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# Decanter

## Best-value Rhône

50 delicious reds to drink now

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# 50 top Rhône reds £8-£18

Our expert panel has tasted through 120 reds from the northern and southern Rhône to bring you 50 of the best bargains available in the UK today - at prices that won't break the bank. Judge Matt Walls analyses the results

THE RHÔNE MIGHT be one of the classic wine regions of France, but it remains just as fruitful for the bargain hunter as for the serious collector. Rhône reds in particular have long had a reputation for delivering good value and this recent tasting of inexpensive reds largely confirmed it.

At this price level, the named village wines performed strongly and 'generally showed their individuality and quality', according to panel judge Joanna Simon. Cairanne performed particularly well - justifying its recent elevation from Côtes du Rhône-Villages to AC status - with Plan de Dieu and Massif d'Uchaux not far behind.

There were plenty of solid wines from southern Rhône crus like Vinsobres and Lirac. Though better known, Vacqueyras and Rasteau and were less reliable. Good-quality Châteauneuf-du-Pape has long sat outside this price bracket, and it seems that Gigondas, once seen as 'the poor man's Châteauneuf', is heading the same way.

One surprise was the quality of some of

the straight AC Côtes du Rhône. As you might expect at this most basic level, quality oscillated wildly; but there are some delicious wines if you know what to buy.

Little from the northern Rhône fell into our price bracket but the cheapest Crozes-Hermitage. Most that we tasted were from the tricky 2013 and 2014 vintages; quality was inconsistent, but a handful delivered.

The 2013s at this level in both northern and southern Rhône are drinking well, and in general are more successful than the '14s. The more robust 2012s were still going strong, but the '11s were past their best.

That we weren't tasting richer vintages may have been a blessing; we found few examples of jammy fruit or unbalanced alcohol. 'I was very impressed with the wines' freshness,' said *Decanter's* Christelle Guibert. 'Overall I felt the oak was very well managed, with only a few exceptions.'

Simon summed up our impressions well: 'Overall, it was a solid performance, especially in the price range.'

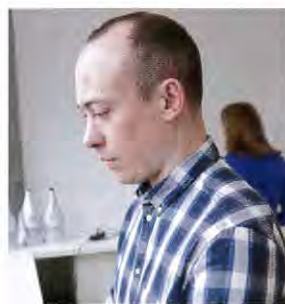
## The tasters



**Christelle Guibert** is *Decanter's* tastings director, having worked in wine for more than 20 years



**Joanna Simon** is a judge at the Decanter World Wine Awards, and a wine and food writer who publishes the *www.joannasimon.com* website



**Matt Walls** is a freelance wine writer and author with a special interest in the Rhône. He also blogs on *www.mattwalls.co.uk*

**1 Cave de Tain, Crozes-Hermitage 2013 91**  
£10.99 **Booths, Woodwinters**  
Classic Crozes nose with perfumed fresh berry fruit underscored by rich notes of pepper and roasted meats. The alluringly supple and persistent palate offers a ripe fruit core delicately enrobed in soft tannins. Delicious Syrah silkiness. **Drink** 2016-2018  
**Alcohol** 12.5%



**6 Domaine de la Renjarde, Les Cassagnes de la Nerthe, Côtes du Rhône-Villages 2013 90**  
£12.75-£16.99 **Berry Bros & Rudd, Champagnes & Chateaux**  
Intense, youthful nose of loganberries, strawberries and cherries underscored by a hint of spicy liquorice. Fresh mouthfeel with mineral, dry tannins delivering an appealing finesse. Made with precision and now coming into its own. **Drink** 2016-2017  
**Alc** 14%

**2** **Domaine Oratoire  
St-Martin, Réserve  
des Seigneurs, Côtes  
du Rhône-Villages**

**Cairanne 2013** 91  
£16.75 **Berry Bros & Rudd**  
Wonderfully aromatic with a gamey richness overlaid by notes of rosemary and lavender. The palate is full bodied and intense, with grainy, integrated tannins and a superb long finish. Characterful wine that resonates Rhône.  
**Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 14%

