

Chateauneuf du Pape 2010 pre-arrival offer [20% discount off regular prices]

Interested in another much-hyped “vintage-of-the-century” from France’s Chateauneuf du Pape appellation? Why, of course! So, **choose six [or more] bottles of 2010s**, mixed as you wish, from this list of offerings and **receive a 20% discount** on your purchase. Also mixing in this offering are some **late arriving 2009s**. The wines will be available in the spring. A fifty percent down payment is due upon confirmation. Quantities limited. Below, see [1] reviews of these offered wines from famous wine writers and [2] general remarks on the special excellence of the 2010 vintage. Chateauneuf du Pape that has had enough time to be with itself is perhaps the world’s finest wine value. Furthermore, just think of what \$50 buys for a wine at a restaurant!

All orders are subject to confirmation.		Parker Points	Tanzer Points
Cuvee du Vatican 2010	\$41.99 less 20% = \$33.60	(90-92) Drink: 2011-2026	(91-93)
Bosquet des Papes Cuvee Tradition 2010	\$44.99 less 20% = \$38.40	(91-92) 2011 -2026	(89-91)
Vieux Donjon 2010	\$67.99 less 20% = \$54.40	(93-95) Drink: 2015-2026	(93-95)
Clos des Papes 2010 *	\$139.99 less 20% = \$119.00	(96-98) Drink 2011-2041	(94-96)

Late releases of these 2009s:

Charvin - Chateauneuf du Pape 2009	\$59.99 less 20% = \$48.00	95; Drink 2011-2026	94
Saint-Theodoric – CNP les Sablons 2009	\$49.99 less 20% = \$39.99	92; Drink 2011-2021	
Saint-Theodoric – CNP la Guigasse 2009	\$64.99 less 20% = \$51.99	92+; Drink 2013-2028	93
Saint-Theodoric – CNP le Grand Pin 2009	\$89.99 less 20% = \$71.99	95; Drink 2013-2028	94

*Unfortunately, we must ask you to include earlier vintages of Clos des Papes [2008 and/or 2009] on a 1:1 ratio with purchases of any 2010 Clos des Papes to qualify for the 20% discount. Bottles of these earlier vintages would, of course, qualify for this special 20% discount “pre-arrival” offering. Apologies for any inconvenience this may cause.

1. Wine Reviews

Cuvee du Vatican - Chateauneuf du Pape 2010 **\$41.99 less 20% = \$33.60**

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Bright purple. Powerful aromas of black and blue fruits, cola and allspice. Deeply pitched blackberry and blueberry flavors are impressively concentrated but are carrying no excess fat. Finishes sweet and intense, with the blackberry and spice notes repeating. I suspect that this seductive wine will be enjoyable soon after bottling. **90-92 points**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): The 2010 Chateauneuf du Pape boasts an opaque, deep purple color as well as a stunning bouquet of scorched earth, tobacco leaf, black currants, kirsch and lavender. The impressive aromatic and flavor spectrum is nicely complemented by a long, rich, well-balanced finish with good freshness, precision and zesty acids. This cuvee should drink well for 15 or more years. Drink 2011-2026. (91-93) points. These are two very strong vintages [2009 and 2010] from the Diffonty family (among the oldest estate bottlers in the appellation). The 2010s may be one of the finest vintages the Diffonty family has yet made.

Bosquet des Papes - CNP Cuvee Tradition 2010

\$44.99 less 20% = \$38.40

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: (75% grenache, with mourvedre, syrah and cinsault; raised in old *foudres*): Bright purple. Floral-accented aromas of red and dark berries, allspice and anise. Spicy, penetrating black raspberry and cherry flavors show good clarity and pick up a smoky quality with air. Finishes ripe, silky and persistent, with the anise note carrying through. **89-91 points**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): For example, the 2010 Chateauneuf du Pape Tradition. The opaque ruby/purple color offers up a nose of black raspberries, kirsch and some licorice, sandalwood and roasted herbs. It is full-bodied, with impressive purity, freshness and definition, and the great intensity of fruit sets it apart from other top vintages. It should drink well for 15 or more years. Drink 2011 -2026. (91-93) points.

