



WINE News



IT'S FEBRUARY, and we've got fabulous new wines in stock to enjoy whether the Groundhog sees his shadow or not. And there's no other region that provides more options for the season than the Rhône Valley. We've got great new selections from the exceptional 2010 and very good 2011 vintages. Read on for our staff's picks...

Gorgeous Grenache? TRY GIGONDAS

Oh what a great run France's Rhône Valley has had! With the exception of 2008, the last six years have been very good in this region of France. Perhaps the two strongest vintages, 2007 and 2010, yielded top wines that will age gracefully for the next 10-20 years. Although most of the 2007s are long gone and resting comfortably in many a wine cellar, K&L presently has an extensive selection of 2010 Rhône to try on for size, and a handful of just-arrived 2011s.

One of the most spectacular sights in the southern Rhône Valley is, without a doubt, the *Dentelles de Montmirail*, a chain of mountains directly above the sleeping village of Gigondas. A plethora of delicious Grenache-based wines come from the surrounding vineyards, made in a style reminiscent of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Below are several examples of Gigondas, all of which are carefully vinified by some of the best winemakers in the region.

2010 Montirius "Terre des Aïnés" Gigondas* (\$29.99) Planted in clay and limestone. Half of the estate's vines in Gigondas were planted by the Saurel family's great-grandfather in 1925. Three parcels equaling 16 hectares are planted to Grenache and Mourvèdre, 12 of which are those very old vines dating back to 1925. The 2010 *Terre des Aïnés* is composed of 80% Grenache and 20% Mourvèdre. A distinct anise note lingers on the long finish of this rich red, which combined with a hint of lavender and black currant tea, make for a delicious and complex Gigondas. Certified by Ecocert and Biodyvin. 14.5% ABV.

2010 Domaine Les Pallières "Les Racines" Gigondas (\$42.99) 92 points Robert Parker: "The soft, delicious 2010 Gigondas Les Racines is, surprisingly, more open-knit than I remember it from last year. Abundant notes of red and black currants, raspberries, garrigue, crushed rock and peppery spice are all present in this medium to full-bodied, elegant yet substantial, authoritative Gigondas. It should drink well for 12-15+ years."

2011 Montirius Côtes du Rhône* (\$13.99) Like all of Montirius' wines, this delightful Côtes du Rhône is vinified without the use of oak. The 2011 is composed of 65% Grenache and 35% Syrah and showcases the characteristics of the vintage beautifully. It entices with dark cherry fruits with just a hint of damp earth and black tea notes, framed by fine tannins and snappier acidity. Organically grown grapes. 14% ABV.

Sommelier Notes THE AGE OF VACQUEYRAS

"...One AOC that is exceptional is Vacqueyras. This is an up-and-coming star in the southern Rhône." —Robert Parker

We recently added the wines of Montirius, a fifth-generation Vacqueyras producer to our Direct Import program, just in time to give you a chance to get your hands on these wines before they become increasingly more expensive and scarce. This estate works entirely biodynamically and never uses new wood in any of their wines, striving for a purer, more elegant expression of fruit and terroir, which is why their wines have always stood out to me amid the sea of competition as a step above in elegance and craft for the price.

2010 Montirius "Garrigues" Vacqueyras* (\$19.99) This blend of 30% Syrah and 70% Grenache comes from 65-year-old vines. The soil type here is a mix of blue marl, clay and sandstone, promoting concentration, lift and mineral nuances in the wine. The wine is raised in concrete, with no contact with wood to preserve the fruit's natural, wild, "garriguey" expression (hence the name). It offers an intoxicating nose of dark cherry overlain with lavender, rosemary and savory herbs, with spicy hints of licorice, black pepper and warm earth. Styled for near-term drinking, this improves in the glass and is an ideal match with roast meats and braises.

2010 Montirius "Le Clos" Vacqueyras* (\$24.99) Syrah leads the way in this 50/50 Syrah-Grenache blend, dominating the nose with that irresistible pairing of freshly cracked black pepper and smoked meat aromas. Named *Le Clos* for the fact that all the fruit comes from a parcel totally enclosed by forest, this is more structured than the Garrigues. The palate is densely packed with dark, meaty fruit but is supported very well by solidly structured tannins and impressive acidity. This has much to offer now, but it seems poised to develop beautifully over time.

2011 Montirius "Mineral" Vacqueyras Blanc* (\$24.99) The Montirius white Vacqueyras consists of half Bourboulenc blended with equal parts Grenache Blanc and Roussanne. Bourboulenc is known for high acidity and verve, and this wine wastes no time in showing off its provenance of ancient sandstone soils in the form of bright, chalky aromas and flavors laced with subtle herbs and a fleeting hint of white pepper. Its fleshiness, viscosity, and balance are attributed to the supporting roles played by Grenache Blanc and Roussanne and not to wood. This is very different from your average peachy, blousy white Rhône. To all fans of distinctive, mineral-driven white wines: I predict this bottle will make an appearance at your table very soon.

