



## RHONE 2010

What an outstanding vintage! Having recently returned from the Rhone, I am left struggling to find wines I *cannot* recommend and producers who *failed* to deliver exceptional wines. For a buyer, 2010 really is a dream vintage with great wines produced in every area: superb in the South but almost equally good in the North; fantastic for whites but perhaps even greater for reds. One of the only complaints would be the very small volume of red produced in the South. This is because of "coulure," which means that the flowers don't become fruit. Grenache is often affected by "coulure", but rarely as much as in 2010. Some bunches were just stalks and others had a mere 5 or 10 berries on them compared to the usual 50 or more!

Every cloud has a silver lining and the prevalence of "coulure" meant that the remaining grapes were very healthy and concentrated. Their almost-perfect ripeness added to great levels of acidity have resulted in fresh, crunchy but ripe and deep wines. There is no sign of the heat often evident in Southern Rhones in a ripe vintage; even less so in the North, the wines are silky and rich, expressing the true characters of the northern Syrah. Whites also benefit from the increased freshness and some northern Viogniers are exceptionally aromatic; meanwhile, the Southern blends have real delicacy and an uncommon zesty finish. So what to choose? Last year, 2009 vintage, was a more typical ripe year and I was recommending the better value cuvées which were really delivering. 2010 is quite different!

Firstly, I would definitely have a close look at the whites. I am convinced that Francois Villard has made his best Condrieus ever, superbly aromatic but also showing great mineral notes. They are lovely to drink now but will surely age well. Unfortunately many of Pierre Gaillard's whites are already sold out, but the new 'Condrieu Cuvée l'Octroi' is showing more minerality than the main Condrieu and originates from Pierre's first vineyard run with truly organic methods. I even liked, for the first time, the Saint Peray made by Francois Villard...The Southern whites are equally interesting: one of my favourites is the delicate and flowery Chateauneuf from Marcoux, but the wines from Clos du Caillou are also intense and mineral in a slightly richer style.

Reds are the real stars of course. Although I could easily mention every single wine I tried, for every single one had some virtue of note, that would be boring so I am highlighting a few that were showing particularly well. Remember, this is only a snapshot picture, taken during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of October, so nothing is set in stone but it will give you an idea! Most wines are a long way from being bottled and some final blends not decided, so there will surely be a few changes over the coming months. Some wines will undoubtedly end up even better than they currently appear, and there will inevitably be the odd one that loses a little shine, at least temporarily.

In the North, Francois Villard's wines were all top notch but I especially liked the simple 'Poivre et Sol' Saint Joseph, his entry level wine! Jeanne Gaillard, one of Pierre's daughters, is slowly but surely establishing herself and her Crozes Hermitage is more than a match for her father's wines. In Pierre's range, I really liked the Cote Rotie showing great finesse and perfume. Maxime Graillet St Joseph is already showing well with a silky and balanced palate.

Stunning wines have been made in the South. At Domaine de Fondrèche, Sébastien Vincenti is always aiming to elevate the Cotes du Ventoux appellation and has produced very precise and savoury wines: it's difficult to choose between the 'Nadal' and the 'Persia'. New to us are the wines of Domaine la Fourmente: the owner/winemaker Rémi Pouzin, a cousin of the owner of Clos du Caillou, is surely making some of the best wines of the more northerly part of the Southern Rhone. Having been dedicated to organic farming for many years, the wines have real purity and clean-ness of fruit with 'Amour de Fruit' a perfect example for early drinking. Also new to us and available soon are the sought after wines of Domaine Vieille Julienne. Denis Alary decided some time ago to produce less extracted and better balanced wines and obviously 2010 is a success here; I always have a soft spot for the 'Font d'Estevenas' with its higher than usual Syrah content. Philippe Bernard at La Ligiere is converting the very large estate to organic farming then most probably biodynamy. His Vacqueyras doesn't see any oak and can be easily drunk early but will improve for a few years. Yves Gras' wines are truly spectacular. As usual, they are intense and need time to reach their peak. The rare 'Grand Grenache' is surely one of the best Gigondas I have ever tasted but I would also be very happy with the not-so-simple 'Cotes du Rhone 4 Terres'.

