

# WINE News

*Benchmark harvests for Rhône, French Regional and Loire.*



## SEPTEMBER 11, 2017 FEATURES

- |   |                          |   |                            |
|---|--------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | Top Picks to Sip Today   | 5 | The Pross Report: 2015 CdP |
| 2 | L'Ou and the Vinifilles  | 6 | Cellar Calls in the Loire  |
| 3 | Ladies of the Languedoc  | 7 | Cab Franc; Franck Millet   |
| 4 | 2015 Châteauneuf-du-Pape | 8 | Southern Rhône in 2015     |

## Deep in French Territory

By Keith Mabry

After a rigorous trip through the Rhône and Loire Valleys in March, we came back with several exciting new producers, some fantastic new wines from our existing producers and a few library selections that are off-the-charts delicious. In a word, 2015 was on everyone's tongue. It's tremendous throughout all regions, and you will see some truly amazing wines at all price levels. Not to overshadow 2015 already, but 2016 is equally strong, although in areas like the Loire it is seriously limited in production levels, due to frost early in the season. The quality is outstanding, though. Our trip begins with a look at an association

of grower-producer women working in the Languedoc-Roussillon, known as the "Vinifilles." These artisanal vigneronns are making some of the best and even some of the most critically acclaimed wines in the region. Next we look at Châteauneuf-du-Pape and the host of new 2015 arrivals that are sure to excite now and for years to come. We journey down the Loire River and its host of Sauvignon Blancs, Chenin Blancs and Cabernet Francs. We finish with our favorite in-stock 2015 Rhônes from our top Direct Import producers. Here are a few top picks to sip on whilst we while away the time on these pages:

### 2014 Domaine L'Ostal Cazes "Grand Vin" Minervois La Livinière (\$19.99)

From famed Bordeaux vigneron Jean-Michel Cazes comes this outstanding wine from his Minervois property. A beautiful expression of the south of France, this Syrah-dominant wine has layers of nuance with its savory spices, black fruit and garrigue notes. Each sip is like taking a walk through the vineyards. **95 DC**



### 2016 Aurore Dezat Domaine des Chasseignes Sancerre (\$18.99)

Our newest producer from Sancerre, Aurore Dezat took over the family vineyards and makes one of the most mineral-driven and aromatically perfumed of all our Sauvignon Blancs from the region. Her vines are on the classic calcareous clay soil with caillottes gravel. Focused and pure with flavors of grapefruit peel, chalky mineral and white flowers. Tremendous!



### 2013 Vidal-Fleury Côtes-du-Rhône (\$12.99)

One of our top values of this year and last, the Vidal-Fleury is now on its final tour. It is a classically old-school Rhône that is beautifully integrated and drinking at its very best right now. Showing its red fruit, Indian spices and potpourri even better than last year, this delicious wine is well worth the price of admission. Act now before it's gone for good. **95 DC**



## Château de L'Ou Moves the Needle

By Keith Mabry

Some of our best new relationships often come through referrals from other producers with whom we have already long established relationships. Our sparkling wine producer from Limoux, Françoise Antech, has made many great recommendations over the last few years through her association with the Vinifilles, which have included Domaine de la Reserve d'O and Clos de l'Anhel. When she said, "you must try my friend Séverine Bourrier's wines from Château de L'Ou," we listened. And were deeply impressed.

Séverine came to winemaking through her own passion for the subject, not having the family history associated with so many winemakers. She studied oenology in school and worked in Bordeaux for a decade. After meeting her husband, they relocated to a property an hour outside of Perpignan in the Roussillon. They began restoring an old château and did some replanting, rechristening the estate L'Ou, which is Catalan for "egg." The property is in an oval-shaped valley that was used as a rest area by herd animals and likely the Knights Templar on their way to various crusades.

The estate consists of three primary terroirs: the alluvial marl soils that make up the valley, and two higher-elevation sites, one made up of black schist and the other brown. Their key grape variety is Syrah but Séverine also grows the classic regional varieties like Grenache and Carignan. For white grapes, they grow Grenache Gris, Grenache Blanc, Muscat and of all things, Chardonnay, which is renowned for being one of the best in the region. We have their full complement of wines in stock but we'll focus on the terroir wines for this article.

