

WINE News

The 2015 rosé wines—and so much more—from the south of France.



JUNE 20, 2016 FEATURES

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In the South of France, it's Red, White and...Grüner?

By Keith Mabry

Having recently returned from a two-week trip visiting almost all of our Direct Import producers in the south of France, as well as meeting new ones along the way, I am struck by the difficulty of conveying a single message about the wealth of wines that are on their way. After tasting wines on location, it takes about four months for us to buy it, ship it, and finally get it on the shelves for you, so I will have to defer most of my excitement for a subsequent report. Meanwhile, I still have plenty of pent-up excitement from my trip last fall, when I visited Provence. I've dedicated an extended article, on page 2, to the pinkest

of wine-producing regions by looking at it through non-rosé-colored glasses. On page 3, "Team France" member Alex Schroeder gives us a fine feature on Domaine Dugois, one of our DI producers from Jura. This is an area that has been a favorite on sommelier wine lists for the last few years, and we brought in a few new wines we think you will be excited to try. Finally, John Majeski checks in with James Kinglake at Domaine Begude, maker of some of the best single-varietal wines anywhere in the south of France—whether they're officially approved varietals or not...! And below are three of my top picks this month.

2009 Domaine de la Jaufrette Gigondas

(\$39.99) One of the wines from my recent trip I can tell you about is this gem from Gigondas. The Jaufrette is 80% Grenache, 10% Syrah and 10% Mourvedre from an exciting vintage. It's held in the winery's own cellar until it's ready for release. Blackberries, Maraska cherries, garrigue, cocoa powder and coffee lead to a mouthfilling wine. The more this opens, the more you're pulled in.



2014 Clos de l'Anhel "Lolo de l'Anhel"

Corbieres (\$12.99) When winemaker Sophie Guiraudon introduced me to her wines last year, I could only hope that you, our faithful patrons, would embrace the wines as much as I did. The 2014 is a worthy if not greater successor to the 2013. Based primarily on old vine Carignan with a good dollop of Grenache and Syrah, this wine shows vibrant red fruit flavors with notes of violets, damp earth and savory spices. Medium-bodied and bright acidity lead to a joyously perfect summer red.



2015 Domaine Petroni Corse Blanc (Corsica)

(\$13.99) Last year I had the privilege to visit this estate on the island of Corsica. They first came to my attention with their rosé (which is spectacular, by the way), but the white is a new superstar, as well. Made from 100% Vermentino, it is a beautiful wine with aromas of lemon rind, white flowers and a spicy complexity that seems to come out of nowhere. Gorgeous for warm weather drinking!





Château Les Valentines in La Londe les Maures.

Provence: It's Not All Rosé— But We Have Those, Too!

By Keith Mabry

Last October, I was in Provence—and it was a great time to be there. Harvest had finished a few weeks earlier, most of the wine fermentations were winding down, and the weather was cool but clear. I was there partly on vacation and partly for work—but in the wine business that's kind of what we all do! While exploring the region, I wanted to embrace all of what it has to offer, besides the obvious—*rosé*.

The appellation of Provence contains three main regions: Côtes de Provence, Coteaux Varois en Provence and Coteaux d'Aix en Provence, each with distinctive terroirs and climatic influences (the smaller regions like Bandol, Palette and Cassis, we will have to cover another time). Rosé makes up about 80% of the production, but there are many quality whites and reds produced there. After tasting with many producers, I offer this snapshot of some of my favorites.

Château Revelette

We begin with Château Revelette in Coteaux d'Aix en Provence. Coteaux d'Aix takes its name from the city of Aix en Provence, a famous college town and cultural destination. The appellation makes up the western section of Provence abutting the Rhône Valley and is known for having the largest diversity of terroirs, with lots of sand, clay, gravel and limestone mixed with various topographies that contribute to a breadth of mesoclimates. Revelette is about 15 miles north and east of town and is run by German transplant Peter Fisher. Peter took over the estate in 1985 and quickly shifted to organic practices in the vineyard. Unlike most other Provence producers, Peter's primary focus is on his red and white wines. About 50% of his production is red, where most Provence producers may dedicate about 10%. The **2015 Château Revelette Coteaux d'Aix en Provence Rosé (\$14.99)** is captivating, with its clean citrus and light strawberry notes. It is a more subtle yet serious expression for people who prefer a mineral-driven style. But the **2014**



Château Revelette Coteaux d'Aix en Provence Rouge (\$17.99) really captured my imagination. It is a blend of Syrah, Grenache, Carignan and Cabernet Sauvignon (which has become an important secondary variety in the region) with beautiful notes of black currants, black cherries and spices. I believe that the Rhône varieties and Cabernet Sauvignon have found a synergy here in Provence that is lacking in many other areas. Cabernet can express itself well without getting lost or dominating the flavor profile.