**3** **Caves de Rasteau,  
Ortas Tradition,  
Rasteau 2013** 90  
£13.25 **The Flying**

**Corkscrew**  
Rich aromas of earthy, brambly fruit and dark chocolate lifted by perfumed black cherry. Powerful yet polished, persistent palate with concentrated fruit and an attractive hint of orange freshness on the finish. Pair this with a hearty stew and it would really hit the spot.  
**Drink** 2017-2019 **Alc** 14%

**4** **Domaine Amadiou,  
Vieilles Vignes,  
Côtes du Rhône-  
Villages Cairanne**

**2014** 90  
£14.50 **Stone Vine & Sun**  
Appealingly perfumed strawberries, cherries and bramble fruits waft up from the glass. On the palate they are bolstered by a fine tannic structure, delivering an elegantly poised and wonderfully fresh mouthfeel. Eminently drinkable with a lingering, clean finish. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 14%

**5** **Domaine Chaume-  
Arnaud, Vinsobres  
2013** 90  
£15.95 **Berry Bros &**

**Rudd, Woodwinters**  
Savoury meatiness to the nose, delightfully underpinned by plenty of sweet black fruit. Structured and robust in the mouth, yet combining lovely detail and freshness with the perfect level of ripeness. Interesting complexity with great length and a lovely fresh finish. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 14%



**7** **Domaine de  
L'Amandine, Côtes  
du Rhône-Villages  
Séguret 2012** 90

£11.95 **The Flying Corkscrew**  
Attractive, berry-driven nose with sweet notes of strawberry jam. On the palate, the silky milk-chocolate richness is lifted by a raspberry backbone that steers the palate towards a bright, fresh finish. Well-crafted and very drinkable.  
**Drink** 2016 **Alc** 13.5%

**8** **Domaine des  
Pasquiers, Côtes du  
Rhône-Villages Plan  
de Dieu 2014** 90

£14.99 **Bottle Apostle, Dulwich Vintners, La Marchande, Philglas & Swiggot**  
Perfumed plums and baked bramble fruit enriched by alluring notes of sweet chestnut. Agreeable rusticity to the mouthfeel. Lovely spicy depth, ebullient fruit and ripe, grainy tannins enlivened by a delicious mineral freshness. Lots to enjoy here. **Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 14%

**9** **Domaine St-Gayan,  
Gigondas 2012** 90  
£16.95 **Yapp Bros**

Fragrant spiced sweet cherries with a fresh leafy lift and a hint of rosemary. The spicy cherry theme continues on the palate where the soft, yielding fruit is underscored by rich notes of cocoa and vanilla and coated with rounded tannins. Full bodied, developed and appealingly harmonious.  
**Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 14%

**10** **Vignobles  
Verzier,  
Chante-Perdrix,  
Empreinte,**

**St-Joseph 2013** 90  
£17.50 **Christopher Piper**  
Bright, spicy nose with soft notes of blackberries and medicinal herbs. Characterful palate of fresh blackcurrants underpinned by a touch of tarry liquorice and rounded out by milk chocolate oak. The rustic feel is carried through the clean, herbal finish. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 12.5% ➤

For full UK stockist details, see p111

**11 Charles Helfenbein, Brézème, Côtes du Rhône 2013** 89  
£15.75 Great Western

**Wine**  
Soft, blackberry-toned nose with enticing smoky notes and a hint of rosemary. Peppery, savoury palate offering plenty of impact. Well-structured and persistent with good depth, fine-grained tannins and crisp acidity. An interesting wine, showing potential. **Drink** 2017-2018 **Alc** 13%

**12 Château Beauchêne, Les Sens de Syrah, Côtes du Rhône**

**2014** 89  
£14.99 Taurus Wines  
Brooding blackberry fruit underlined by a seam of vanilla oak and a hint of aromatic herbs. The intense impact of black fruit on the palate is whisked along by keen acidity and enriched by notes of scorched earth. Juicy and well spiced with an appealingly savoury tannic frame. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 13.5%

