

Notes From The Cellar (NFTC); Winepairings e-letter Apr16, 2008

Great 2005's from the Southern Rhone

Welcome to the post tax filling deadline day. I will be heading out on a short trip to the Pacific NW tomorrow, but wanted to get this out right away. I just got word that some very special wines we ordered a while back have hit the receiving dock at the warehouse.

Those of you who have been getting my newsletter for a while know that I am a big fan of the French wines from the Southern Rhone. They can be flavorful and complex. Complement a large variety of food, are good young, and can age and develop nice secondary characteristics with some cellar time. Best of all they can be outright bargains. As such they have been "Go to" wines in my house for the last 30 years.

The key is finding the right producers during the right vintages. This is a little tricky, as there is excellent wine produced by many -even in good vintages not just the great ones. Vice versa a great vintage is not always a guarantee for great wine across the board.

Enter the current release vintage of 2005. Growing conditions were classic, certainly as good as the excellent 2001 if not better. Unfortunately finding the great values is getting tougher. In addition to unfavorable currency exchange rates, we have also witnessed some serious price appreciation in wines from the regions most famous appellation Chateaufort du Pape. This causes a "Domino Effect" as the leading appellation prices soar, they also tend to effect the prices of the lesser known districts.

I approached a recent preview tasting of French wines with extra caution -I knew that I will find wines I would like, but I wanted to ensure that we could get great value. We hit the bull's eye: Each of today's wines represent outstanding value, which I would say- easily compete very favorably with wines from this region costing 2-3 times the price. We found something special in every price range. Quantities are however rather limited.

\$\$\$ wine deals \$\$\$

Domaine du Trapadis Cote Du Rhone 2005 \$18-

The Family has owned this property since the early 1800's (makes the wine affordable when you don't have to pay a fortune for prime vineyards) they are located in the village of Rasteau and most of their wines get labeled under the Rasteau appellation (and retail in the mid \$30's to mid \$40's.) Some of the vines are 80 years old and when I tasted the wine I was impressed with the concentration and deep flavor of this particular wine -much more intense than most Cote du Rhones. This sure tastes like a fine Rasteau I thought. When I mentioned it to the winery representative I got a big smile -"that's because it is Rasteau" was the answer...So here you go Rasteau quality in a CDR label and CDR price. I actually liked this wine better than some of the more expensive wines in the line -you got to like it when this happens (unfortunately not very often). Unquestionably one of the best under \$20 bottles we will be selling this year. I strongly urge you to consider a case or two purchase with this one.

Domaine du Beurenard Cote Du Rhone Rasteau Villages 2005 \$23-

Do not confuse this with other wines in the line which sell for less. This is the real deal -a power house Rasteau full of dark fruit and that classic chocolate aromatics typical in the wines of this area. There is some impressive structure and spice in this big bold wine. This is from the same producer famous for their line of Chateaufort du Pape.. I had a chance to taste this side by side with their

flag ship Chateuneuf : the 2005 "Boisenard" bottling which received a glowing review from Wine Spectator magazine (96 points and a retail price in the mid \$80's) This held it's own next to it's impressive big brother. For less than a third the price – well you get the picture. This is great to drink now yet will easily age another 5 + years and reward you handsomely if you have the discipline and patience to keep your hands away from it.

Here is what Mr Parker had to say about this producer; *"One of the great families of Chateauneuf du Pape, the Coulons, have been estate bottling for nearly 100 years, and have an impressive, nearly unmatched record of quality. Moreover, one needs to keep an eye out for their best value wine, the Rasteau cuvees they produce."*

Collector's Corner

Domaine du Galet des Papes Vieilles Vignes 2005 \$48

One of the most impressive 2005 CDP's I have tasted to date ! A top select bottling at a price of an average bottle. This wine is made by Jean Luc Maynard- a tiny 3500 case producer using old school methods in a cellar built by his dad in 1929. The wine is classic old fashioned traditional CDP; perfect for long term aging. If you like the style of wines such as Clos du Pape or Vieux Telegraph from Brunel you would love this at a fraction of the price. This is full of the intense powerful expression that makes aficionados of classic CDP excited. Big structure dark red & black fruit, some funky leather and smoked meat, tobacco & olive tapanade are all present on the aromatics, as well as a superb mineral infused finish.

The estate derives it's name from the large round stones (Galets) that are found in the vineyards. The galets act as heat absorbing material for the gnarly old vines. The average age of vines in this estate are 50 years old, but this special cuve is made from the oldest parcel of the vineyard which produces the finest fruit . A special bottling that Maynard only started making with the classic 1990 vintage . This will easily age 15 + years. It has the stuffing to produce that magic quality that makes traditional CDP so special and desirable with collectors. At a time when many comparable wines are selling in the \$ 75-130 range this is a true find -a must purchase for any CDP fan's cellar.

events:

Thomas Arvid is considered by many to be one of the top photo - realistic painters of wine bottles and wine items in the US today -you undoubtedly seen his work in magazines and wineries. A native of Georgia he is friends with Aaron and Sandy LaPedis, owners of **Fascination Street Gallery** in Cherry Creek. Arvid will be in appearance at the Gallery on May 9& 10th give them a ring to get on the invite list. Always a great show - Check it out at http://www.fascinationstart.com/thomas_arvid

Thanks again for all your support and referrals, tell your friends, Cheers

Paul David, Chief Fermented Grape Taster.

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