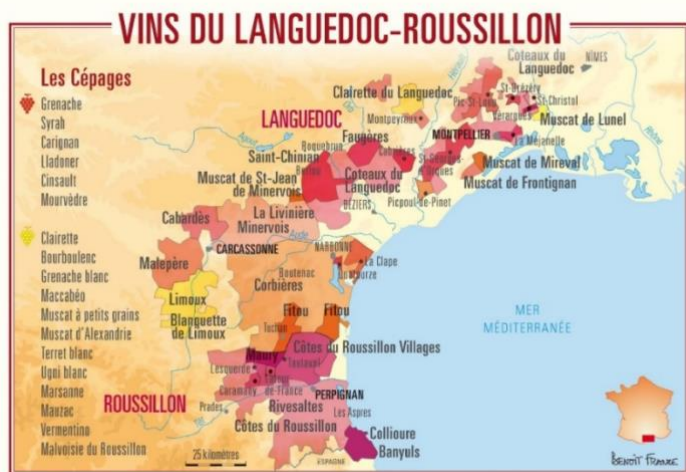


April 2023: Roussillon



Located in the South of France, in what was once part of the kingdom of Northern Spain, Roussillon is one of the most exciting wine regions in the world. With Perpignan as its beating heart, it has been shaped over the centuries by nature, history and its people. Nestled within a natural amphitheatre which opens to the Mediterranean Sea, Roussillon's vineyards are surrounded by mountain ranges and benefit from an ideal climate which is perfect for the cultivation of healthy vines. The region enjoys hot, dry summers, and mild winters – Roussillon is France's sunniest region and enjoys 2,530 hours (316 days!) of sunlight in an average year. The region is also rather famous for its mountain winds that sweep across the entire landscape –

especially the mighty Tramontane, a dominating northerly wind which helps to keep the vineyards in healthy condition, reducing the need for pest control or other human intervention.

During the 1970's, this region was guilty of over-producing cheap jug wine. Old Grenache vineyards were ripped out and replaced with high yield varieties such as Carignan. Fortunately for us, Roussillon has turned its back on this image and has been recovering its status as a producer of quality wines by reducing yields and returning to its old friend, Grenache. Roussillon now offers a wide range of diverse wines, each with its own distinctive and unique character. Many of the region's winemakers have embraced a holistic approach to viticulture, by combining ancestral techniques with modern-day skills and as a result many of the regions' estates are at the very forefront of the organic and biodynamic winemaking movement.

For wine enthusiasts on a budget, Roussillon is fast becoming known as a great value wine region. It's all about the blends – the region is known for its patchwork of vineyards, so-called because so many different grape varieties grow together, side-by-side. Most producers make blends instead of single varietal wines, with reds erring on the fuller, fruit-driven side and the whites packed with rich and ripe fresh fruit flavours.

This month's case is packed with delicious wines, each full of character and they are cracking value! As always, we look forward to hearing what you think about the wines and whether you have discovered a new favourite among them.

Raise a glass, share your tasting notes with us on Instagram @thevineking, and be sure to tag us in your posts.



Mas Bécha, 'Classique' Rouge, Côtes du Roussillon 2021 – 14.5%, £22.99

Artisan vigneron, Charles Perez, took over the Mas Bécha estate in 2008. The estate is located in the 'Aspres' terroir, which is close the Spanish border, and Charles prides himself on producing wines of distinct character while doing all he can to protect the local environment. Over the years, the estate has become renowned for its fruit-forward wines which are both fresh and elegant. 'Aspres' translates from the Catalan for 'arid', which perfectly characterises the sun-drenched terroir of this region surrounded by a landscape of garrigue on clay and marble pebbled soils.

The estate is practicing organic and makes use of neither pesticides nor chemicals in the vineyard and winery. The wines are made following a philosophy of minimal intervention, the fermentation occurring at low temperatures to preserve the wines' freshness, and gentle techniques being used to extract colour and aroma. Ageing is kept to a minimum and takes place in stainless steel to preserve the integrity and vibrancy of the fruit flavours.

This wine is a classic Roussillon blend of Syrah (60%), Grenache (20%) and Mourvèdre (20%). Expressive and complex, with ripe red fruits, blackcurrant and blueberry supported by spicy undertones of peppery spice and cinnamon, and delicate hints of garrigue herbs. Pair with charcuterie, rack of lamb with a thyme and rosemary crust, or a hearty vegetable stew.

From the appearance of the bottle, you'll gather that Charles is quite a character - each of his cuvées are dedicated to special family members, and every year he commissions a new artist to design a set of unique and original labels.

Domaine Gardiés, Côtes du Roussillon Villages Tautavel, 'Clos Des Vignes' Rouge 2020 – 14%, £38.99



Tautavel is located in the foothills of the Pyrenees, and here you will find Domaine Gardiés, a family-run vineyard currently on its 8th generation of winemakers. The vines are, unsurprisingly, old, and therefore naturally low-yielding. Growing on the clay limestone and black slate soils of the region, all the vines are certified organic and are cultivated with the utmost respect for the rugged and wild nature of Roussillon. Understanding and nurturing the soils is at the very heart of the Gardiés winemaking philosophy, and as a result, they produce wines which are expressive of the terroir and characterised by complexity, depth, structure and elegance.

The 75-year-old vines, whose fruit go into this wine, flourish in this region and produce low but extremely concentrated yields (as little as 25hl/ha). The Mediterranean climate with hot, arid summers encourages the vines to work hard to survive, driving their roots deep into the soil in search of vital nutrients. The resulting wines are concentrated, complex and powerful. The grapes underwent traditional vinification, with maceration taking place in concrete tanks, promoting the gentle extraction of fruit flavours, colour and fine, elegant tannins. After a fermentation, kickstarted by natural yeasts, which lasts up to 20 days, the wine was then aged for 12 months in French oak barrels.