**13 Château Beauchêne, Premier Terroir, Côtes du Rhône**

**2012** 89  
£11.99 Private Cellar  
Fragrant fresh red cherries with a hint of herbs and an appealing note of orange peel. Barely noticeable tannins deliver a creamy texture to the warm, generous palate which is enhanced by notes of vanilla, chocolate and nutmeg. A bright line of acidity brings pleasing vitality and freshness. Ambitious but it works. **Drink** 2016 **Alc** 13.5%

**14 Château Gigognan, Bois des Moines, Côtes du Rhône-Villages 2013** 89

£16 Humble Grape  
An intriguing aromatic blend of strawberries, cocoa and herbs carries across onto the succulent palate which is full bodied with good tannic grip. A bright, raspberry-toned acidity lends lovely definition and a real sense of freshness, lifting the savoury, earthy tone. **Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 14%



**15 Domaine des Amouriers, Vacqueyras 2012** 89

£17.49 Ellis Wines  
Lifted herb and black fruit nose with a hint of sun-warmed figs. Full-bodied and firmly structured palate with powerful tannins, a solid oak frame and notable alcohol warmth. Showing promise, but needs a little time to mellow. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 14.5%

**16 Domaine Le Clos des Cazaux, Cuvée St-Roch, Vacqueyras 2012** 89

£13 Goedhuis & Co, The Wine Society  
Sweet, fragrant black cherries with notes of vanilla and a hint of smoke. Soft yet powerful palate supported by ripe tannins. The concentrated fruit core is underscored by rich notes of nutmeg and mocha which lead to a savoury, herbal finish. **Drink** 2016 **Alc** 14.5%

**17 Famille Bréchet, Moulin des Chênes, Lirac 2012** 89

£13 Askewine, Drinkmonger, Noble Green, Reserve Wines, Scarlet Wines, Shills of Cockermonth, The Fine Wine Co, The Wine Chambers, Winetrust100, Wright Wine Co  
Nutty, spicy nose with hints of brooding, brambly fruit. Soft, fleshy and attractively velvety palate. Nicely rounded with spice and sweet, dark fruit backed by crisp acidity and oak which lead to a long finish. **Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 14%

**18 Famille Perrin, Coudoulet de Beaucastel, Côtes du Rhône**

**2013** 89  
£14.96-£16.99 Goedhuis & Co, Lay & Wheeler, Millésima, Woodwinters  
Rich aromas of sun-warmed earth and stones lifted by black cherry fruit. Firm, structured palate packed with sweet, juicy strawberries and cassis and sprinkled with pepper. Fine, grainy tannins and good length. Rustic but real. **Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 13.5%

For full UK stockist details, see p111

19 **Famille Perrin, Les Cornuds, Vinsobres 2013** 89

£9.99-£11.99 Booths, Coop, Marks & Spencer, Millésima  
Rich notes of black cherry jam and milk chocolate march boldly onto the palate where they are sprinkled with black pepper and a hint of thyme. Powerful and structured yet with a softness of tannin which lends a rounded mouthfeel. Pleasing, long, warm finish. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 14.5%**

20 **Gilles Robin, Papillon, Crozes-Hermitage 2014** 89

£15.95-£16.25 Great Western Wine, Lea & Sandeman  
Meaty nose lifted by bright mineral notes and a hint of thyme. Rounded and juicy in the mouth with sweetly ripe black fruit lending appealing silkiness. Light on its feet as it skips towards a fresh finish. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 13%**

21 **La Cave Les Coteaux du Rhône, Arboise, Côtes du Rhône-Villages Massif d'Uchaux 2013** 89

£8.70-£8.95 Hawkshead Wines, SH Jones, Slurp, Tanners  
Alluringly perfumed black cherries pick up delicious notes of spice as they carry on across the palate, gaining intensity and richness. Full-bodied mouthfeel with muscular tannins encasing the juicy fruit. Lovely long finish. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 13.5%**

22 **M Chapoutier, Les Meysonniers, Crozes-Hermitage 2014** 89

£16.50-£17 Millésima, Sainsbury's, Tanners  
Smoky, peppery nose with appetising flashes of vivid black berries. Nicely textured, supple palate with pure black fruit enlivened by fresh acidity and light tannins. Remarkably fruity with decent length. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 13%**



