

## **The Rhone Valley 2016: the latest must-buy vintage**

Rhone commentators have for months been claiming that 2016 is even better than the superb 2015 vintage, especially in the south. For the estates and merchants, this would be good news if it encouraged wine lovers to dig deep but, let's face it, we hear these reports at least three or four times a decade, including for vintages such as the over-ripe and all too often unbalanced 2003. Admittedly that was an exceptional vintage inasmuch as the heatwave threw obstacles in the path of the winemakers that they didn't necessarily understand. So, what about 2016?

At the recent *Printemps en Chateauneuf*, an annual wine-tasting extravaganza which involves forty or fifty of the top estates in the appellation, I had the opportunity of tasting wines from both 2015 and 2016 from several leading names and found that, if 2015 was a year defined by beautiful tannins which will help the wines age gracefully, in 2016 it is the fine acidity which lifts the fruit and works with the tannins and alcohol (slightly lower than in 2015, generally by at least half a percent) to give the wine its longevity.

The whites are rather good too and, of course, some of the wines being released are whites from the very low-yielding 2017 vintage in which yields as low as 50% of the normal levels were not uncommon.

Why buy 2016 Rhone wines?

Quite simply, the best are stunning. Once again, we have restricted the offer to the handful of estates whose wines really impressed us. At the *Printemps* event, I genuinely felt that Stephane Usseglio's wines were the most stylish, elegant and interesting wines there. Elsewhere in the valley, Laurent Brusset's top cuvees are very high quality this year and Chateau Juvenal continues its pursuit of quality very successfully. For just the second year, Domaine Ste-Anne features on the list with wines which are more approachable than the 2015s but which will be a joy to drink for several years to come. Pierre Gaillard's wines are also a little more immediately accessible than his powerful 2015s. Only the offer from Xavier Vignon focuses more on other vintages but these include 2010 and 2015 wines as well as a delightful new Lirac from 2016.

**Please note also that wines are offered at lower prices here than they will ever be at a later date.**

Wines are generally offered in unsplit cases (in some cases wines may be shipped in quantities other than those listed, in particular those wines offered as 3x75cl) and under bond (duty, VAT and delivery costs to be charged prior to release from our warehouse). The 'equivalent' duty paid price is an approximation shown for information only.

### Important T&Cs

Wines are offered subject to availability. All wines remain the property of The Big Red Wine Company until paid for in full. The Big Red Wine Company will not be liable for failure to meet agreed obligations due to prevailing circumstances beyond its control.

Wines will be sold at the prices quoted per case IN BOND. Duty and VAT will be charged when the wines are ready to be delivered. Wines may be stored under bond at a cost of £6 per dozen per annum (plus VAT) although we do pro-rata storage costs (minimum of six bottles per wine).

Onward delivery is charged at cost (usually around £15 per order).

Wineries are listed alphabetically.

## **Chateau de BEAUCASTEL and Famille PERRIN**

2016 was, of course, yet another great year at Beaucastel. The wines were originally offered towards the end of 2017 but we persuaded the Perrins to increase our allocations this year so we are able to include them in this offer for late-comers.

<b><u>Red wines</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<p><b>COTES DU RHONE Rouge 'Coudoulet de Beaucastel'</b></p> <p>Red fruit on the nose follows through with an intense explosion on the palate. This Coudoulet can be enjoyed young. Lively but tamed tannins and pretty fruit.</p>	<b>2016</b>	<b>12x75cl</b>	<b>£132</b>	<b>£15.80</b>
<p><b>VINSOBRES 'Les Hauts de Julien'</b></p> <p>Fairly immediately accessible with full fruit flavours. Extremely elegant. 15% aged in oak for 12 months.</p>	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£99</b>	<b>£22.40</b>
<p><b>GIGONDAS 'Clos des Tourelles'</b></p> <p>From the showcase of the Famille Perrin vineyards, a 10ha property in one of the best sites in Gigondas on the sandy mid-slopes of the appellation. Very low yields so very small quantities available (we are very lucky to have an allocation). Seamless, gorgeous mouthfeel. Perfectly integrated with a medium-to-full body. Red/black fruit. Gigondas at its very best! Needs time for the tannins to fully integrate but this will be a joy. Aged in oak casks for 15 months.</p>	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£144</b>	<b>£31.40</b>
<p><b>GIGONDAS 2016 'L'Argnee'</b></p> <p>Superior quality - a noticeable step up from the regular <i>cru</i> wines from the Perrins, as expected. Very concentrated and intense with luscious fruit and texture. Will go on - superb. Aged in one-year-old foudres for 12 months.</p>	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£144</b>	<b>£31.40</b>
<p><b>CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE Chateau de Beaucastel</b></p> <p>Coudoulet on steroids! Very ripe, intense and rounded with a rich, velvet mouthfeel. Ripe fruit with a hint of chocolate. Quite tannic with good acidity, so built for ageing although, no doubt, we will be opening a bottle around Christmas 2018 to see how it is getting on. Great potential, rich and long. Very low stocks available.</p>	<b>2016</b>	<b>3x75cl</b>	<b>£120</b>	<b>£50.60</b>