A rich and opulent blend of Carignan (35%), Grenache (35%), Mourvèdre (15%) and Syrah (15%). Bursting with lashings of black cherry, layered with fig and spice. There is a beautiful balance on the palate which has ripe tannins underpinned by mineral freshness leading to a deliciously long finish. A great alternative to Châteauneuf-du-Pape, this wine would pair brilliantly with roast beef and all the trimmings, or a steaming bowl of Ratatouille with fresh garlic bread.

Domaine Gardiés, Côtes du Roussillon Villages, 'Les Millères' 2020 – 13.5%, £26.99

Another wine from Domaine Gardiés for you to enjoy, this one is a slightly different blend, with Grenache and Syrah taking centre-stage and Carignan featuring in a supporting role. Here each variety was vinified separately and blended together prior to bottling. Maceration and fermentation took place at low temperatures in neutral concrete tanks, which preserves the fresh fruit character of the wine. After vinification, 50% of the wine ages in French oak barrels and the other 50% in concrete vats.

The blend of Grenache (30%), Syrah (30%), Mourvèdre (25%) and Carignan (15%) produces a wine packed with ripe and dark berry fruit characteristics, supported by hints of black pepper spice and a slight graphite note. This wine is surprisingly fresh (that's the effect of 50% spending time in concrete!) and pairs well with aromatic vegetable tagines, and all manner of game dishes such as Roasted Venison.

Domaine Madeloc, 'Tremadoc Blanc', Collioure 2021 – 14.5%, £28.99

Domaine Madeloc is situated in the stunning appellation of Banyuls-sur-Mer, which borders Catalonia. Winemaker Pierre Gaillard literally grew up in vineyards, as from the age of 12 he could be found ploughing the family vineyards with their horses. Naturally, he followed his love for viticulture and went on to study Oenology in Montpellier. Upon



graduating, he became the vineyard manager for Guigal and in 1981 he set out on his own with parcels of land in the Rhône Valley. Pierre purchased Domaine Madeloc in 2002, then was joined by his daughter Elise in 2009, and the estate now boasts 18.5ha of mountain and coastal vines which overlook the Mediterranean Sea. The vineyards are on some pretty steep slopes so are planted on terraces (much like those found in the Douro Valley) to enable cultivation. The dry and very hot climate is tempered by the refreshing sea breezes which bring minerality and elegance to the resulting wines.

The grapes for this beautiful white blend are hand-harvested at the perfect level of ripeness and then vinified separately at cool temperatures, which serves to protect the freshness of the fruit flavours. During fermentation, Pierre stirs the lees to impart a smooth texture and volume to the wine. After fermentation, the wine ages for 8 months in oak barrels, all second-fill or older so as to keep the influence of the oak on the flavour of the wine to a minimum. After ageing, the separate parcels are blended to create an incredibly characterful wine.

A fragrant blend of the rare variety, Grenache Gris (60%), with Vermentino (30%) and Roussanne (10%), the nose is perfumed with white blossom and notes of ripe nectarine. The palate is rounded and rich in texture, but well-balanced with refreshing acidity. Hints of white pepper spice and fennel linger on the finish, making this a perfect pairing with grilled white fish or tuna steaks. It is also a brilliant accompaniment to creamy seafood pasta dishes or risottos.

Château de l'Ou, Rouge, Côtes du Roussillon 2020 – 15%, £24.99

Château de l'Ou is an organic wine estate located in Montescot, independently owned by oenologists Séverine and Philippe Bourrier. When they purchased the estate back in 1998, they immediately set about converting to organic farming, which at the time was a pretty niche approach. They are now fully certified organic, and not only grow grapes, but have parcels of their land devoted to olive trees. Together, Séverine and Philippe hand-craft their wines using a variety of techniques and fermentation vessels, including terracotta and sandstone amphorae. The wines they produce are distinctive and really showcase the rugged terroir of the region.

Located in the AOP Côtes de Roussillon, on the foothills of the Pyrenees, the vines are rooted in soils made up of alluvial marls and black schist which impart great aromatic complexity to the wines characterised by notes of black fruit and herbal garrigue. Yields are kept low to ensure optimum concentration of pure fruit flavours and all of the estate's fruit is harvested by hand. Fermentation took place in stainless steel tanks, blended and then matured for a further 12 months, also in stainless steel. This particular cuvée was made without the influence of oak to allow the wine to fully express its pure fruit flavours.

An aromatic and fruity blend of Syrah (60%) and Grenache (40%) with crunchy red and black bramble fruits complemented by a touch of peppery spice and a subtle hint of violets. Juicy and fresh, this would be great with grilled meats and vegetables, so perhaps it's one worth saving for a barbecue on a warm spring evening.

Château de l'Ou, Blanc, Côtes du Roussillon 2021 – 13.5%, £24.99

Séverine and Philippe's wines all sounded so delicious, we decided to include a second wine from their portfolio in this month's case. This is a unique blend of Grenache Blanc (50%), Grenache Gris (30%) and Roussanne (20%). Each variety was vinified separately, spending up to 5 days on the skins, which imparts a full texture and a subtle peachy hue to the wine. Fermentation took place in stainless steel to retain the purity of the fruit and as a result the wine is beautifully fresh.

This is a refreshing white, full of crisp notes of lime and white fruit aromas, which combine perfectly with the peachy and textured palate. A well-balanced white, that works well as an apéritif and also makes a great match for roast chicken and mushroom dishes.

£167.94

Case Price: £142.75

Wine Club Price: £124