23 **Marks & Spencer, Les Closiers, Lirac 2013** 89

£10 Marks & Spencer  
Alluring herbal aromas with a hint of liquorice. Fresh juicy cherries enriched by creamy milk chocolate tones deliver a palate that is full but not hefty, with fine tannins enhancing the clarity. Enjoyably rustic with good length and freshness. **Drink 2016 Alc 14%**

24 **Mas de Restanques, Vacqueyras 2013** 89

£17.50 The Flying Corkscrew  
Meaty, gamey nose lifted by herbal notes followed by a rich palate offering good depth of chewy dark fruit underpinned by ripe tannins. Needs a little more time to settle. **Drink 2016-2018 Alc 14%**

25 **Réserve de Fleur, Les Coumbarelles, Côtes du Rhône 2014** 89

£8.50 Bablake Wines  
Appealing aromas of plums and blackberries with a hint of strawberries and rhubarb. A light tannic grip enhances the plump, generous, juicy palate. Appetising spiciness and a long, clean finish. Real Rhône character here. **Drink 2016-2018 Alc 14%**

26 **Boutinot, Les Six, Côtes du Rhône-Villages Cairanne 2014** 88

£13.99 Aitken Wines, Baccanalia, D Byrne & Co, Kwoff, Lewis & Cooper, Slurp, The Jolly Vintner, The Oxford Wine Co, Woodwinters  
Nutty, oak-toned nose with a touch of gingerbread. Supple, rounded palate but not lacking in appetising acidity. There's a touch of kirsch and cola to the black cherry fruit and a delightful dash of spice. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 13.5%** >

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27 Cave de Tain,  
Grand  
Classique,  
Crozes-

**Hermitage 2013** 88  
£14.75-£14.99 **Cork of the North,**  
**ND John, TJ Wines, Vin-est, The**  
**Wine Cellar, Woodwinters**  
Dark nose of liquorice-spiced  
fruit with savoury touches of  
pepper and tar. A green  
backbone and ripe, chewy  
tannins bring structure to the  
silky palate. Medium-bodied  
and showing good intensity.  
**Drink 2016 Alc 12.5%**

28 Caves de  
Rasteau,  
Ortas  
Prestige,

**Rasteau 2010** 88  
£16.50 **The Flying Corkscrew**  
Lifted spicy, floral, nutty nose  
with undertones of stewed  
blackberries. Powerful palate  
clad with more nutty, spicy  
oak and ripe, mouthcoating  
tannins but, remarkably, the  
rich fruit is still going strong.  
A mature southern Rhône that  
punches above its weight.  
**Drink 2016-2017 Alc 14.5%**

29 Cellier des  
Dauphins,  
Côtes du  
Rhône-

**Villages Massif d'Uchaux**  
**2014** 88  
£9.29 **Waitrose**  
Delightful nose of plums and  
blackberries with a bright hint  
of raspberries. A powerful  
wine with grunt, muscle and a  
long savoury finish, but there's  
an attractive cleanness and  
purity to the fruit flavours and  
lovely ripeness to the tannins.  
**Drink 2016-2018 Alc 13%**

30 Château  
Beaubois,  
Cuvée  
Expression,

**Costières de Nîmes 2013** 88  
£9.95 **The Flying Corkscrew**  
Strawberry aromas dance over  
appealing savoury hints of  
smoke and pepper. Youthful,  
medium-bodied, harmonious  
palate offering a pure fruit  
expression with further  
delightful peppery notes.  
Impressive style and finesse.  
**Drink 2016-2018 Alc 13.5%**



31 Château  
Beaubois,  
Elegance,  
Costières de

**Nîmes 2013** 88  
£12.50 **The Flying Corkscrew**  
Intriguing nose of spicy  
blackberries with gamey  
undertones and a touch of  
sweet red fruit which opens  
out to a full, ripe, rich, rounded  
palate packed with liquorice-  
spiced fruit and mouthcoating  
tannins. Decidedly southern  
Rhône Syrah with a nice rustic  
vibe. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 13.5%**