The proprietors of a reasonably large estate of nearly 70 acres, with parcels spread throughout Chateauneuf du Pape, the Boiron family has long been a fixture in the appellation, dating at least as far back as the mid-1800s. Nicolas Boiron, who is running the estate now, is certainly a bigger than life character, both literally and figuratively. He is possibly the tallest vigneron in the southern Rhone. His property is a wonderful source of traditional Chateauneuf du Papes that are consistently well-made and among the best-known of the appellation. Their 2009s are all strong efforts, and their 2010s, to my taste, are the greatest wines they have produced since 1990, even eclipsing their success in the sensational vintage of 2007. The 2010s are probably the finest wines Nicolas Boiron has yet made, equal to the success they had in 1990, and eclipsing the wondrous vintage of 2007.

Vieux Donjon - Chateauneuf du Pape 2010

\$67.99 less 20% = \$54.40

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): A brilliant effort that ranks alongside the 2007, the 2010 Chateauneuf du Pape boasts abundant notes of black cherry liqueur interwoven with black currant, blueberry, spring flower, roasted herb, licorice, pepper and bouquet garni characteristics. Full-bodied with good acidity, terrific purity, a fleshy mouthfeel and a long finish, it should be even better in 4-5 years and last for two decades or more. Drink 2015 -2035. (93-95) points.

Now that Lucien Michel has inched his way into retirement, his young daughter, Claire, who did an apprenticeship at Napa's Harlan Estate, is in full control of the winemaking (another example of a woman who has taken charge of a famous estate).

Stephen Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: (75% grenache, 10% each of mourvedre and syrah and 5% cinsault, fermented in concrete and aged in *foudres*): Bright purple. Explosive aromas of black and blue fruits, Indian spices and lavender, with a bright mineral topnote. Fleshy and smooth, with excellent clarity and lift to its black raspberry and mulberry flavors. The floral note repeats on the very long, sweet, focused finish. **93-95 points**

Clos des Papes - Chateauneuf du Pape 2010

\$139.99 less 20% = \$119.00

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Tasted first in components, then from a cask that Avril figures to roughly approximate the final blend. #1: About 80% grenache. Bright and assertively perfumed, with intense red berry character and sneaky florality. Silky and smooth, with sweet raspberry and cherry flavors and good back-end cut. #2: "Lots of syrah and mourvedre," according to Avril. Deeper and darker in character, offering intense blackberry and cherry scents and flavors. Tannins give grip to the long, spicy finish. #3: "About two-thirds grenache, then all of the others," said Avril. Intense red fruit and floral aromas, with a hint of smoke. Powerful but lithe, showing impressive depth and a seamless texture. #4:

50% grenache, 30% mourvedre and 20% syrah and "all of the other permitted red varieties": Avril says that this cask is representative of where he thinks the 2010 will ultimately wind up by the time it gets into bottle. Opaque ruby. A heady, expressive bouquet of red and dark fruit preserves, incense and *garrigue*, with a spicy accent. Juicy and sharply focused, offering vibrant raspberry and cherry flavors that pick up weight with air. Closes on a lively, spicy note, with excellent clarity and lingering sweetness. **94-96 points**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): The 2010 looks to be extraordinary. A slightly fresher and more elegant version of the 2007, I think it may well be the greatest Clos des Papes since the 1990 and 1978. The 2010 has a dense ruby/purple color, a beautifully precise and pure nose of deep black raspberry, black cherry, boysenberry and blueberry notes with some licorice, *garrigue*, and bouquet garni. Additionally, there is a meaty richness that probably comes from the Mourvedre and Syrah. It is an extraordinarily intense, fresh, lively wine with great finesse and elegance, which is somewhat unusual given the richness of fruit and the power of this wine. The color is a dense ruby/purple, perhaps slightly less opaque than the 2007, but very dark. This wine should evolve for 30+ years. Drink: 2011-2041. **(96-98) points.**