From Francoise Roumieux at Domaines Mayard I would pick the 'Crau de Ma Mere:' the old vines cuvee; this wine is deep but not overpowering. Some would say that some of the wines of Bosquet des Papes are a little old-fashioned but the 2010 'Chateauneuf Tradition' has bags of sweet spices and lovely fruit and just demands to be aged for 6 to 10 years. Domaine de la Mordorée has relinquished 12 hectares of rented vineyards to focus of the conversion of the estate to organic farming. That hasn't stopped Christophe Delorme making reds with great focus and precision. The Chateauneuf is, of course, the star but the 'Lirac Reine des Bois' isn't far behind. Grand Veneur have to be one of the most consistent estates that I have been following for the last 10 years. Even if the 'Vieilles Vignes' is the new flagship, my favourite is still the 'Cuvée Origines', a blend with a good proportion of Mourvedre.

Domaine Marcoux, what more can I say about this superstar of the Rhone and beyond? Sophie and Catherine Armenier now look after the Lirac organic vineyards as well as making the wine. This is without a doubt their best ever vintage of Lirac! Finally Clos du Caillou: Bruno Gaspard has sometimes been criticised for making very rich and overpowering wines but the critics should try his 2010s. They have freshness and poise without losing the typicity of the estate. The 'Bouquet des Garrigues' is not only back at its best but even better than that, if such a thing is possible!

**Notes:** Wines already bottled are highlighted with **(b)**.

The wines will be shipped between March and November 2012 with the exception of the wines marked **(a)** that are already available.

Prices are in bond (London City Bond) per case of 12. Duty and VAT will be charged at the rate in force at the time of delivery. Delivery will be charged at cost.

**E** indicates an estimated price; we will confirm as soon as possible.

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## Maxime Grailot, Equis and Domaine des Lises

Maxime also doesn't want his wines to be judged before bottling and I respect his decision. The wines are fresh and well defined with low extraction, gentle house style. Perhaps Maxime's love for Burgundy and friendship with Domaines like Dujac has influenced his approach. The Cornas is obviously bigger but not extracted and with a lot of ripe black fruits. The 2009 Cornas has just being released and has huge depth and intensity. The vineyards are tended organically but not certified.

Crozes Hermitage Domaine des Lises (100% Syrah)	£129.00
St Joseph Equis (100% Syrah)	£138.00
Cornas Equis (100% Syrah) - 2009 Vintage	£265.00

## Pierre Gaillard - Jeanne Gaillard

The ever green Pierre is now seconded by his daughters and he needs a big family to look after vineyards in Cote Rotie, Cornas, St Joseph, Crozes Hermitage, Faugeres, Collioure and Banyuls.....and I am sure that I have forgotten some. Jeanne is now fully in charge of her own patch in Crozes Hermitage and also produces some interesting vins de pays. The 2010 vintage is a success like 2009 but with more precision and freshness, typical of the vintage. .

Cotes du Rhone Viognier Les Gendrines (b) limited 100% Viognier	£116.00
Condrieu (b) 100% Viognier	£234.00
Condrieu l'Octroi (b) 100% Viognier	£279.00
Syrah, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes (b) 100% Syrah	£ 52.00
Crozes Hermitage 100% Syrah	£114.00
Saint Joseph 100% Syrah	£116.00
Saint Joseph Clos de Cuminaille 100% Syrah	£158.00
Saint Joseph Les Pierres 100% Syrah	£228.00
Cornas 100% Syrah	£240.00
Cote Rôtie 90% Syrah, 10% Viognier	£288.00
Cote Rôtie Rose Pourpre 100% Syrah	£576.00
Condrieu Fleurs d'Automne (b) 100% Viognier	£290.00

## Francois Villard

Francois is still trying to run a marathon at a sprint pace, experimenting, expanding and changing every year. The use of new or nearly new oak is still present but it looks like the, sometimes heavy, extraction had been toned down several notches giving more delicacy and finer tannins to his wines. The whites are particularly successful this year, most probably the best he has ever produced. The reds, very precise and with lots of character will need a couple of years to fulfill their full potential.

