

Rhône Valley 2010 Vintage Report

"The best vintage since 1978—and possibly even better!"

Marc Perrin at the tasting of the 2010 vintage of Beaucastel and Perrin wines at the Grocer's Hall, London in October 2011.

Following on from the excellent 2009 vintage, 2010 saw a vintage of exceptionally high quality but very small quantities in both the north and south of the Rhône Valley. Sceptics can relax though: 2011 will not be in the same league so there is every reason to read on.

Prices remain stable – unlike Bordeaux. Given the quality/volume issue, this is very welcome news. In the **Southern Rhône**, winemakers are extremely enthusiastic about the 2010 vintage. When I visited estates in Châteauneuf-du-Pape earlier this year to taste the 2009 wines, winemakers such as Baptiste Grangeon of Domaine de Cristia were so excited by the potential of 2010 that they insisted I taste these wines too even though they had barely finished fermenting. My recollection is of wines that were very ripe but equally fresh with wonderfully fine tannins. They are wines that will probably drink well young, yet age magnificently. At Raymond Usseglio, I only tasted the white wines from 2010 but these were superb, fresh wines with good acidity and generous, delicious fruit.

A cold, damp spring ultimately led to shattered Grenache (in effect, many flowers did not become grapes thereby reducing yield) and the long summer meant the harvest was delayed until the beginning of October. Yields were as low as 27hl/ha in Châteauneuf-du-Pape (the maximum permitted yield is 35hl/ha)

"2010 will be an exceptional vintage; it could be the amongst the best ever made," says Marc Perrin of Château de Beaucastel. "The colour is far superior to anything I've seen in the last eight years to ten years and the Mourvèdre is sumptuous. We are expecting wines with freshness and balance."

Robert Parker -The Wine Advocate. "Concerning the 2010 vintage, readers should keep in mind that it was looking to be a very tiny crop as well as another dry growing season. However, the region did receive the rain necessary for these dry-farmed vineyards in mid-September. It's too early to say, but 2010 could turn out to be a very small but fascinating vintage in the southern Rhône."

In the **Northern Rhône** the weather patterns were very similar: a cool, wet start to the season resulted in a small flowering. The summer started off hot in July but the August weather helped the grapes to ripen well before temperatures soared again in September. Some welcome rain later in the month helped and the grapes were eventually picked in perfect condition in early October. Wines should have deep colour, powerful tannins and moderate alcohol of 13° to 14°.

"The quality is extraordinary" says René Rostaing. "The growing season was wonderful, which gave beautiful, supple round fruit and tannins."

This offer is restricted to the wines of René Rostaing and the Perrin family. The bulk of our offers from the 2010 vintage in the Rhône Valley will come in the new year. Many wines from 2009 and earlier vintages are still available – see www.bigredwine.co.uk. **Orders for the following wines must be received by Friday 28th October at the latest.** We will confirm your order immediately after this

Château de Beaucastel and Domaines Perrin

Château de Beaucastel is regarded by many as the top estate of Châteauneuf du Pape. The winery takes its name from the Beaucastel family which lived in Courthézon in the mid-16th century although there are no records of vines on the property until the early 1800s. Following the phylloxera epidemic of the mid- to late-19th century, the then owner, Élie Dussaud, elected not to replant the vineyards but, rather, to sell the property so it was not until it was bought by Pierre Tramier in 1909 that the vineyards were reinstated. His son-in-law was Pierre Perrin who expanded the estate considerably and is the great-grandfather of the current generation responsible for managing the estate.

In addition to the Beaucastel property (which includes both the Châteauneuf holdings and some in the Coudoulet *lieu-dit* just outside the appellation, so only entitled to Côtes du Rhône status), the Perrin family has built up a portfolio of wines from vineyards that they control but in some cases do not own (of a total of 350ha managed by the team, around a third are not owned by the family). Quality is extremely high: our particular favourites are the Vinsobres and Gigondas (especially the outstanding Vieilles Vignes and new Clos des Tourelles) wines.

Wine	Case size	£/case in bond
Coudoulet de Beaucastel, Côtes du Rhône 2010 *	12x75cl	£126
Château de Beaucastel, Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2010 **	6x75cl	SOLD OUT
Vinsobres 2010 Les Cornuds	12x75cl	£72
Vacqueyras 2010 Les Christins	12x75cl	£102
Vinsobres 2010 Les Hauts de Julien	12x75cl	£216
Gigondas 2010 Vieilles Vignes	12x75cl	£270
Clos des Tourelles, Gigondas 2010	12x75cl	£300

* Magnums are also available at the same price, pro-rata, as bottles.

** Half bottles, magnums and double magnums are also available. Halves and magnums are, pro-rata, the same price as 75cl bottles. A case of 3x300cl double magnums is priced at £630.

René Rostaing

René Rostaing is one of the great names of Côte Rôtie. He started out in 1971, with less than 1/2 hectare of Côte Rôtie vineyards, split between the Côte Blonde and La Landonne. Largely through inheritance, the estate stands at over 6 ha of Côte Rôtie, including some highly valued plots, featuring in several cases some ancient vines.

René is firmly in the modernist camp of Côte Rôtie producers, destemming the majority of his fruit and being one of the first producers to ferment using vinomatics (horizontal automatic vinifiers). However he dislikes the overt taste of new oak and uses a maximum of 15% in the maturation process. In keeping with his minimal intervention belief all the wines are bottled unfiltered.

From the 2009 vintage René has renamed his „Classique“ cuvee Ampodium after the ancient gallo-roman name for the town of Ampuis where his winery and cave are located.

Wine	Case size	£/case in bond
Ampodium 2010	12x75cl	£408
La Landonne 2010	6x75cl	£372
Cote Blonde 2010	6x75cl	£435

Restrictions apply to purchases of La Landonne and Cote Blonde: one case of Ampodium for every case of the others.