This is one of the great estates in Chateauneuf du Pape, with a history that dates back to the mid-1700s. I believe the Avril family first estate-bottled wine in 1896. Clos des Papes, with its 90+ acres of vines spread among 24 separate parcels in the appellation, is one of the traditional hallmarks of classic, long-lived Chateauneuf du Pape. Everything is aged in old wood foudres, no old vine or luxury cuvee is produced, and the red wine is a classic blend of 65% Grenache, 20% Mourvedre, 20% Syrah, and the rest Vaccarese, Counoise, and Muscardin. It is generally not fined or filtered after aging 15 months in these old wood foudres. Tasting here is always a treat, but it takes a while to work through all the different lots and then look at the potential assembled version of the 2010. I was consistently rating each foudre between a low of 92 or 93 to a high of mid- to upper-90s. That is as impressive as 2010 is. Avril told me that the average alcohol in 2010 was high on all the different lots, which is in keeping with recent vintages. (The 2003 was 15.6%, and the 2007 was 15.7%, while the final assembled version of the 2010 is 15.9% and the 2009 is 15.6%.) The 2010, paradoxically, has relatively high acidity compared to other top vintages. Since I had a few extra moments, Vincent opened a 1998 Chateauneuf du Pape blanc, which I rated 93. I thought it was still very fresh and lively. Of course, he ended our tasting with one of the all-time classics of Chateauneuf du Pape and of Clos des Papes, the 1990, which is close to perfection.

Clos des Papes – Chateauneuf du Pape 2009 \$139.99 less 20% special offer=\$112.00

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Full ruby. Intense aromas of red fruit preserves, anise, lavender and exotic spices. Supple and expansive on the palate, offering deep raspberry and cherry flavors accented by floral pastille and spice nuances. Tannins come on late and build with air, but the fruit keeps pace. Finishes firm and very long, with resonating floral and spice notes and impressive energy. **95 points.**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* #197 (Oct 2011): The 2009 is showing better out of bottle than it was last year. Gorgeous kirsch liqueur notes, raspberry jam, forest floor, spice box, new saddle leather and a peppery spiciness are all present in this deep, voluptuously textured, open-knit Clos des Papes, which is atypically forward, luscious and approachable already. These wines often need a good 5-10 years of cellaring in the more structured vintages, but the 2009 is gorgeous from the get-go. This full-bodied, deep, concentrated wine has a deep purple color and should drink well for 20-25 years without ever really closing down. Readers may want to think of this as a slightly more concentrated version of the 2003, which is one of the great stars of that vintage. Drink: 2011-2036. **95 points.**

Wine Spectator: Sinewy and reserved, with a light dusting of cocoa powder over the tangy damson plum, red licorice and cassia notes. The long, supple finish, with a lovely wafting note of Lapsang souchong tea, is packed with minerality and tight-grained tannins that will need time to fully evolve. One of the more backward 2009s, though this should pick up steam in the cellar. Best from 2013 through 2025. 9,000 cases made. 11/15/11. **96 points.** –JM

Clos des Papes – Chateauneuf du Pape 2008 \$112.99 less 20% special offer=\$90.40

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Mar/Apr 11: Bright ruby. A heady bouquet displays fresh red berries, sandalwood, dried flowers and a hint of baking spices. Creamy in texture, with lively acidity lifting sweet red and dark berry and candied rose flavors. Becomes sappier with air and finishes with very good clarity and lingering spiciness. Avril thinks this wine will surprise people with its ability to age. **91 points**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* #191 (Oct 2010): Vincent Avril fashioned one of the finest 2008 Chateauneuf du Papes of the appellation. Made from a classic blend of 65% Grenache, 20% Mourvedre, 10% Syrah and the rest an assortment of permitted varietals, it exhibits a dark color as well as a bouquet of lavender, kirsch, licorice, loamy balsamic notes and hints of roasted meats and herbs. Evolved by this estate's standards, it is an elegant effort with surprising density and richness. I actually prefer it to the 2005 (which was The Wine Spectator's Wine of the Year). Drink 2010-2025. **91 points**.