Viognier Contours de Poncins, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodanienne (b) 100% Viognier	£141.00
Condrieu Terrasses du Palat (a)(b) 100% Viognier	£258.00
Condrieu Grands Vallons (b) 100% Viognier	£280.00
Condrieu De Poncins (a)(b) 100% Viognier	£310.00
Syrah Appel des Sereines, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes (b) 100% Syrah	£ 80.00
Saint Joseph Poivre et Sol 100% Syrah	£135.00
Cote Rotie Le Gallet Blanc 95% Syrah, 5% Viognier	£318.00
Seul En Scène, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes 100% Syrah	£220.00
Saint Joseph Reflets 100% Syrah	£228.00

## Stéphane Ogier

Stéphane is a perfectionist and we like his handling of the oak always very gentle and in tune with each different cuvée. We will also be offering a few cases of 2009 next year.

Viognier La Rosine, Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodanienne 100% Viognier	£130.00 E
Cote Rotie 100% Syrah	£375.00 E

## Nathalie Blanc Marès, Mas Carlot – Costières de Nimes

Nathalie has 4 young children and each has their own named plot with a different varietal; and of course children being children, some have more "character" than others. Les Enfants Terribles is a blend of Syrah and Mourvèdre but she didn't give me the "Terribles" children names!

Les Enfants Terribles (b) 50% Syrah, 50% Mourvèdre	£ 80.00
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## Sébastien Vincenti, Domaine de Fondrèche

Sébastien has been criticised by many for his modern approach, almost new world style but he carries on leading the appellation and many are now following in his tracks. Without a long tradition behind him, he wants to make wines that people can enjoy and appreciate early. The secret is that there is no secret but just hard work in the vineyards and each wine is carefully thought through from the harsh winter days in the vineyard till the final touches in the cellar. 2010 is surely one of, if not the most successful vintage here. The combination of intense, deep fruit, and purity and freshness of the vintage works beautifully and delivers succulent but not heavy red wines. Organic vineyards.

Cotes du Ventoux Fayard (a)(b) £ 60.00

50% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre, 20% Carignan

Cotes du Ventoux Nadal £ 92.00

50% Grenache, 40% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre

Cotes du Ventoux Persia £120.00

90% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre

Cotes du Ventoux Il Etait une fois £220.00

80% Grenache, 10% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre

## Philippe Bernard, Domaine La Ligière

Philippe has taken over all of his father's domaine in 2010 meaning that the 5 hectares of Vacqueyras have grown into 40 hectares with some Cotes du Rhone, Beaufort de Venise and Gigondas and to increase the challenge the entire estate is being converted firstly to organic production first and then to biodynamic!

Vacqueyras (b) £105.00

75% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 15% Mourvèdre

Vacqueyras Point G £170.00

100% Old Grenache

## Denis Alary

After a very successful 2009 vintage I wasn't sure that Denis could raise the bar. But 2010, like in many good producers has delivered a range of intense but beautifully balanced wines. The Font d'Estevenas, with its higher Syrah content is showing well with nice smokey flavours. The Jean de Verde, sometimes a bit too big and rich, has a perfect balance and will be superb in 3 to 4 years. Denis is changing his vinification and has dumped the old foudres and started using a mix of 600 new barrels (in 2010 he's experimented with vinifying straight into these 600 barrels) and steel tanks but he's buying some oak tanks for the next vintages as he believes in vinification in large newer oak. The Domaine is in organic conversion since 2009.