The first is the 2015 Château de L'Ou "Infiniment" Côtes Catalanes Rouge (\$19.99), which comes from the marl and alluvial soils. Made from 100% Syrah, it has a powerful nose with copious, rich, ripe fruit and spice box aromas. On the palate it is refined, delivering its power in waves, so as not to overwhelm. 94 RP

The 2015 Château de L'Ou Chardonnay "Infiniment" Côtes Catalanes Blanc (\$19.99) comes from the black schist soils on one of their higher-elevation sites. Aging occurs in 300-liter barrels with some lees stirring during élevage, which yields a rich and creamy rendition that still holds great minerality and flavors of baked apples, cinnamon and honeysuckle. If it were from California it would fetch twice the price. 90 RP

The 2015 Château de L'Ou "Velours Noir" Côtes Catalanes Rouge (\$24.99) comes from the black schist high above the valley. Also derived from 100% Syrah, the wine is aged in barrel and has a beautiful, dense texture. This is reminiscent of the great wines of the Northern Rhône, and you would be hard-pressed not to think of producers like Chapoutier or Guigal while drinking it. 94 RP



Their benchmark wine to be sure is the 2015 Château de L'Ou "Ipso Facto" Côtes Catalanes Rouge (\$119.99). A blend of the best lots from all three soils—alluvial, black schist and brown schist—the depth on this wine is almost inconceivable. Approaching perfection, this wine moves the needle on what we think about wines from the Roussillon. With organic principles, insightful winemaking and passion for their project, Château de L'Ou has done something truly amazing by changing the perception of what a region is and what can be accomplished there. 97 RP



Photo: Luc Jennepin

## Who Are the Vinifilles?

Vinifilles loosely translates to "wine girls" and it is an association of women winemakers. Each vigneron represents a particular region in the Languedoc-Roussillon area of France. All these women team together to share marketing strategies, winemaking practices and have fun promoting their wines. We were first introduced to them through our dear friend Françoise Antech-Gazeau from Maison Antech of Limoux, a founding member of the group.

We have since added Marie Chauffray from Domaine de la Reserve d'O of Terrasses du Larzac, Sophie Guiraudon from Clos de l'Anhel of Corbières, Pascale Riviere from La Jasse Castel of Montpeyroux and now Séverine Bourrier from Château de L'Ou of Roussillon. All the producers work sustainably and organically and each one represents the pinnacle of production in their respective regions.

# Our Ladies of the Languedoc

By John Majeski

During the late Middle Ages in France, women and girls, whether high born or peasant, often lived apart from the larger community in a form of ritual separation, creating their own milieu of memory and artistic reverie through tapestry weaving, embroidery or chansons (song). Temporary escape from these confined spaces could sometimes be found in shared narratives and songs about the orchard or vineyard, where symbolic openings existed, and where the women of Occitania, as the Languedoc region was called at the time, could walk and breathe the air of freedom in the sunlight, and gaze at the profusion of fruit and berry that hung from bough and vine.

What passed as “life” for women in such a cloistered space is long gone. Today you will find a radically different community in the Languedoc—a strong sisterhood of dedicated women winemakers who call themselves the Vinifilles (“wine girls”), women who cultivate and honor alliances, share insights, and live and breathe the vineyards, having long replaced the worn spindle and sewing needle with a pipette and refractometer. In their own words they are “adepts of the pleasure and richness of their profession, beautiful, rebellious, active, greedy, friendly, sociable and dynamic.”

## Clos de L’Anhel

Sophie Guiraudon of Clos de L’Anhel embodies the spirit of the wild and picturesque Corbières, France’s fourth-largest wine appellation. She spent some years making reputable wine for others until finally in 2000 deciding that it was time to strike out on her own. Today she tirelessly works her 10 hectares of well-tended, organic vines that flourish on clay-limestone soils among fallen ruins that might have once housed women in their weaving and song. Her winery is even named for an eroded sheepfold that lay among the vines—L’Anhel means lamb in the ancient Occitan tongue.