Wine Spectator: Dark, inviting and very alluring, with captivating black tea, charred mesquite and kirsch aromas and flavors allied to a remarkably silky mouthfeel. Superlong, with mineral, violet, pepper and additional crushed cherry and plum fruit notes all gliding through the finish. Best from 2011 through 2027. 5,500 cases made. 10/15/10. **95 points.**—JM

Charvin - Chateauneuf du Pape 2009

\$59.99 less 20% mixed case= \$48.00

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Ruby-red. Highly perfumed bouquet evokes candied red fruits, potpourri and allspice, with notes of licorice and white pepper adding complexity. Shows excellent clarity and power on the palate, offering juicy raspberry and cherry flavors and a sexy touch of candied flowers. The very pure, incisive finish lingers with impressive tenacity. **94 points**.

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): The 2009 Chateauneuf du Pape (which tips the scales around 15% natural alcohol) is a great example of traditional Chateauneuf du Pape winemaking. A dense dark ruby color is followed by a sexy nose of raspberries, ground pepper, spice box, damp earth, kirsch and dark currants. Full-bodied, complex, elegant and already irresistible as the tannins have completely melted away, it can be drunk now and over the next 15+ years. Drink 2011-2026. **95 points**.

Beautifully made, traditional wines emerge from Laurent Charvin's estate in the northwestern sector of Chateauneuf du Pape, where the family owns 20+ acres of vines. Everything made here is aged in cement tanks. The Chateauneuf du Pape blend tends to be approximately 85% Grenache and the rest equal parts Syrah, Mourvedre and Vaccarese. One of the best buys is Charvin's delicious Cotes du Rhone called Le Poutet. Last year Laurent Charvin told me he thought that in 2009, the most favored part of Chateauneuf du Pape was the northern sector, and I think there is some truth to that although it was not nearly as evident when I carefully analyzed the tasting notes of the southern parts of the appellation versus the northern parts. Nevertheless, the north was certainly highly successful as was Charvin.

Wine Spectator: This is very well-built, with a range of apple wood and toasted spice notes framing the core of crushed plum, blackberry and cassis. Dusty structure give a long and grippy feel through the finish, while a tarry edge emerges on the back end. More oomph than usual for this estate, but it's all inlaid with fresh acidity and minerality for balance. Best from 2014 through 2025. 500 cases imported. 2/29/2012. **94 points**. —JM

Charvin – Chateauneuf du Pape 2008

\$44.99 less 15% mixed case= \$38.25

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Mar/Apr 11: Vivid red. An exotically perfumed bouquet displays cinnamon-accented red berries and cherry, with a sexy floral overtone. Spicy and incisive on the palate, offering sweet raspberry and cherry flavors and a hint of baking spices. The spicy notes linger on a long, silky finish. Showing lots of complexity right now but this is also balanced to age. **92 points**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 191 (Oct 2010): The 2008 Chateauneuf du Pape is a sexy, medium to full-bodied effort with far more depth, richness and seductive powers than most Chateauneuf du Papes in this vintage. A classic blend of 85% Grenache and the rest equal parts Mourvedre, Syrah and Vaccarese has resulted in a deep plum/ruby-hued 2008 displaying loads of kirsch, pepper and licorice notes. The fruit is sweet, the tannins silky and the wine very seductive and evolved. Drink it over the next 7-8 years. 2010-2018. **90 points**.

One of the most intelligent young Chateauneuf du Pape turks is Laurent Charvin. As I have written before, consumers are lucky that the entire production here is now estate bottled as opposed to being sold to negociants as it was prior to 1990. I always find Charvin's wines come closest to those of Chateau Rayas, although the Charvin cuvees are slightly more concentrated.