Finally, the two standard-bearers from the estate, the **2014 Château Revelette “Le Grand Blanc” Bouches-du-Rhône (\$31.99)** and **2013 “Le Grand Rouge” (\$31.99)** were tasted. Peter and I played a little game when we tasted the Grand Blanc—he asked me to guess the varietals. I could see that there was some barrel-fermented character that lent richness and stone fruit qualities, but there was a lot of minerality and underlying acidity. I hedged and guessed local varieties: Clairette, Rolle and maybe some Ugni Blanc. All good guesses, he said, but: “You're wrong!” The wine is Chardonnay and Roussanne with a splash of Sauvignon Blanc! Even so, the wine is spectacular and I have had nothing but rave responses from my fellow tasters. The Grand Rouge is another expression altogether. Here the makeup is equal parts Syrah and Cabernet with about 20% Grenache. Rich and powerful, but balanced and nuanced, this is one of the best expressions of a Bordeaux-Rhône mash-up I have tasted in quite some time.

Château Trians

Coteaux Varois en Provence is in the west center of the appellation and is ringed by hills and mountains to the south, north and west. The soils are mostly limestone and clay with the two main distinctions being altitude (most vineyards average 350 meters) and a continental climate influence. The surrounding mountains and hills act as natural barriers. Our newest DI producer from the region, Château Trians has the added benefit of having all north-facing vineyards. In 1989, Jean-Louis Masurel took over the 50-acre vineyard and began modernizing and shifted to organic production. Arriving just a month ago, his rosé quickly sold out, but his white and reds are tremendous offerings and exceptional values. The **2015 Château Trians Coteaux Varois en Provence Blanc (\$13.99)** is a blend of Rolle (aka Vermentino), Sémillon and Ugni Blanc. With flavors of white peach, Meyer lemon and notes of lemon verbena, this is crispy, crunchy white, perfect as an aperitif. The two rouges are distinctly different. The **2013 Château Trians Coteaux Varois en Provence Rouge (\$13.99)** is an equal parts blend of Syrah and



Jean-Louis Masurel shows us an old map of the vineyard.

Grenache. Like a southern Rhône wine, it has loads of black-fruited flavors with spices and a supple, loamy earthiness. Unlike many of the ultra-ripe baked qualities we expect in Côtes du Rhône, this wine leads with more freshness and brighter flavors. The **2012 Château Trians “T de Trians” Coteaux Varois en Provence Rouge** is the top bottling, coming in at a whopping **\$16.99**. A near equal parts blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Grenache, this is a full-bodied wine with flavors of roasted black plum, blueberry, and smoky mineral with savory, polished tannins. It was well matched with the braised wild boar Jean-Louis served us for dinner.



Château Les Valentines

The Côtes de Provence appellation makes up the largest part of the whole region, accounting for nearly 50,000 acres of plantings (Coteaux d'Aix contributes 10,000 and Coteaux Varois 6,000). Within Provence there are a few sub-appellations including Sainte-Victoire and La Londe. In the village of La Londe les Maures, our friends Gilles and Pascale Pons left their Parisian lives as computer entrepreneurs and fled south, taking over an existing estate in 1997. They promptly began restoring this century-old property and christened it Les Valentines after their children, Valentin and Clementine.

Now certified organic, the Pons have created some of the most beloved rosés in our stores. The main influence at this winery is the proximity to the Mediterranean, less than two miles away. The

dramatic influence can be felt in the light, crisp nature of both the white and rosé. The **2015 Château Les Valentines Blanc (\$19.99)** is a blend of old vine Ugni Blanc, Rolle and Clairette. The wine has lovely notes of quince, lemongrass and makrut lime, with a whisper of salinity on the nose. It reminds me of some of the great whites of Cassis, the seaside village about 100 kilometers away. The **2012 Château Les Valentines Rouge (\$19.99)** is a near equal parts blend of Mourvedre, Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault and Cabernet Sauvignon. Ripe but balanced flavors of cassis, blackberry and exotic spices lead the charge, with beautifully polished tannins on the finish.

Of course, the grand dames of the region are the rosés, so that's where we'll finish. The **2015 Château Les Valentines Rosé (\$19.99)** is made up of Grenache and Cinsault and is everything one should look for in a rosé. It has inviting flavors of white cranberries, white cherries, strawberries and a hint of fennel. This is a full and complex wine. 92 points *Wine Enthusiast*. But the *pièce de résistance* is the **2014 Château Les Valentines “Grande Cuvée No. 8” Côtes de Provence La Londe Rosé (\$27.99)**. Always released later in the season, and because of its La Londe special designation, this is their equivalent of a grand cru wine for the region. So detailed and expressive, this is a wine of length and complexity that could easily stand a few years of cellaring. Gorgeous, with great minerality and intensity, it is never overbearing, and has beautiful intensity and a long finish.