Sophie remains a strong advocate for her native Carignan grape, believing that if properly cultivated and kept to low yields it can make extraordinary wines. And the evidence is there, for year after year her Carignan-based wines engage with their superb fruit, delineation and charm. Her **2015 Clos de L’Anhel “Lolo de L’Anhel” Corbières (\$12.99)** is a blend of Carignan, Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Direct, appealing and honest, with bright, enticing notes of raspberry, violets, wild thyme and kitchen spice, this is a wine for the picnic basket or by the grill. The **2015 Clos de L’Anhel “Les Terrassettes” Corbières (750ml \$16.99; 1.5L \$34.99)** is Sophie’s proud workhorse cuvée, showcasing the terroir—a beautifully balanced blend with more verve and structure, displaying ripe black plum, raspberry, garrigue and mineral notes with expressive tannins and a polished finish. And the **2015 Clos de L’Anhel “Les Dimanches” Corbières (\$21.99)**, her “Sunday wine,” is fashioned from a precious parcel of 80-year-old Carignan vines blended



Sophie Guiraudon with her vines.

with Syrah and Grenache. Almost opaque in color, with devastating black fruit aromas and enchanting overtones of ripe cherry, plum, cocoa and spice, balanced by a solid core of velvety tannins, this is a lavish wine that will merit a few more years in the cellar.

When conditions are spot-on, Sophie makes an extraordinary single-variety wine, and the **2015 Clos de L’Anhel “Envie” VDF (\$29.99)** truly lives up to its name. Made from selected Grenache fruit, it shimmers in the glass like a handful of rubies, and captures all the spirit, exuberant spice and generous red-fruited character of that effusive grape.

## Domaine de la Réserve d’O

With her genuine warmth and embrace of non-interventionist winemaking, Marie Chauffray of Domaine de la Réserve d’O manifests the abiding ethos of the Vinifilles. She and her husband relinquished their safe life as owners of a wine shop, and spent a decade scouring the rugged countryside for the perfect site to grow their own. They found it in the high, windswept Terrasses du Larzac appellation, where her biodynamic, terroir-driven wines, grown on poor clay and calcareous soils, are defined by their refreshing aromatic profiles and intense flavors. The **2016 Domaine de la Réserve d’O “Bilbo” Languedoc (\$17.99)** is a Grenache-dominant blend. Juicy, medium-weight and interwoven with red and black fruits, a hint of pepper and clean acidity, it’s far more elegant than its price reveals. Serve slightly chilled as a delicious complement to tapas or lighter fare. The **2015 Domaine de la Réserve d’O “La Réserve d’O” Terrasses du Larzac (750ml \$21.99)** is a compelling blend of Syrah, Grenache and Cinsault, with alluring black fruit aromas leading to an expansive palate of blackcurrant, cherries, licorice, cocoa and baking spice. Marie also exercises her artisanal talents by creating a unique, declassified white wine, the **2016 Domaine de la Réserve d’O “La Réserve d’O” Saint Guilhem le Desert Blanc (\$21.99)**, made from co-harvested, co-fermented Chenin Blanc, Roussanne and Grenache Blanc. Unoaked, fresh-fruited and utterly distinctive, this shows floral and citrus aromas and a roundelay of rich yellow and stone fruits, and is embroidered with lovely acidity. A true tapestry of a wine!

## 2015 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Knocks It Out of the Park

By Keith Mabry

In March of this year, Alex Pross and I paid a visit to the Southern Rhône to investigate the 2015 vintage. As in most other regions in France, the 2015 vintage in the Rhône was highly touted and interest was high. We wanted to determine what kind of stand we would take on the vintage, and after a crisscrossing of the appellation from north to south, we agreed there are some remarkable wines to be had. Probably the most illuminating part of our trip was our two-day visit to Châteauneuf-du-Pape. We visited nearly a dozen properties, including Janasse, Sabon, Marcoux, Vieux Télégraphe and Beaucastel. The wines across the board had a freshness and appeal that had been missing from some previous vintages. From top cuvées to traditional appellation bottlings, the wines had zest, purity of fruit and finesse. There is no shortage of intensity but the wines have a lifted, vibrant quality that keeps them engaging. To use a ham-fisted boxing analogy, if 2007 was Mike Tyson, these wines would be Sugar Ray Leonard—cut and fine, firm but strong and deft on their feet.