Cairanne Font d'Estevenas White £ 86.00

Clairette, Roussanne

Cotes du Rhone La Gerbaude (a)(b) £ 55.00

6% Old Grenache, 20% Syrah, 20% Carignan

Cairanne Tradition £ 70.00

65% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 10% Carignan

Cairanne la Brunotte £ 80.00

70% Old Grenache, 20% Mourvedre, 10% Old Carignan

Cairanne Font d'Estevenas £93.00

45% Old Grenache, 55% Syrah

Cairanne La Jean de Verde £110.00

90% Old Grenache, 10% Old Carignan

## Yves Gras, Domaine Santa Duc

The friendship between Yves and I goes back a long way and 20 years on I am still amazed by his huge energy and enthusiasm. 2010 has seen the construction of a modern new cellar-tasting room. The quality found with the 2009 vintage is there again this year. As always at this stage the wines are a little more muscular than from most other producers but with age, they develop amazing finesse and elegance. Patience is key when buying and cellaring Yves's wines. The very rare cuvée GG is surely one of the best Grenache that I have ever tasted. Ad of course this is there is a new cuvée this year: a small 1 hectare parcel of old Grenache in Chateauneuf du Pape.

Cotes du Rhône Quatre Terres £ 69.00  
70% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 10% Carignan/Cinsault

Gigondas £148.00  
75% Grenache, 10% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre, 5% Cinsault

Gigondas Prestige des Hautes Garrigues £250.00  
80% Grenache, 15% Mourvèdre, 5% Syrah/Cinsault

Gigondas Grand Grenache £340.00  
100% Grenache

Chateauneuf du Pape £350.00  
100% Grenache

## Francoise Roumieux, Vignobles Mayard

I love visiting this cellar as Francoise is very humble and with her brother and sister concentrates to make great wines at especially good prices. After a decade of inflation fed by great demand it's nice to see a very good producer still offering wines at such good value. A good mix of tradition with some modern touches but controlled. Also interesting is the good quantity of vineyards from the south side of the appellation, particularly in the first cuvée, something that have helped her a great deal in 2011, but I will report on that vintage later. The Crau de Ma Mere 2010 is a must for all the Chateauneuf aficionados!

Châteauneuf du Pape Père Pape £162.00  
65% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 15% Cinsault

Châteauneuf du Pape Clos du Calvaire £190.00  
70% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 10% Cinsault

Châteauneuf du Pape La Crau de Ma Mère £225.00  
80% Grenache, 10% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre

## Bosquets des Papes, Nicolas Boiron

I used to work with Nicolas's father many years ago and I am pleased to work with the Domaine again. Nicolas, despite his rugby second row stature makes more refined wines than his father, but still keeps a fairly traditional style. In 2010 I particularly like the simple tradition as it delivers lots of sweet fruit and spices and promise to age well. The Chante le Merle is even more impressive and shows huge intensity but needs a few years to settle.

Châteauneuf du Pape Père £180.00  
75% Grenache, 11% Mourvedre, 11% Syrah, 3% Vaccarese/Cinsault/Counoise

Châteauneuf du Pape A la gloire de mon Grand Père £263.00  
100% Grenache

Châteauneuf du Pape Chante le Merle £308.00  
80% Grenache, 10% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre

## Sylvie Vacheron, Clos du Caillou (Bruno Gaspard Winemaker)

Bruno Gaspard is a very busy man, running this magnificent 53 Hectares property. 2010 is a vintage that suits Clos du Caillou as the wines always have power and richness but 2010 added freshness and purity to the equation. The Bouquet des Garrigues, often compared to a Chateauneuf, is surely the best I have tasted here over the past 10 years. The other reds also offer the perfect combination of power and finesse, volume and freshness. As with most other Domaines, the quantities are low but this is definitely a vintage not to miss. The Domaine will be certified organic from the 2010 vintage.