## **Domaine BRUSSET**

Laurent Brusset must be the most consistently good winemaker in Gigondas and Cairanne. Even in off-vintages, his wines offer rather more than most and in great vintages such as 2015 and 2016, we are spoilt for choice. The 2016 Cotes du Rhone was shipped last year and offers attractive, lively fruit in an understandably simple style but the more serious wines from Cairanne and, especially, Gigondas are truly world class.

<b><u>Red wines</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<b>CAIRANNE 'Les Travers'</b> Older vines are noticeable here compared with the basic Cotes du Rhone. Fruity, spicy and balanced with lovely freshness.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£39</b>	<b>£10.40</b>
<b>CAIRANNE 'Vieilles Vignes'</b> Formerly known as 'Chabriles', this is Grenache and Syrah from 90-year-old vines with the Syrah aged in second year barrels. A lovely richness and sweetness in a more evolved style. Some tannin but the fruit dominates.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£57</b>	<b>£14.00</b>
<b>CAIRANNE 'Hommage a Andre Brusset'</b> A formidable blend of Mourvedre and Grenache gives this wine a wonderfully rounded texture and fruit that will integrate fabulously in a short time to give immense pleasure.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£99</b>	<b>£22.40</b>
<b>GIGONDAS 'Le Grand Montmirail'</b> Much prettier at this stage than the 2015, this has blackberry and a touch of strawberry in the mix. Lively acidity.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£60</b>	<b>£14.60</b>
<b>GIGONDAS 'Les Hauts de Montmirail'</b> Beautiful black fruit (50% Grenache, the balance equal parts of Syrah and Mourvedre) grown high in the Dentelles de Montmirail giving this wine plenty of welcome freshness. The 50% new oak used is swallowed up by the cassis and spice-laden palate which has fresh minerality and a superb structure.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£99</b>	<b>£22.40</b>
<b>GIGONDAS 'Les Secrets de Montmirail'</b> This is the wine equivalent of fruit cake. Aged in old oak, this is all about texture, chocolate and spice. Excellent stuff.	<b>2016</b>	<b>3x75cl</b>	<b>£81</b>	<b>£35.00</b>

## **Pierre GAILLARD**

We are pleased to be listing Pierre Gaillard and his wines once again. This is a range which impresses and demonstrates the differences between the appellations and, in some cases, between different parts of the appellations. Quality is extremely high throughout but the huge range has necessitated a strict selection for this offer. We have followed our usual policy of only offering wines we don't mind being stuck with if no-one wants to buy them!

<b><u>White wines</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<b>ST JOSEPH Blanc</b> 100% Roussanne. A favourite in 2016 and sublime again in 2017.	<b>2017</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£75</b>	<b>£17.60</b>

## **Red wines**

<b>ST JOSEPH Rouge 'Clos de Cuminaille'</b> Pierre's flagship wine, pure Syrah, is full-flavoured, elegant with velvety texture. From 2020.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£75</b>	<b>£17.60</b>
<b>ST JOSEPH Rouge 'Les Pierres'</b> Always more powerful and, potentially, long-lived than <i>Clos de Cuminaille</i> , this is one of the greatest St Joseph wines which can rival many wines from the more prestigious appellations.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£120</b>	<b>£26.60</b>
<b>IGP Rouge 'Asiaticus'</b> Just north of Vienne, Seyssuel is an exceptional site, considered to outclass nearby Cote Rotie, but only recently replanted by Pierre and a few others since it was abandoned after the Roman era. Pure Syrah, the wine exudes class, combining strength with elegance, blackberry with graphite.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£123</b>	<b>£27.20</b>
<b>COTE ROTIE 'Esprit de Blonde'</b> From the Cote Blonde which produces more elegant wines, this combines power and grace.	<b>2016</b>	<b>3x75cl</b>	<b>£126</b>	<b>£53.00</b>
<b>COTE ROTIE 'Rose Pourpre'</b> From the Cote Brune, this is more powerful and long-lived with plenty of peppery black fruit character.	<b>2016</b>	<b>3x75cl</b>	<b>£165</b>	<b>£68.60</b>

## **Chateau JUVENAL**

A firm favourite and improving with every vintage. Chateau Juvenal continues to strive for excellence whilst always seeking to keep things interesting. This year, a new red from Beaumes-de-Venise completes the line-up.