### Domaine de Marcoux

I would put Marcoux in my top five estates in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. One of the first producers in the region to be certified Biodynamic, their incredible attention to detail and promise to the landscape is translated in the wines. Making only two red cuvées from their 18 hectares keeps the wines focused. You essentially have great wine and extraordinary wine here. I visited them in 2016 for some tank sampling of the 2015s and then again in March of this year to assess the final products. Both are top-tier.

#### 2015 Domaine de Marcoux Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$44.99)

My first pass at this wine, when it was still in its component parts, was a scribble of notes describing a range of strawberries, spices, minerals, lavender and swirling dust. Now fully assembled, the wine is redolent of strawberry preserves, potpourri and minerals. It is long and full of finesse, and a couple of years in the cellar will be well rewarded.

92-94 VN, 90-92 RP

#### 2015 Domaine de Marcoux “Vieilles Vignes” Châteauneuf-du-Pape

(\$129.99) One of, if not my wine of the vintage. When I tasted this in 2016 from the oak tank, it was one of the most exotic and perfumed young CdPs I had ever tasted. When tasted earlier this year, it was again revelatory. Concentrated yet refreshing, with so much gorgeous fruit and spice, the wine is beginning to firm up around the edges. I would not say the wine will shut down, but there are signs that 5–10 years in bottle will reward those who cellar it with a truly exceptional wine. 96-98 VN, 94-96 RP

### Domaine Roger Sabon

Perhaps the biggest surprise visit for me in all of Châteauneuf was at Sabon. In all honesty, I hadn't tasted the wines in a few years and had always thought they were well made but a touch unremarkable. I'm glad to have had this opportunity to reassess.

#### 2015 Roger Sabon “Les Olivets” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$29.99)

A more classically rustic yet charming style. Notes of red and black fruit macerated together with a beautiful sandalwood edge. One of the great values of the vintage. 90-92 RP, 90-92 VN

#### 2015 Roger Sabon “Réserve” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$39.99)

The Réserve shows much more of the mineral qualities of Châteauneuf, with savory black fruit and graphite. Aged primarily in foudre and larger oak tanks, this should evolve gracefully to unleash more of the exotic floral and dusty spice notes. From the La Crau and La Grenade lieux-dits. 93-95 RP, 91-93 VN

#### 2015 Roger Sabon “Prestige” Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$59.99)

The “Prestige” is actually a single plot co-planted with their oldest Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre vines plus a handful of the old heirloom grapes from the region. The smallest production cuvée, it rapidly approaches “next level” with its incense, brambly fruit and dynamic palate. This represents high-order, terroir-driven CdP and at a comparatively reasonable price. 95 WS, 93-95 RP, 93 JS, 91-93 VN

#### 2015 Roger Sabon “Secret de Sabon” Châteauneuf-du-Pape

(\$149.99) The tête de cuvée is no “secret.” Made from 100% Grenache, it was a little tight on the nose but delivered copious, fleshy fruits. Layers of kirsch, Chambord and spices abound. The finish was long, almost endless. Had we not proceeded to another powerhouse tasting, I would still be tasting it. 97 WS, 94-96 RP, 93-95 VN



Cellar tasting at Roger Sabon.

# The Pross Report: 2015 Châteauneuf-du-Pape

By Alex Pross

As I hit the ground for my first trip to the Rhône Valley I was excited but guarded. While this was my first time in the region, I have been to Bordeaux eight times to taste *en primeur* so I am pretty familiar with both a hectic schedule and reserving judgment until I had tasted through a relatively large swath of wines. Pretty quickly it became evident that 2015 is a special vintage in the Rhône, both north and south. Having tasted through the great Bordeaux vintages of 2009, 2010 and 2015, I think I can spot a great vintage in the making from the raw materials at hand. The 2015 vintage in the Southern Rhône has produced a wealth of great wines that combine power, elegance and beautiful fruit all wrapped up in an approachable package.

The true test of a great vintage isn't whether or not the top or most expensive wines are good—for the prices these wines fetch, they'd better be! The real test of the overall quality of a vintage is: how good are the entry-level wines? As K&L's Southern California-based Rhône buyer Keith Mabry and I tasted through numerous offerings, we were blown away by the quality and value the entry-level Châteauneuf-du-Papes represented.