Cotes du Rhône Clos du Caillou White (b) 100% Clairette Rose	£ 75.00
Cotes du Rhône Bouquet des Garrigues White (b) 40% Grenache, 30% Clairette Rose, 15% Bourboulenc, 15% Viognier	£ 90.00
Châteauneuf du Pape Les Safres White (b) 40% Grenache, 30% Clairette Rose, 30% Roussanne	£310.00
Cotes du Rhône Bouquet des Garrigues 85% Grenache, 15% Syrah/Mourvèdre	£ 90.00
Cotes du Rhône Quartz 85% Grenache, 15% Syrah	£134.00
Cotes du Rhône Réserve 80% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre	£180.00
Châteauneuf du Pape Les Safres 95% Grenache, Mourvèdre/Vaccarèse/Cinsault	£240.00
Châteauneuf du Pape Quartz 85% Grenache, 15% Syrah	£420.00
Châteauneuf du Pape Réserve 60% Grenache, 40% Mourvèdre	£720.00

## Christophe et Sébastien Jaume, Domaine Grand Veneur

As always, Christophe and Sebastien Jaume have produced polished and seductive wines. The La Fontaine white with a little note of new oak that demands 12 to 18 months to integrate has the same intensity as the 2009 but with extra zest and will be a great success. The reds are rich and savoury but not too heavy despite the immense concentration due to the very low yielding Grenache. Les Origines is one of my favourite cuvée, regularly over delivering for the price. Being converted to organic culture.

Châteauneuf du Pape La Fontaine (b) 100% Roussanne	£258.00
Châteauneuf du Pape Les Jaumes 70% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre	£180.00
Châteauneuf du Pape Les Origines 50% Grenache, 30% Mourvèdre, 20% Syrah	£258.00
Châteauneuf du Pape Vieilles Vignes 50% Grenache, 30% Mourvèdre, 20% Syrah	£460.00

## Christophe Delorme, Domaine de La Mordorée

Christophe has reduced the size of the Estate by a massive 12 Hectares to concentrate on the best vineyards and to convert the Domaine to organic culture. He's obviously pleased by the vintage but like many other producers he's sad by the low volume that will make allocation very difficult. On the day of my recent tasting there the Chateauneuf was exceptional, less showboating than in previous great vintages but with a near perfect balance. The two Liracs were a little closed but they just had been racked and blended in preparation of the bottling early next year.

Lirac Dame Rousse £ 96.00  
50% Grenache, 50% Syrah,

Lirac La Reine des Bois £150.00  
35% Grenache, 35% Syrah, 30% Mourvèdre

Châteauneuf du Pape La Reine des Bois £400.00  
80% Grenache, Mourvèdre-Syrah-Counoise-Vaccarèse

## Sophie et Catherine Armenier, Domaine de Marcoux

2010 is the third year in a row where they only produced a meagre 17 hectolitres per hectare meaning that it's very difficult to balance the books with such a low yield.

The ever improving Lirac is now entirely under their control and is in conversion to organic farming and by far the best they ever made. The reds have a rare intensity and as always they have a beautiful balance and purity although having tasted the 2009s again I maintain that they have produced superb wines during that vintage too; the 2009 Vieilles Vignes is truly exceptional. Not to be forgotten is the delicate and perfumed white, with lovely peachy flavours and just a hint of tropical notes. Marcoux have been adept of Biodynamics for many years.

Châteauneuf White (b) £310.00  
70% Roussanne, 30% Bourboulenc

Lirac £105.00  
35% Grenache, 35% Mourvèdre, 30% Syrah

Châteauneuf du Pape £310.00  
80% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah /Cinsault

Châteauneuf du Pape Vieilles Vignes £840.00  
100% Grenache

## Domaine de la Vieille Julienne, Jean Paul Daumen

A new Domaine for us. Jean Paul Daumen's wines have a lot of personality and are unique. He is keen to keep his own personal style to express the originality of his terroir. Great wines with unique balance and poise. Very limited quantities.

Cotes du Rhône Lieu dit Clavin £ 108.00 E

Chateauneuf du Pape £ 350.00 E

Chateauneuf du Pape Réserve £1500.00 E