévallon Rouge 2008 Jeroboam	£105.00 each	2015 – 2026

The 2008 is a union of the aristocratic Cabernet Sauvignon and the zesty Syrah. It delivers layer-upon-layer of delicious red and blackberry fruit, cassis liqueur and subtle earthy flavours that lead to an alluring wildness on the finish. Voluminous and velvety yet with Trévallon's trademark structure intact, this is a lovely wine that expresses its unique house style as well as the elegance of the 2008 vintage.

Domaine de Trévallon Blanc 2009 (very limited) £189.00 per 6 2011 – 2018
A rare wine indeed, Eloi produces this beauty from Marsanne, Roussanne, Chardonnay and now Grenache Blanc. He describes the 2009 vintage as more opulent than his 2008 with fleshier fruit and less acidity. Please note that due to its miniscule production, this wine will be highly allocated.



TERMS AND CONDITIONS

All wines are offered In Bond England (i.e. all shipping and bottling charges are included). We will arrange shipment from the domaines in autumn 2010. 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 £9.50 ex-vat per case per annum.

When you decide to take delivery, Duty and Vat at the prevailing rate will become payable. These charges are at present £19.26 per 12-bottle case and 15% respectively. Delivery will be charged at cost.

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