Our first day on the ground, we tasted fantastic examples of the vintage, the first being the **2015 Domaine Giraud "Tradition" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$36.99)**. This wine comes from the small family team of Girauds: Pierre (the patriarch), Marie (daughter and winemaker) and Francois (brother and viticulturist), along with the help of famed wine consultant Philippe Cambie. This wine is elegant, with gorgeous dark berry fruit flavors, exotic spice and floral notes, and fine tannins. With a long, lush finish, this is a great introduction to Domaine Giraud. **93 WS, 90-93 RP, 91-93 VN**

## Domaine de la Janasse

One of the highlights of the trip for me was our visit to Domaine de la Janasse, where Isabelle Sabon graciously poured us the 2015 lineup. Isabelle's father, Aimé, who founded the estate in 1976 and still oversees the vineyards—of which there are 40 hectares containing some 70 different parcels—is a huge proponent of Grenache, which makes up 75% of the total plantings. In the past, the wines of Domaine de la Janasse have always been some of the larger-scaled offerings in all of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but in 2015 I noticed the style here was a bit lighter and more elegant. I think this makes the wines even better, because there is always clearly plenty of fruit, thanks to their fantastic Grenache vines.

Here we have an amazing trio of wines. Let's start off with the **2015 Domaine de la Janasse "Tradition" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$39.99)**, which is loaded with red and black fruits and sweet spice notes. Supple tannins give this wine a plush feel. **93 WS, 90-92 RP, 91 JS, 90-92 VN**



Stepping up from the incredible value represented by the Tradition is the **2015 Domaine de la Janasse "Chaupin" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$64.99)**. A 100% Grenache wine from vines that are aged 100 years or older, this scintillating wine just oozes the raspberry coulis notes with layer upon layer of fruit that shimmers with electricity. This irresistible wine blew me away. **95 WS, 94-96 RP, 93 JS, 93-95 VN**

Not to be outdone, the **2015 Domaine de la Janasse "Vieilles Vignes" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$89.99)** is a cellar-worthy candidate. A blend of Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah with 30% whole clusters, this monolithic wine could very easily be a candidate for wine of the vintage. If you haven't hopped onto the Janasse train, there's still time to get aboard! **97 WS, 94-96 RP, 94 JS, 94-96 VN**

## Château de Vaudieu

One of the new stars of Châteauneuf-du-Pape is Château de Vaudieu. This is a bit of a misnomer, because they've been around for some time, but until recently the property was neglected and in disrepair. Brothers Laurent and Julien Meffre have resurrected this noble property, and much like at Domaine de la Janasse, the main grape here is Grenache—both Noir and Blanc. This is quickly becoming a winery with a cult-like following. Here are the four wines we have available from them—you need to own them! And all are in-stock:

**2015 Château de Vaudieu "Tradition" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$36.99)** **94 WS, 91-93 RP, 91-93 VN**

**2015 Château de Vaudieu "Val de Dieu" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$64.99)** **95 WS, 94-96 RP, 93-95 VN**

**2015 Château de Vaudieu "Amiral G" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$89.99)** **96 WS, 95-97 RP, 93-95 VN**

**2015 Château de Vaudieu "l'Avenue" Châteauneuf-du-Pape (\$89.99)** **96 WS, 94-96 RP, 93-95 VN**

# Cellar Calls: Three Stops in the Loire Valley

By Keith Mabry

## Powerful Cabernet Franc from La Source

I first met vigneron Jean-Noël Millon while attending an organic wine fair in the South of France. The wines were impressive, so we arranged to meet on my trip through the Loire a couple of months later. A visit to the winery led to a trip through the ancient cellar, which had been carved from the chalky stone (known as tuffeau) below two centuries before. As we progressed from chamber to chamber, it began to feel more like a spelunking expedition. Ancient coins were pressed into the walls by past workers, the old wine press was still intact, even the old pulley system for transporting barrels and equipment to the surface was evident, though replaced by a just slightly more modern conveyance.

The **2015 La Source du Ruault Saumur-Champigny Rouge (375ml \$8.99; 750ml \$16.99)** represents all that is good and delicious about the wines of the region. Planted in the sandy and gravelly soils over the tuffeau, this powerhouse Cabernet Franc is rich, representing the depth of fruit from the 2015 vintage, but it is also full of finesse. The tannins are quite fine and the finish is long on black fruit, cedary spice and black pepper.