Saint-Theodoric – CNP les Sablons 2009

\$49.99 less 20% mixed case = \$39.99

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): Revealing the lightest ruby color, the 2009 Chateauneuf du Pape Les Sablons offers an exquisitely fragrant, ethereal nose of licorice, kirsch, sandy, loamy soil and spice box. The remarkable perfume and expansive texture are amazing given its surprisingly light ruby color, but that's Grenache at its finest. Because of the forwardness of the vintage, I suspect this wine will drink well during its first decade of life [2011-2021]. **92 points.**

This is a joint project between importer Peter Weygandt and Baptiste Grangeon of Domaine du Cristia. **In essence, its aim is to showcase three totally different terroirs in Chateauneuf du Pape. The wines are made from biodynamically farmed parcels of sandy-based vineyards (Guigasse, Le Grand Pin and Les Sablons) and are bottled without fining or filtration.** Les Sablons is aged in old, small oak barrels and the Guigasse and Grand Pin in larger 600-liter demi-muids. Yields for all three terroirs came in at an amazingly low 14 hectoliters per hectare (because of the drought in 2009 and the flowering problems with the Grenache in 2010). **These are all remarkable efforts of extraordinary elegance and finesse that, stylistically, come closer to the styles one sees from nearby Chateau Rayas and further north, Domaine Charvin.**

Wine Spectator: Rich and mouthfilling, with a saturated core of blackberry, blueberry cobbler and cherry compote, all stitched with hints of plum eau de vie and red licorice. The finish is polished and creamy. A new project from Baptiste Grangeon of Domaine de Cristia. Drink now through 2021. 2/29/12. **91 points.** –JM

Saint-Theodoric – CNP la Guigasse 2009

\$64.99 less 20% mixed case = \$51.99

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): The 2009 Chateauneuf du Pape Guigasse exhibits a dark ruby color along with a distinctive nose of roast meat, kirsch, black raspberries, lavender and licorice. Fuller-bodied, denser and firmer than Les Sablons, it represents a more virile, masculine style of wine. Layered and full, it needs 2-3 years of cellaring, and should age well for 15 years [2013-2028]. **92+ points.**

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Vivid ruby. Aromas of cherry and boysenberry are complemented by notes of lavender and violet and lifted by a spicy topnote. At once rich and energetic, with very good depth to its sappy black raspberry and bitter cherry flavors. An intense spicy quality builds with air and carries through a very long, seductively sweet finish. **93 points**

Wine Spectator: A very perfumy, enticing style, with toasted anise, cardamom and black tea notes up front, followed by silky blackberry and raspberry fruit and a long, graphite-filled finish. Latent grip at the very end bodes well for the cellar. Best from 2013 through 2022. 100 cases imported. 2/29/12. **92 points.**–JM

Saint-Theodoric – CNP le Grand Pin 2009

\$89.99 less 20% mixed case = \$71.99

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 197 (Oct 2011): My highest score goes to the 2009 Chateauneuf du Pape Le Grand Pin. This impressive, deep ruby-colored, broad wine offers oodles of kirsch liqueur, black raspberry, sweet herb and meat broth-like characteristics, impressively sweet tannin, a full-bodied mouthfeel and stunning purity as well as length. Enjoy this 100% Grenache over the next 15+ years [2011-2026]. **95 points.**

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Full, bright ruby. Explosive, seductively perfumed scents of fresh red berries, incense and Asian spices. Sappy, palate-staining raspberry and cherry flavors show both power and vivacity, with notes of star anise and candied lavender coming up with air. Finishes silky, sweet and impressively long, the floral and cherry notes echoing. I underrated this wine last year. **94 points**

Wine Spectator: Very dark and lush, with loads of blueberry compote, açai berry, Black Forest cake and mulled spice flavors all framed by roasted vanilla bean and melted licorice snap notes. Polished and dense through the finish, with nice latent grip for the cellar. A great combination of power and finesse. Best from 2013 - 2024. 100 cases imported. 2/29/12. **94 points.**–JM

Other Chateauneuf du Pape in stock:

Mont Olivet – Chateauneuf du Pape 2009

\$37.99 less 15% mixed case=\$32.30

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Deep red. Complex, spice-accented bouquet of cherry, dark berry and dried flowers, with a hint of anise emerging with air. Deeply pitched blackberry and bitter cherry flavors are lifted by tangy acidity and show a suave floral nuance. Finishes juicy and long, with very good clarity and lingering spiciness. **92 points**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* #197 (Oct 2011): Made from 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah, Mourvedre, Cinsault, Counoise and Vaccarese (aged completely in old wood foudres), the 2009 Chateauneuf du Pape Tradition displays classic, textbook Chateauneuf du Pape aromas of kirsch liqueur, roasted Provencal herbs/garrigue, cedar and loamy soil intermixed with a hint of lavender. Full-bodied and lavishly fruited with moderately sweet tannin and abundant glycerin, this heady, upfront, complex, evolved 2009 can be enjoyed over the next 10-12 years [2011-2023]. **90 points**.

The Sabon family that owns Clos du Mont Olivet was one of the first to estate bottle Chateauneuf du Pape over 80 years ago. This is a highly respected source of traditional wines that age wonderfully. The family's habit of bottling as they sold the wine has been abandoned, and the result is far more consistent offerings than existed 15 or 20 years ago. The 2009s are beautiful wines, but the 2010s will ultimately eclipse them. Both vintages merit serious interest.

Wine Spectator: This red has a good sappy intensity, delivering flavors of kirsch and blackberry preserves that course along, followed by notes of graphite and iron that take over on the finish. Approachable now, but has the cut to cellar short term. Drink now through 2019. 4,000 cases made. 10/31/11. **92 points**.—JM

Mont Olivet – Chateauneuf du Pape Cuvee Papet '09

\$69.99 less 15% =\$59.50

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 12: Vibrant red color. High-pitched aromas of raspberry, candied cherry, allspice and clove, with an intense floral quality that gaining strength with air. Showing more energy and delicacy from bottle than it did from barrel last year; in fact, there's something Burgundian going on here. Silky and seamless on the palate, with a bracing minerality adding punch to its sweet red fruit and floral pastille qualities. Finishes spicy and very long, with lingering red fruit and floral notes. This wine virtually always delivers the most bang for the buck of any Chateauneuf *tete de cuvee* and this vintage continues that streak. **95 points**

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* #197 (Oct 2011): Needing more patience, the 2009 Chateauneuf du Pape Cuvee du Papet (75% Grenache, 15% Mourvedre and the balance Syrah aged in foudre) comes from the estate's oldest vines planted in such famous sites as Mont Olivet and Bois Dauphin. Usually about 1,000 cases are produced and the 2009, which tops the scales at 15.5% alcohol, is brilliant. A gorgeously aromatic bouquet of dark fruits, kirsch, underbrush, raspberries, licorice, spice box and pepper soars from the glass of this dark ruby/purple-tinged wine. Opulent and voluptuously textured with moderate tannins, and a broad, fleshy mouthfeel, it has 15 years of evolution ahead of it. [2011-2026] Nevertheless, it is very accessible and upfront now. **95 points**.

Vieux Donjon – Chateauneuf du Pape 2005

\$67.99 less 15% =\$57.80

Robert Parker *Wine Advocate* # 173 (Oct 2007): As one would expect, the 2005 Chateauneuf du Pape is formidably tannic, backward, and in need of 5-6 years of bottle age. Its dark ruby/purple color is accompanied by classic notes of sweet cherries, roasted herbs, meat juices, forest floor, and resinous underbrush. Deep, full-bodied, backward, and serious, this is a wine for patient connoisseurs. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2020+. **92+ points**.

An estate for connoisseurs with cold cellars, these traditionally made Chateauneuf du Papes rarely strut their stuff until they have been in the bottle for 5-7 years. Moreover, this is one of the few estates that has resisted the current fashion for producing old vine cuvees.