32 Château  
Rochecombe,  
Côtes du Rhône  
2013 88

£10.50 **Vintage Roots**  
Lively blackberry and black  
cherry aromas, and notes of  
fragrant herbs. Succulent, rich  
plum compote flavours are  
backed by sweet herbs and a  
peppery crunch. It has an  
opulent yet enticingly fresh  
mouthfeel, all enhanced by  
smooth tannins and a breezy  
finish. Polished and  
characterful. **Drink 2016-2017**  
**Alc 14%**

33 **Domaine des**  
**Carabiniers,**  
**Lunar Apogé,**  
**Lirac 2012** 88

£14.95 **The Flying Corkscrew**  
Soaring Syrah aromatics of  
smoky bacon, burnt herbs and  
ripe blackberries. The soft  
palate is held together and  
elegantly defined by textured  
tannins, fresh fruit and brisk  
acidity. With a delightful  
mineral edge on the finish, this  
is a great example of a mature  
Lirac. **Drink 2016 Alc 13.5%**

34 **Domaine des**  
**Entrefaux,**  
**Les Champs**  
**Fourné,**  
**Les Champs Fourné,**

**Crozes-Hermitage 2014** 88  
£14.50 **Christopher Piper**  
Vibrant red pepper and black  
olive aromatics with floral  
overtones. Round and supple  
palate with an appealing silky  
texture enlivened by bright  
peppery highlights. This is  
very drinkable, retaining an  
appetising freshness. **Drink**  
**2016 Alc 12.5%**

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35 **Domaine des Pasquiers, Côtes du Rhône-**

**Villages Sablet 2014 88**

£13-£15 La Marchande,

**Winegrowers Direct**

Open, expressive nose of sweet red fruit kissed by a touch of spice and brightened by a sprinkling of fresh herbs. The supple palate is lent real freshness by lively acidity and delightfully crunchy tannins.

**Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 14%

36 **Domaine Roche-Audran, Côtes du**

**Rhône-Villages Visan 2012 88**

£11.45 Christopher Piper

Smoky, rich, savoury nose followed by a dark fruited palate with blueberry and loganberry highlights and spicy notes of liquorice and black pepper. Firm, dry tannins and a seam of alcohol stand up to the bold flavours.

This wine is calling for meat!

**Drink** 2016 **Alc** 14%

37 **Jean-Luc Colombo, Les Forêts, Côtes du**

**Rhône 2014 88**

£14.50 Cotswold Vintners,

**Flagship Wines, Woodwinters**

Black cherry aromas march confidently across the ripe, supple palate where they are matched by attractive savoury notes from the oak and invigorated by a tangy freshness. A structured wine showing ambition.

**Drink**

2017-2020 **Alc** 13.5%

38 **La Compagnie Rhodanienne, Domaine de St-Alimant,**

**Rasteau 2013 88**

£8.99 Booths

The nose sings with peppery, lifted Syrah fruit over fleshy, red-berried Grenache and a slight note of witch hazel. Very soft on the palate: fleshy and giving but kept in check by supple tannins and a spine of herbs and spices. Natural, unforced style. Low alcohol too.

**Drink** 2016 **Alc** 13%



39 **Les Dauphins, Tête de Cuvée, Vinsobres 2014 88**

£10.50 Asda

Bright nose of raspberries, strawberries and Victoria plums tempered by a background note of pine needles. Intense and linear in the mouth with chewy, ripe tannins but lifted by ripe black fruit and savoury freshness on the finish. Still a little young.

**Drink** 2016-2018 **Alc** 14%

40 **Pierre Amadieu, Grande Réserve, Côtes du Rhône 2013 88**

£12-£13 AC Gallie, Champagnes & Chateaux, Love Wine, Maidenhead Wine Co

Bold aromas of black cherry jam followed by an intensely powerful palate where good fruit concentration is matched by enjoyably chewy tannins and lifted by a refreshing line of acidity. There's nice finesse here and a pleasing twist of liquorice.