The big brother is the **2014 La Source du Ruault “Sensei” Saumur-Champigny Rouge (\$24.99)**. A sensei is a teacher (Jean-Noël practices martial arts in his spare time) and there is no better wine to teach you about the quality of Saumur fruit. More strikingly powerful, this is parcel-selected fruit that sees some time in barrel, giving it a long-lingering quality that will persist for years to come.

One of the most serious contenders for my white wine of the year is the **2014 La Source du Ruault “La Coulee d’Aunis” Saumur Blanc (\$24.99)**. Made from 100% Chenin Blanc, this barrel-fermented style delivers all the roasted apple and quince paste fruit of Chenin with just a note of marzipan. It has a fleshy Burgundian finesse that brings to mind Premier Cru Meursault. But at one-third the price, this is a worthy addition to your collection. Jean-Noël is a vigneron to watch, as we continue with his gorgeous and complex wines for years to come.



*In the cellars of La Source du Ruault.*

## Big Rewards at Domaine du Petit Coteau

In Vouvray, I had the chance to visit this beautiful little organic domaine. All the wines are made from 100% Chenin Blanc but vary in degrees of sweetness depending on where the grapes are harvested from. Planted in the sandy clay soils over tuffeau (that magical chalky soil of the Loire), these wines show the range of the quality that can be found in Vouvray for a mere pittance.

The **2015 Domaine du Petit Coteau Vouvray Sec (\$13.99)** is the dry wine, with its lush mineral components, apple flavors, sweet fig notes and rounded acidity. It is a perfect foil for complex foods ranging from savory to spicy. Methinks a little duck confit with a salad of bitter greens would complement quite nicely.

The **2014 Domaine du Petit Coteau Vouvray Moelleux (\$15.99)** is just on the sweet side of things, drinking like a fine Auslese from Germany. It is unctuous and long on the ripe apple and caramelized pear flavors. You could treat this as more of an after-dinner wine, pairing with creamy goat cheeses, or get a little bold and serve it with rich curries or spicy Thai food. One of the biggest surprises for me, though, was the **Domaine du Petit Coteau Vouvray Brut (\$13.99)**. This is a straight-up delicious sparkling wine with notes of pear cider and toasted apples. Take note of this engaging bubbly to enjoy as we begin to enter the fall season.



## Cellar Raiding at Domaine les Pins

We’ve been working with Domaine les Pins in Bourgueil for several years now and the wines continually over-deliver for the money. On our recent visit, vignerons Philippe and Christophe Pitault-Landry were kind enough to dig some older bottles out of the cellar to show us how the wines evolve. I immediately homed in on their two 2004s—the Les Clos des Pins and Vieilles Vignes. After a little negotiating we were able to convince them to sell us a small parcel of each.

The **2004 Domaine Les Pins “Le Clos les Pins” Bourgueil (\$21.99)** was brimming with notes of tobacco, leather and spices. The fruit has mellowed but is ever-present, showing the classic style of the sandy and gravelly soils. This still has a long way to go. The **2004 Domaine Les Pins “Vieilles Vignes” Bourgueil (\$24.99)** was remarkably persistent on the palate, showing flavors of strawberries, clove and truffle nuances. It is still quite powerful in the mouth and loaded with body and texture. This could easily withstand another decade of evolution. Both are tremendous successes and demonstrate the ageability of Cabernet Franc, even from a modestly priced producer such as this.

## The Charm of Cabernet Franc, Direct from the Loire!

By Lilia McIntosh

It's a good time to revisit an often overlooked wine: **Cabernet Franc**. While it's true that the grape can be finicky, like Pinot Noir, and it can take on vegetal notes if not properly ripened, the 2015 vintage was a huge success in the Loire Valley—just like everywhere in Europe in 2015—and the Cabernet Franc displays purity and vibrancy like never before. With the K&L Direct Import program, we now have killer wines that over-deliver for under \$15 and represent classic expressions of Cabernet Franc.