<b><u>White wine</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<b>VENTOUX Blanc 'Ribes de Vallat'</b> An unusual blend of 80% Clairette and 20% Viognier yields a refreshing white with capacity to age.	<b>2017</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£39</b>	<b>£10.40</b>

## **Rose wine**

<b>VENTOUX Rosé 'Ribes de Vallat'</b> The Juvenal rosé list blends Cinsault with Grenache and makes a lovely, fresh and subtle wine.	<b>2017</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£30</b>	<b>£8.60</b>
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## **Red wines**

<b>VENTOUX Rouge 'Ribes de Vallat'</b> Very pure Grenache fruit with just a dash of Syrah to provide further backbone. The 2016 is a little less forward than previous vintages – we think it will be drinking well by the end of the year though and continue for several years to come.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£36</b>	<b>£9.80</b>
<b>BEAUMES-DE-VENISE</b> The new blend of 80% Grenache and 20% Syrah is immediately appealing for its incredible texture. At a recent tasting, it was one of the highlights.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£45</b>	<b>£11.60</b>
<b>VENTOUX 'Terre du Petit Homme'</b> Grenache and Syrah in equal parts with the latter aged in oak. As you would expect, red and black fruits abound in this forward wine.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£51</b>	<b>£12.80</b>
<b>VIN DE FRANCE 'Perseides'</b> Concentrated Grenache aged in tank. Possibly more serious than the debut outing of this cuvee last year, this has a more tannic structure and will certainly need a couple of years to show at its best but it will be extremely impressive.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£112</b>	<b>£25.00</b>

## **Domaine MADELOC**

Part of the Gaillard family's portfolio since 2002, Domaine Madeloc is run by Elise Gaillard. The two prestige reds from Collioure are quite exceptional and the Banyuls Solera is a revelation. New to the range is the Vin de Liqueur from a joint enterprise with a local Maury producer.

<b><u>Red wines</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<b>COLLIOURE 'Magenca'</b> Grenache, Mourvedre and Carignan make a full, fresh and very drinkable wine.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£66</b>	<b>£15.80</b>
<b>COLLIOURE 'Crestall'</b> Almost pure Mourvedre with a little Syrah. An exceptional Mourvedre to rival the best of Bandol!	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£87</b>	<b>£20.00</b>

## **Fortified wines**

<b>VIN DE LIQUEUR 'Terre-Mer'</b> Ever restless, Pierre is constantly looking for new things to do including new partnerships. With this wine he is collaborating with Stephane Gallet, a producer of fortified Maury wines to produce a Maury/Banyuls blend from 100% Grenache Noir which undergoes a 12-month oxygen-free maturation to preserve its fresh fruit aromas. Smooth and, obviously, sweet, this is a rich and concentrated wine and certainly something a little different. Recommended with blue cheeses and chocolate or black fruit desserts; also, unusually, with duck breasts!	<b>NV</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£66</b>	<b>£16.20</b>
<b>BANYULS Hors d'Age 'Solera'</b> When Pierre bought Maledoc, he was delighted to discover a solera of Banyuls started in 1920 but abandoned in 1960. On tasting the wine, he immediately decided to start it up again and began drawing wine from the solera and refilling with the newer vintages so every year there are subtle differences. The result is a stunningly good wine which rivals the very best Ports for complexity. Astonishingly good.	<b>NV</b>	<b>3x50cl</b>	<b>£66</b>	<b>£29</b>

## **Domaine SAINTE-ANNE**

A second year in our offer also for Ste-Anne. We enjoyed a visit to the estate recently where we were met by Alain Steinmaier who guided us through the 2016 vintage. The 2016 Blanc is already in stock but we are thrilled to be offering the Viognier from this vintage at last. Along with all Alain's wines, this is a very elegant cuvee with more of a nod to the Northern Rhone than any other Viognier from the south I have tasted.

<b><u>White wine</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<b>COTES DU RHONE Blanc VIOGNIER</b> A delightful blend of Roussanne, Marsanne and Viognier with pleasing freshness.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£45</b>	<b>£11.60</b>

## **Red wines**

<b>COTES DU RHONE VILLAGES 'Notre Dame des Cellettes'</b> Mainly Grenache with Syrah and Mourvedre, this has a wonderful texture and is quite approachable already.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£45</b>	<b>£11.60</b>
<b>ST GERVAIS 'Les Mourillons'</b> Pure Syrah, aged in oak. Quite structured and, like the Viognier, the influence of the northern Rhone is apparent. More approachable now than the 2015.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£60</b>	<b>£14.60</b>



## **Raymond USSEGLIO et Fils**

As always, Stef Usseglio's wines are in a class of their own, combining power with elegance in a way that most other winemakers fail to understand. Some of the very best wines coming out of the south's most heralded appellation and at a very reasonable prices: cellar door prices at most Chateauneuf estates start at around 28-30 euros so £22.40 for this wine is a steal.