Josh Reynolds Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*, Jan/Feb 08: Deep ruby. Seductively aromatic bouquet of red and dark berries, fresh flowers and minerals, with subtle garrigue and baking spice character. A round, creamy mid-weight with deep, sweet raspberry and blackcurrant flavors and a finish featuring gently gripping tannins and excellent smoky persistence. More civilized and fruity than the 2006 and 2004 releases from this top producer. **94 points**

Wine Spectator: Juicy and spicy, with lots of raspberry ganache and blueberry notes offset by hints of mulled spices, black tea and fig cake. Really picks up steam on the finish, with a racy, mouthwatering minerality. Should age beautifully. Drink now through 2025. 10/31/07. 4,250 cases made. **95 points; #3 in Top 100 of 2007.**—JM

2. General Remarks on the Vintage

2010 and 2009 Southern Rhone Wines by Josh Raynolds, Tanzer's *International Wine Cellar*

The southern Rhone's winning streak continued through the generally outstanding 2010 vintage, with some estates having produced the best wines I've yet tasted from them. According to Christophe Sabon of Domaine de la Janasse, "balance is the word for 2010. Okay, maybe it's really two words: balance and freshness." He went on: "The acidity levels are high in the '10s but the fruit is ripe, almost like 2007 or even 2003 in some cases. But there's no roasted character. When those two elements are in harmony the wines are classic, classic Chateauneuf."

At Clos du Caillou, winemaker Bruno Gaspard, who makes no secret of his preference for wines of finesse over blockbusters, told me that 2010 shows the best aspects of 2008—"its bright fruit, but with greater depth *and* intensity"—and describes the year as a vintage "that will appeal to fans of both power *and* elegance."

The growing season did not have an auspicious start, as early spring frosts induced *coulture*, which in some cases severely reduced potential yields. But it was mostly smooth sailing after that, with warm but not excessively hot weather throughout the entire season coupled with cool nights that helped the fruit retain acidity and freshness.

A major factor behind the southern Rhone's success in recent years has been the concentration of the wines, which almost necessarily comes at the expense of yields. For example, while the maximum harvest allowed at Chateauneuf du Pape is 35 hectoliters per hectare, the average yield in 2010 was reportedly just 27 hectares per hectare, and that's taking into account every producer in the region, not just the ones who achieve low yields by design.

Daniel Brunier of Vieux Telegraphe (as well as Les Pallieres in Gigondas) bemoaned the pitiful quantity of grapes harvested in recent vintages, telling me that at Gigondas "we got 20 hectoliters per hectare in 2009 and only 15 in 2010. It's especially painful to have such high quality and almost no wine. It's the constant irony of wine-growing." Brunier's sentiments were shared by Thierry Usseglio, who noted that what he thinks makes 2010 such a special year is that "because of the concentration from the low yields the flavor impression can move toward darker fruits, but not dark as in heavy or roasted, like 2007 can be, so you have both masculine and feminine character at the same time: structure and power as well as elegance."

Two thousand nine, as I wrote last year, also enjoyed a beneficent and notably warm growing season, with almost no rain. There were some serious heat spells in August during the lead-up to harvest, which resulted in thicker grape skins and thus more tannins. As the producers I visited in November told me, the 2009s are wines that will require cellaring to harmonize and round into drinking form.

While 2008 appears destined to live in the shadow of the superior 2009 vintage, '09 itself is already falling off the radar of some merchants and consumers as interest in the 2010s heats up. Good to very good vintages like 1999, 2004 and 2006 are often neglected as the market runs off after a more-hyped or simply superior follow-up year, but 2009 might be the first genuinely outstanding set of wines that will suffer such a fate. Anecdotal evidence from producers, importers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers (in other words, the whole spectrum of the wine market) indicates that this is already happening. **Jan/Feb 2012**

Two Terrific Vintages in the Southern Rhone: (One Excellent, One Great)

by Robert Parker, *Wine Advocate*

Some of the issues I had with the 2009s prior to bottling with hard tannins and a certain astringency were largely non-issues when I tasted through the bottled wines. This is the type of vintage consumers will love as the wines are fruit-forward, full-bodied, relatively high in alcohol with low acidity and sweet, well-integrated tannins. The downside to the vintage is that even though the flowering was regular and rapid, the berries were small and the overall crop size suffered considerably because of summer's drought.