Anjou has always been known for its wonderful white wines, yet red wine production in the region is also prominent. The **2015 Domaine du Petit Clocher Anjou Rouge (\$12.99)** is an amazing value and quite a gem. Grown on predominantly schist soil, this wine is made entirely in stainless steel, which helps to retain its freshness and minerality. It's full of delicious berry pie notes: a mix of blackberry, raspberry and blueberry. Supple, fresh, smooth and gentle, with low tannins, soft acidity, but bright and light texture, it's an incredibly elegant style of Cabernet Franc.



Fruit-forward and cherry-scented, with a touch of black peppercorns, the **2015 Joël Taluau "Expression" Saint-Nicolas-de-Bourgueil (\$12.99)** is another great expression of young Cabernet Franc. Grown on clay, silica and limestone hillsides, the vines average 35 years of age. This wine has a lovely concentration of black plum sauce and sweet Bing cherries with low tannins, racy acidity, density and minerality. It's made in stainless steel, so the incredible floral aromas and juicy fruit of the Cabernet Franc are unobstructed by oak influence. Wines like these are fantastic companions for game birds, a signature cuisine of the Loire region.

Another new DI, the **2015 Domaine des Ruettes Saumur-Champigny Rouge (\$12.99)** comes from 30-year-old vines grown on clay, flint and calcareous tufa. Aged 12 months in French oak barrels (25% new), it's more robust and structured, with firm tannins, bright acidity and earthy components—a smoky note evokes the flint soil. Full-bodied and rich in plum and black cassis, with a spicy finish, this can age nicely for another 5–7 years.



## Old Friends in Sancerre: Domaine Franck Millet

By Morgan Laurie

One of our longtime favorite producers from Sancerre is helmed by the dynamic husband and wife duo, **Betty and Franck Millet—our superheroes of Sancerre!** Their mission is to make great, affordable wine and boy, do they!

Over the past few decades as Sancerre wines have gained more attention and acclaim, the region's wines have also become increasingly more expensive—not surprising, given that some of the finest Sauvignon Blanc in the world is made here. Lucky for you (and me), we snagged these guys as a Direct Import long ago.

As the vineyard manager, Franck practices sustainable agriculture and does all work in the vineyard by hand, a philosophy that he extends to his winemaking. He favors indigenous yeasts and avoids the use of chemical and animal products in his production. In tandem with Franck's attention to detail is the fortuitous placement of the domaine's vineyard in the village of Bué. With wine production going



Franck and Betty Millet with K&L's Clyde Beffa Jr. (second from left) and Keith Mabry (right).

back hundreds of years here, it has long been considered one of Sancerre's best areas for producing wines. It's the perfect marriage of a winemaker who strives to showcase the place more than the grape, and the terroir that allows him to do just that.

In tasting both of Franck's 2016 releases, one of the first things that struck me was the freshness of the wines and the clean, bracing minerality. He attributes this to his *terres blanches*, which literally translates to "white earth," a reference to the magic that exists in soil rich with chalky limestone, of which you'll find plenty on his 22-hectare estate.

The **2016 Franck Millet Sancerre Rosé (\$16.99)** is made from 100% Pinot Noir and is delicious and crisp with ripe peaches, watermelon, stony minerality and Rainier cherry at its core.

The **2016 Franck Millet Sancerre Blanc (\$16.99)** is electric and bounds out of the glass with notes of lemon zest, lime blossom and tart, green fruit. We also carry the Sancerre Blanc in half bottles (**375ml \$8.99**) and magnums (**1.5L \$39.99**) for any occasion in which you might find yourself needing a refreshing, food-friendly white wine. Both wines are exciting, dynamic and altogether charming. Kind of like our favorite superheroes of Loire wine.





## Navigating the 2015 Vintage in the Southern Rhône

By Thomas Smith

**The wines of the Southern Rhône Valley produced during the hot, dry conditions of the 2015 harvest are finally starting to hit the shelves.**

The 2015 vintage was an exceptionally ripe one, resulting in wines that have rich color, silky tannins and lean toward power and concentration. In a vintage like this, Châteauneuf-du-Pape is a no-brainer. Yet the Southern Rhône is a vast region with 17 other named villages and more than 171 communes. In a great vintage like 2015, quality is raised across the board and there are excellent opportunities to find exceptional values in lesser-known places.