Discover the Joys of Jura

By Alex Schroeder

With all the high-quality, low-price wine options K&L puts on the table, it's all too easy to overlook the quality and affordability of the store's Jura wine selections. They reflect this region's wonderful cool-weather climate (similar to neighboring Burgundy), a winemaking tradition that goes back to the thirteenth century, and fascinating terroir shown through its unique and delicious grape varieties. A K&L Direct Import, Domaine Dugois has been making award-winning wines in Arbois since their very first vintage in 1982, when they won the gold medal for Chardonnay in the Jura Wine Contest. Today, their elegant and impressive wines are available exclusively at K&L Wine Merchants.

2008 Domaine Dugois Vin Jaune Arbois (\$39.99) A high-quality *vin jaune* for this price is unheard of stateside. It is produced by aging Savagnin wine in barrel “under the veil” for over six years without topping it off. This results in an air bubble as the wine evaporates and a thick layer of yeast on the top, the veil, that imparts it with a rich bouquet of walnuts, butterscotch, apricots and lemon meringue. It is complex and opulent on the palate, with flavors of soft cheese, citron, almonds and dried apricots. This is the perfect aperitif to pair with a cheese and charcuterie plate.

2011 Domaine Dugois Savagnin Arbois Blanc (Sous Voile) (\$24.99) This is a traditional-style Jura wine that is aged for three years under the veil. It has the same nutty Oloroso notes that are present more intensely in the Vin Jaune, but is lighter and more refreshing. The richness is balanced out well by a bright acidity, and its complexity evolves with decanting time.

2014 Domaine Dugois Ploussard Arbois Rouge (\$17.99) Ploussard produces a wine reminiscent of an elegant Burgundy (for a much more reasonable price). The Dugois Ploussard glows a bright ruby red in the glass, and after a swirl, a rich blend of honey, cherries and baking spices reaches the nose. The wine is light and silky on the palate, with bright red currant and cranberry flavors. Its bright fruit, elegant nature and nice acidic finish make it a perfect bottle to have around for a hearty meal—I brought this bottle to Thanksgiving dinner last year.





Vineyards of Limoux.

Begude to Yourself

By John Majeski

With all of its illustrious history, grandiose châteaux and storied charms, wine is still, after all, a product of the earth—of human agriculture, and of dedicated, judicious work in the vineyard to ensure that only the finest fruit arrives in the cellar and fermentation room and ultimately makes its way into the bottle of wine on your dinner table. Over the past four decades we've been fortunate in establishing great rapport with hundreds of winemakers throughout the world who live and breathe this philosophy of less is more, of backing off, of allowing their premium fruit to express itself and its true origins. James Kinglake, who founded Domaine Begude with his wife, Catherine, weathered many years in the financial sector in London until one day in 2003 he decided to simply walk away from the urban grind and transplant his boots to the ground of the historic Limoux region of southern France, where vines have been cultivated since the sixteenth century. A cool climate, the influence of tramontane winds and higher altitude contribute to an impressive range of mostly white wines, all organically certified and reflective in their exuberant aromatics of the long, gentle growing season.

2015 Domaine Begude “Les Paradis” Viognier Pays d’Oc (\$15.99) Planted to a southern exposure, this slow-ripening northern Rhône variety develops lovely fruit in Limoux—as long as the local wild boar, deer and birds, seduced by the profuse aromas, don't get to it first! Picked immediately before pressing to preserve the succulent appeal of the fruit, this wine has a measure of restraint in its delicate interplay of pear, nectarine and honeysuckle aromas, with welcoming notes of peach

and apricot on the enticing, mouthwatering palate. Recommended with a spicy Moroccan chicken tagine, this also drinks beautifully as an aperitif, and at a very desirable price.

2015 Domaine Begude Grüner Veltliner “Exotique” Limoux (\$13.99) Now for something completely different. James Kinglake made an end run around the authorized French varieties when he brought cuttings of this grape from a fellow winemaker in Austria. One sip and you will appreciate the clandestine brilliance of his maneuver, for this is, cloak and dagger aside, an elegant, tantalizing rendition—vibrant, dry, light-bodied, suffused with telltale white pepper, green melon and lentil flavors, finishing with a note of celery and cucumber. This complex wine would be well-paired with a stir-fry of Asian noodles, vegetables and pork.

2015 Domaine Begude Pinot Noir Rosé (\$12.99) Since springing into summer, everyone comes to a consensus for rosé—why deny yourself the pleasure of partaking in this globally warm-weather ritual? Apart from Champagne, it is hard to find a more versatile performer, and this delicately crisp, lightly fruity version certainly auditions well. Fragrant red berry fruit on the nose—cranberries and wild strawberries—carry through the palate with slices of watermelon and pink grapefruit appearing for the curtain call. Bring on an encore with grilled ahi tuna, sushi or summer salads, or just invite yourself, open a bottle and enjoy!



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