Last year I suggested the 2009 vintage reminded me of a hypothetical blend of 2003 and 2000, and there is little reason to change this observation. 2009 is more consistent across the southern Rhône than 2003, which had a small segment of truly profound wines, but too many other wines suffered from the unprecedented drought and heat wave France endured in 2003. Across all appellations, the 2009s are rich, full-bodied, velvety textured, front end-loaded, powerful wines. The white 2009s tend to be buttery with low acidity yet irrefutably delicious styles. They will require consumption early in life as they are likely to evolve quickly. The bigger red wines of Châteauneuf du Pape, Vacqueyras and Gigondas will last a decade, and in the case of the concentrated, old vine/single vineyard cuvées, 15-20 years is well within reach. While all appellations have done well in this consistently fine year, one AOC that is exceptional is Vacqueyras. This is an up-and-coming star in the southern Rhône. Châteauneuf du Pape has already arrived, and the younger generation that has emerged over the last two decades has made it one of the great winemaking appellations of France as well as the world. Vacqueyras is not far behind and the overall quality of the 70-80 domaines I tasted was impressive as well as consistent. Moreover, Vacqueyras sells for less than half the price of Châteauneuf du Pape.

Production in 2009 was about 20% lower than in an abundant year such as 2000 or 2007. It is probably 40% lower than what will be achieved in 2011, which looks to be a repeat of 2000 and perhaps 1990, assuming the weather continues to be dry and sunny during the last weeks of the harvest. (As a postscript – it was!)

Unquestionably, the southern Rhône has enjoyed a trifecta of top vintages that should keep prices stable as well as offer a flood of high quality wines from this treasure trove of value-priced as well as interesting wines that are wonderful matches with an assortment of cuisines.

2010

This is a great vintage that comes close in quality to 2007 in the southern Rhône. Some producers think 2010 eclipses 2007 because of the wines' vivid freshness and focus. Throughout the southern Rhône, the hallmarks of the vintage are very dense purple, sometimes even blue/black colors as well as higher acid levels that have not been seen since 2004 and 2001. In fact, 2010's paradox is that I can't remember a vintage so concentrated, powerful and rich that also has such zesty acidity. The pHs are lower across the board than in 2009 and 2007, and the acids are higher. The downside is that following the relatively moderate to small crop in 2009, the 2010 crop was very small, largely because 30-40% of the Grenache crop (the dominant grape varietal of the southern Rhône) was lost due to a *coulure* and *millerandage*. This has undoubtedly contributed to the level of concentration in the final wines. However, if a producer usually makes 1,000 cases in a normal vintage, his 2010 production will be closer to 500-700 cases.

Weather conditions were nearly as ideal as they were in 2007, with cool nights (which kept the acids up) and warm days. There was rarely any excessive heat, and the often frequent rain events that begin with the fall equinox never materialized. Average Mistral winds were present, but not as excessive as they were in 2008 and 2007.

The 2010s will have significant aging potential, which is obvious in the level of tannins, but the tannins are sweet with exceptional elegance and finesse. The ratio of high extractive and phenolic skins to the juice has produced wines of extraordinary intensity, freshness, aromatic potential and obvious longevity. This is another great vintage that offers an embarrassment of riches for this region that has enjoyed a succession of extraordinary years. Since 1998, the top years have been 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003 (for a dozen or so estates), 2005, 2006 (which is very underrated and probably the finest year among all the appellations of the last 15 or so years), 2007 (the greatest vintage I have ever tasted in the southern Rhône), 2009 and 2010 (which is very close in quality to 2007). Add the possibility of a trifecta in 2011, and readers can see why more and more importers and consumers are beating a path to these outstanding wines that offer a terrific ratio in terms of value and pleasure, as well as the potential for moderate evolution in a wine collection.

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