One such place is the village of Gigondas, which has vineyards terraced into the high slopes east of the city of Orange, and is often referred to as the “little brother” of Châteauneuf. The slightly cooler temperatures here produce wines of both power and elegance. The **2015 Moulin de la Gardette “Tradition” Gigondas (\$24.99)** is one of the best examples of an extraordinarily well-executed Gigondas. A blend of 80% Grenache with 10% each of Syrah and Mourvèdre, this wine is built with power and concentration while revealing the earthiness and rusticity the commune is known for. Filled with black cherries and brambly fruit, this wine has a dark and brooding character, mouthcoating tannins, and an exceptional length of finish. **90-92 RP**

A couple of miles to the south of Gigondas is the wide, open plateau of Vacqueyras. Unsheltered by forests or hillsides, these vineyards are baked by the sun and develop wines of color and depth that improve with age. The **2015 Domaine de la Ganse Vacqueyras (\$17.99)** showcases Vacqueyras winemaking at its best.



Packed with ripe flavors of plums, fig and nuanced spice, this blend of 70% Grenache and 30% Syrah manages a graceful display of fruit while maintaining perfume and elegance. Concentrated and full of latent energy, the Domaine de la Ganse is accessible enough to be enjoyed now, or will improve in complexity over the next five to 10 years. **89-91 VN**

Tucked into a small hillside to protect its vines, the village of Séguret is situated between the more recognized villages of Rasteau to the north and Gigondas to the south. The wines of Séguret may be less powerful than those of its neighbors, but they possess both freshness and structure. The **2015 Domaine Viticole “Malmont” Côtes du Rhône Villages Séguret (\$19.99)** is an excellent example of this high-value village, which offers exceptional quality in vintages like 2015. The Séguret is a blend of 55% Grenache and 45% Syrah. This wine has aromas of violets and peppery notes, with dark cherries and blackberries on the palate, all while maintaining vibrant acidity and impeccable balance. **90 WS**

At the northernmost extreme of the Southern Rhône is the village of Valréas, whose vineyards are cooled by Alpine foothills to the north. Here, you’ll find the most aromatic wines of the region. The **2015 Mas de Sainte Croix “Passion d’Une Terre” Côtes-du-Rhône Villages Valréas (\$12.99)** displays the elegance and aromatic finesse of a classic Valréas. A blend of 75% Grenache with a heavy dose of 25% Mourvèdre, the Passion is characterized by pure fruit expression and a gorgeous bouquet. Aromas of dark fruit, licorice, spice and earthiness pour from the glass. This wine is a unique expression of its Southern Rhône terroir. **90-92 RP**



### K&L REDWOOD CITY

3005 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061  
**P** (650) 364-8544 **F** (650) 364-4687  
**HOURS** Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-7, Sun 10-6  
**LOCKERS** Mon-Sat 10-6, Sun 11-5

### KLWINES.COM

Toll Free (877) KLWINES (877) 559-4637  
Email: [Wines@KLWines.com](mailto:Wines@KLWines.com)

### K&L HOLLYWOOD

1400 Vine Street, Hollywood, CA 90028  
**P** (323) 464-WINE (9463) **F** (323) 836-0853  
**HOURS** Mon-Thurs 11-8, Fri-Sat 10-8, Sun 11-6

### K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

We host regular evening and Saturday tastings at each K&L store as well as many special events throughout the year. For the complete calendar go to [KLWines.com/Local-Events](http://KLWines.com/Local-Events).

### K&L SAN FRANCISCO

855 Harrison Street, San Francisco, CA 94107  
**P** (415) 896-1734 **F** (415) 896-1739  
**HOURS** Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 9-6, Sun 11-6  
**LOCKERS** Mon-Fri 10-6:30, Sat 9-5:30, Sun 11-5:30

**We accept American Express, Discover, Visa, Mastercard and PayPal.**

**For Order Inquiries, Shipping Information, Local Events, Policies and Up-to-the-Minute Inventory, visit [KLWines.com](http://KLWines.com)**

**🍷 FOLLOW OUR BLOGS UNCORKED AND SPIRITS JOURNAL FOR THE LATEST UPDATES FROM K&L STAFF 🍷**