

DOMAINE MONTIRIUS

Josh Raynolds

2011 Vacqueyras Garrigues (70% grenache and 30% syrah, all destemmed; done in concrete): Inky purple. Ripe black and blue fruits on the nose, with complicating licorice, black tea and lavender qualities. At once rich and energetic, offering lush blueberry and candied licorice flavors perked up by a touch of white pepper. Closes with excellent clarity and lift, leaving dark fruit compote notes behind. [90-92](#)

2011 Vacqueyras Le Clos (a 50/50 blend of grenache and syrah that was completely destemmed and raised in concrete tanks): Dark purple. Heady, complex bouquet of fresh cherry, boysenberry, white pepper and potpourri, plus a bright mineral overtone. Fleshy, broad and alluringly sweet, with intense black and blue fruit flavors complicated by lavender and allspice. Shows uncanny depth and power for the year--or for any year. Finishes with velvety tannins and superb persistence, leaving vibrant floral and spice notes behind. This was clearly the most promising Vacqueyras I tasted from the vintage; actually, it was one of the best 2011s I tasted from the entire southern Rhone Valley. [92-94](#)

2010 Vacqueyras Garrigues (\$22) (70% grenache and 30% syrah): Youthful purple. Fresh red and dark berries on the intensely perfumed nose and in the mouth. Showing more brightness and red fruit character than it did from tank, with sexy floral and spice nuances building with air. Offers a suave blend of power and finesse, finishing spicy, gently tannic and impressively long. [92](#)

2010 Vacqueyras Le Clos (\$27) (a 50/50 blend of grenache and syrah): Opaque ruby. Cherry, dark berries and licorice on the nose, with mineral and Indian spice nuance gaining power with air. Deeply concentrated yet impressively lively on the palate, offering incisive blackberry and bitter cherry flavors with a hint of lavender pastille. Dusty tannins give shape and grip to the very long spicy/floral finish. This Vacqueyras is built for aging. [92\(+?\)](#)

JAN 13

VACQUEYRAS 2011 AND 2010

By Josh Raynolds

At prices generally only slightly higher than most high-quality Cotes du Rhone-Villages bottlings, Vacqueyras offers some of the finest Rhone Valley values in the market today. During my annual tasting tour of the Rhone in November, which covered the 2011 and 2010 vintages, I was struck by the consistently high quality that these wines displayed, especially from the dodgy '11 vintage. And 2010 almost universally confirmed the promise I glimpsed last year: this vintage has produced dozens of deeply flavored, firmly structured wines that should reward at least another five years of cellaring, if not more.

The 2011s, on the other hand, lead strongly with their fruit and can show the dilution of the abundant crop that defined the vintage. But the best wines boast noteworthy vibrancy and clarity, along with strong upfront appeal and gentle tannins. It's the rare 2011 that will reward extended aging, though, and I wonder if more than a handful will even be better in a couple years than they are right now. This is not a vintage in which gratification needs to be deferred, which makes the '11s superb wines to order in restaurants over the next couple of years.

As we have reported in the past, Vacqueyras is seriously undervalued compared to Chateauneuf-du-Pape, and, in most cases, to its neighbor Gigondas. Broadly speaking, most examples of Vacqueyras lack the sheer mass of those from Chateauneuf and show a bit less flavor intensity than most Gigondas, but there are plenty of exceptions. This region is north of Chateauneuf, so its wines tend to be higher in acidity and, some would argue, a bit leaner. That is far from a pejorative for the many wine lovers out there who can find Chateauneuf-du-Pape to be too much of a good thing, especially in the the warmer vintages that have pretty much become the rule in the last decade.

This isn't to imply that Vacqueyras is weak-kneed, particularly when considering vintages like 2010, 2009 and 2007. Still, compared to a 16+% alcohol, low-acid Chateauneuf, most versions of Vacqueyras can seem almost svelte. As Louis Barruol, whose family has been at Gigondas for almost 500 years, explained to me, «the style of the wines here [in the greater Gigondas/Vacqueyras neighborhood] reflects the northern Rhone as much as Chateauneuf, which a lot of people consider as Provencal, anyway. We share the grapes, but the texture, weight and expression are different, a bit more austere, less ripe and heavy, which is the difference between the Rhone and Provence.»