**Drink** 2016 **Alc** 14%

41 **Vidal-Fleury, Cotes du Rhône 2013 88**

£10.99 Majestic,

Nethergate Wines Pure cherry and strawberry aromas bolstered by brooding roasted black fruit and a hint of almond. More powerful black fruit on the palate enhanced by a savoury twist of pepper. Tightly structured with neat, fine-grained tannins. Very impressive for a straight Cotes du Rhône.

**Drink** 2017-2019 **Alc** 14.5%

42 **Vidal-Fleury, Ventoux 2014 88**

£9.99 Bablake

Wines, Hall & Debney, Oddbins, Wadebridge Wines, Whole Foods Redolent nose proffering an autumnal perfume of black cherries and blackcurrants that waft onto the palate where they are invigorated by a peppery freshness. Pleasant upright structure with good depth and a fresh, clean finish.

**Drink** 2016-2017 **Alc** 13.5% ➤

For full UK stockist details, see p111

43 **Château Courac, Côtes du Rhône-**

**Villages Laudun 2012** 87  
 £10.70 **Tanners**  
 Pretty, floral nose of lavender and a touch of vanilla gives way to a full, powerful palate of black cherry and dark chocolate. The concentrated flavours are elegantly lifted by firm acidity, a seam of peppery freshness and an appetising mineral edge on the finish. **Drink 2016-2018 Alc 14%**

44 **Domaine Chamfort, Rasteau 2014** 87

£18 **Be My Wine, Planet of the Grapes**  
 On the nose the black fruit is enrobed by rich, oaky tones and a violet lift. Full and rounded in the mouth with more ripe oak cleverly used to soften the tannins. Enjoyably aromatic and fruity. **Drink 2016 Alc 14.5%**

45 **Domaine de l'Arnesque, Côtes du Rhône-**

**Villages Plan de Dieu 2012** 87  
 £12 **Oddbins**  
 Enticing aromas of spicy, ripe black berries and sun-warmed earth. Yielding, expansive palate full of rich, sweet dark fruit, with supple tannins and an appealing warmth on the finish. **Drink 2016 Alc 15%**

46 **Domaine de l'Arnesque, Côtes du Rhône 2014** 87

£9.50 **Oddbins**  
 Delicate aromas of ripe strawberries, raspberries and redcurrants flow across the light, fragrant palate where they are sprinkled with a hint of nutmeg. Well-made and very drinkable with a long, dry finish. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 14%**



47 **Domaine Elodie Balme, Côtes du Rhône 2014** 87

£13.50 **The Sampler**  
 Not the most expressive nose but it has a lovely freshness. Gorgeous finesse on the palate, with finely drawn aromatics and good length. A very elegant wine indeed for a simple AC Côtes du Rhône red. **Drink 2016-2019 Alc 13.5%**

48 **Domaine les Meulières, Côtes du Rhône-**

**Villages Valréas 2014** 87  
 £10.99 **Cockburn & Campbell**  
 Straightforward fruity nose packed with strawberries, raspberries, cherries and blueberries with a fresh minty lift. Lovely fine-boned texture on the palate, where elegant tannins bring structure to the pure berry juice. Not the longest or most complex wine but eminently quaffable. **Drink 2016-2017 Alc 13%**

49 **E Guigal, Côtes du Rhône 2012** 87

£9.95-£11.49 **BI Wines, Millésima, Waitrose, The Wine Society**  
 Bright aromas of crisp red fruits with smoky, roasted undertones. Soft notes of creamy vanilla complement the fruit on a yielding palate kept in check by fine tannins and a fresh mineral finish. Poised and polished. **Drink 2016 Alc 14%**

50 **Etienne Barret, Crozes-Hermitage**

**2012** 87  
 £11.92 **Goedhuis & Co**  
 Bright, peppery nose with hints of dark chocolate. On the palate, supple fruit flavours are lifted by an appetising black pepper crunch, woven around a delicate web of tannins and minerality. **Drink 2016 Alc 12.5%**

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