

A Sampling of Rhône Reds

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
September 2019

Red, white, and you: Agreeable wine for \$15 or less

D



uring a recent visit to France, we arrived in the Rhône River valley area by accident. The drive to Burgundy from Provence takes you straight up the Rhône, but we would have had no reason to stop, had the traffic not been so terrible that Sunday.

Something you probably know about the French is that when there's a national holiday, many people get in their cars and travel to other parts of the country. What was supposed to be a five-hour drive turned into almost twelve.

Because of the traffic, we took a detour into the tiny village of Châteauneuf-du-Pape (CDP), the most revered southern Rhône wine region. The blends from Châteauneuf can contain up to 18 grapes, though most producers in the region use variations on the blend of four: Grenache Noir, Mourvedre, Syrah, and Cinsault. CDP wines are priced at the premium level, owing to their exclusivity, as they all come from either the village of Châteauneuf-du-Pape or from one of four adjoining towns. Luckily, those who adhere to our Vino price point can still enjoy similarly blended Rhône wines that simply carry the designation "Côtes du Rhône," which means they come from a larger region around the Rhône valley.

A Sampling of Rhône Reds

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
September 2019

Without the French holiday traffic or premium prices, travel with me through these economical red Rhône blends that make for wonderful early fall wines.

Though it is only 20 percent of the blend, Syrah dominates the flavor profile of the **2016 Jean Bouchard Les Terrasses**, which can be described as “dark and smoky” with a peppery finish. Think of pairing this blend with a barbecue, and don’t shy from sharing it alongside slightly charred meat.

Another good choice for a barbecue wine is the **2016 M. Chapoutier Belleruche**. M. Chapoutier is known primarily for premium Syrah-dominated Hermitage and Côte-Rôtie wines, and at this price point the Belleruche is a great steal from this producer. Primarily a Grenache and Syrah blend, it holds a concentrated mix of red and black fruit, complemented by licorice, white pepper, and mild tannins.

Softer please, you say? That’s exactly what you’ll get with the **2016 Domaine de la Presidente Grands Classiques**, which has more big cherry “Twizzler candy” flavors present. Lingering fruity licorice with a bit of that famous Rhône spice on the back of the palate, but overall, drink this wine sans a big meal accompaniment.

If you don’t need much complexity, I have a wine for that. The **2015 Domaine du Mistral Plan de Dieu** is the oldest wine of the group, but one of the least complicated. It’s like what they say when the guy wasn’t exciting, but he was “nice.” Nothing special here. However, it might be just fine for an after-work, wind-down glass.

The **2016 Xavier Vignon** is a great example of a classic Côtes du Rhône wine. Dried red and black fruits, with licorice, wet earth, and some peppery spice. I really enjoyed this, and the darker, earthier flavors made me think about pairing it with mushrooms. For the \$13.99 price point, the Xavier Vignon offers a mouth full of flavor and is a good “bang for the buck” Rhône wine.

A Sampling of Rhône Reds

Written by Jacqueline Coleman, BT Contributor
September 2019

One step up from a general Côtes du Rhône wine is the Côtes du Rhône Villages AOC (short for the certification *appellation d'origine contrôlée*), which covers wine from very specific towns made under stricter winemaking guidelines. The

2016 Domaine Bellevue Signargues

is one of these, and it is a very nicely structured example. Robust blueberries and blackberries on the nose, with more cherry and strawberry joining in the mouth. Hint of pepper on the finish, and overall a very pleasant drinker. I paired it with pasta covered in mushroom and meat sauce, and it was a great match.

One final wine comes from arguably the top Châteauneuf-du-Pape wine-producing family. The

2017 Famille Perrin Côtes du Rhône Réserve

is the best deal of these wines at less than \$12 at Publix. Silky smooth, complex, and perfectly “Rhône” is what you would expect from the Perrin family of the iconic Château de Beaucastel. Taste what five generations of winemaking in a region can produce, even at an economical level. These guys know quality, and it shows in their \$12 wines, too.

Feedback: letters@biscaynetimes.com