Winemaker Interview



Meet Christine & Eric Saurel of Montirius

Name: Christine and Eric Saurel

Winery: Montirius

Number of years in business: 27 years

How would you describe your winemaking philosophy?

A great wine is an addition of lots of small details. Each action that we make in the vineyard [impacts] the wine. As winegrower we have the duty to guarantee the authenticity of the taste of our soil. We have the duty to improve and increase our sensibility to make the right action in the vineyard, which can bring the best balance as possible into the wine. Each step of the winemaking process has to be made in consciousness. The *Bio-Dynamie* is a step in our understanding.

What wines or winemakers helped influence your philosophy?

François Bouchet, who we met 17 years ago (1996), a winegrower in Loire. He helped us to understand and practice the Bio-Dynamie in our own estate. [And] winemaker Marc Kreydenweiss, who helped us to realize that we can have in southern Rhône Valley well balanced wines with finesse and elegance.

How involved in grape-growing are you? Is there a particular vineyard site that wows you year after year?

Eric and I acknowledge that we are continually discovering more and more about the nature and expression of our vineyard soils. This notion supercedes varietal characteristics. It is similar to the practices of the Cistercian Monks of Burgundy who, without precise technical data, could through experience locate and take advantage of the terrior of great vineyard sites. Here at Montirius, Le Clos and Confidentiel are two such exemplary sites. We do not have any plausible explanation as to why Le Confidentiel, in particular, is such a great site. Eric and I are convinced that we have only begun to discover its potential.*

How do you think your palate has evolved over the years? How do you think that's influenced your wines?

Over the years our palates have evolved more towards a style that we would call *gout de vivant*, or wines that taste of life. When tasted, such "living" wines connect with our third shakra or Manipura (solar plexus). And in doing so, through this shakra we experience a calming breath (much like a gentle breeze). This phenomenon has greatly influenced our style of vinification (alcoholic fermentation, elevage) and in the assemblage of our various (cement) tanks. Each step of vinification is guided by our palates and by our collective belief that the life and essence of a particular wine should be respected.*

What changes are planned for coming vintages? Any new (top secret) varietals, blends or propriety wines on the horizon?

• Coming back to massale selection. We started 10 years ago, and we accentuate this thing year after year adding as well *marcotage*. (Look at

the video on our Facebook Montirius group. Eric shows the *marcotage*.)

• Deeper research concerning [the] shape of the tank to age wine, as well the shape of bottle to [better] protect the life of our wines.

• Maybe a Châteauneuf-du-Pape plot (1.75 hectares) with Justine, our eldest daughter (23 years old, five vinifications with us, plus one in New Zealand) who is looking for vines as a *jeune agriculteur*. [We get an] answer [regarding] this plot on the 17th of January, 2013. And if the answer is yes, we will look for help from customers to make barter (exchange money for bottles of Montirius Châteauneuf-du-Pape).

Is there a style of wine that appeals to critics that might not represent your favorite style? How do you deal with it?

We are not at all interested in overprocessed/overworked wines. For us, such "made up" wines are undrinkable. However, a new consumer to wine will often first be exposed to such wines. However, as there is always a positive side to everything, we also realize that thanks to such wines, these new wine drinkers will often discover the structure-characteristics of wine at an attractive price. As time goes by, and through more experience tasting different wines, ones palate and personal preferences will evolve and mature. It is within this context that our wines will speak to such wine drinkers as they journey through the world of wine.

Presently, many consumers are eager for more knowledge and wine experiences and we are delighted to be able to share with such consumers throughout the year, culminating with harvest, where they can experience through their own palate, the birth of a wine. Our winery is always open to them.

What do you drink when you are not drinking your own wine?

Marc Kreydenweiss (Alsace), Champagne Françoise Bedel, Domaine Fouassier "Cuvée les Romains" (Sancerre), Paul Barre "Cuvée Leeloo" (Bordeaux), etc...

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the wine business today?

To move beyond a standardization of tastes: oaked flavors, vanilla aromatics, etc. To introduce, educate and have the consumer recognize the authenticity of vigneron who work artisanally in order to preserve our soul and values. To host such wine enthusiasts at our domaine and introduce them to our daily lives, that of vigneron who work the land and soil. To further develop human values and respect for our colleagues, our clients and our suppliers. In the wine industry the quality of wine and its true value must take precedence over making money at any cost, or excessive marketing tactics (ex: green marketing).*

*Answers translated from the original French by Mulan Chan-Randel