<b><u>White wines</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<b>CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE Blanc</b> The most impressive white CdP for several years, this has lovely citrus character, just-right acidity and great length.	<b>2017</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£99</b>	<b>£22.40</b>
<b>CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE Blanc 'Rousanne Pur'</b> 100% Roussanne. When tasted pre-fermentation, the juice had delicious apricot character which has transformed into a stunning wine.	<b>2017</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£175</b>	<b>£37.60</b>

## **Red wines**

<b>COTES DU RHONE 'Les Argiles'</b> 50% Grenache with Syrah and Cinsault, this is a very pretty CdR which contrasts well with the meatier 'Les Claux' (already in stock).	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£36</b>	<b>£9.80</b>
<b>CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE</b> Fuller-bodied with spicy, plummy fruit and wonderful supporting acidity pulling you deeper into the wine.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£99</b>	<b>£22.40</b>
<b>CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE Vieilles Vignes 'Imperiale'</b> Older vines, planted in 1902, make up the backbone of this wine which is almost pure Grenache. Very concentrated on both nose and palate. Some oak is evident but this is subdued by the weight of the fruit.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£180</b>	<b>£38.60</b>
<b>CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE 'La Part des Anges'</b> An unusually high - 70% - Mourvedre level in this bottling offers a very powerful bouquet and superb varietal character. Leathery black fruit. Gorgeous.	<b>2016</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£180</b>	<b>£38.60</b>

## **Xavier VIGNON**

Xavier is one of the southern Rhone's leading consultants (the other is Philippe Cambie who advises estates including Chateau Juvenal), working with numerous top names including some of those on this list. He makes a range of impressively high quality wines and is constantly pursuing new projects. A few years ago, for example, he launched a range of Turkish wines. He makes multi-vintage blends of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. One year he made a wine which blended Grenache from Chateauneuf with Syrah from Cote-Rotie only to be told he would have to bottle it as Vin de France! His current project is a series of wines to be released over the next several years, each one represented by a label featuring one of the Tarot cards. A bit cheesy, perhaps, but the wines are astonishingly good. I took one of them to a tasting recently on a whim and received more orders for this wine than any other!

<b><u>Red wines</u></b>	Vintage	Case size	£/case IB	Equivalent per bottle duty paid
<p><b>LIRAC</b> 80% Grenache topped up with Syrah, this is an example of Xavier's new-found restraint with its gorgeous red and black fruits and suave texture.</p>	<b>2016</b>	<b>12x75cl</b>	<b>£78</b>	<b>£10.40</b>
<p><b>'SM' (CdR)</b> Not Syrah/Mourvedre but Septentrionales (northern Rhone) Syrah and southern or Meridionale Grenache – this is the new incarnation of 'Sacrilege' and it is drinking fabulously well now (but there's no hurry!).</p>	<b>NV</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£81</b>	<b>£18.80</b>
<p><b>ARCANE XV 'Le Diable' (VdF)</b> What better introduction to the Arcane range than this pure Mourvedre? Smooth and remarkably forward for the variety yet serious and with plenty more to come in time.</p>	<b>2015</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£60</b>	<b>£14.60</b>
<p><b>ARCANE XIX 'Le Soleil' (CdR)</b> The 80% Grenache (with 10% each Syrah and Mourvedre) works with some oak influence because of the old vines which all combine to give a silky smooth wine with gorgeous black fruit, beautifully restrained. A wine to drink or hold.</p>	<b>2015</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£66</b>	<b>£15.80</b>
<p><b>ARCANE XVIII 'La Lune' (CdR)</b> The old vine Syrah of the range is very low-yielding – only one bottle per vine! More northern in style but it does come from the south. A gorgeous Syrah, built to last.</p>	<b>2010</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£81</b>	<b>£18.80</b>
<p><b>ARCANE V 'Le Pape' (CdP)</b> Sadly, most of us see the price tag and return our thoughts to wines further up the page. It is quite an astonishing 100% Grenache cuvee from vines in excess of 100 years. A convoluted method was employed whereby the barrel was immersed in a tank of wine to ensure this wine had no exposure to oxygen during its five years' maturation. This will go on and on.</p> <p>If there is sufficient demand, we will sell individual bottles of this wine... but only with sufficient demand!</p>	<b>2010</b>	<b>6x75cl</b>	<b>£330</b>	<b>£68.60</b>