



LE SOULA

Vin du Fenouillèdes - Terroir d'altitude



Revue de presse

2010

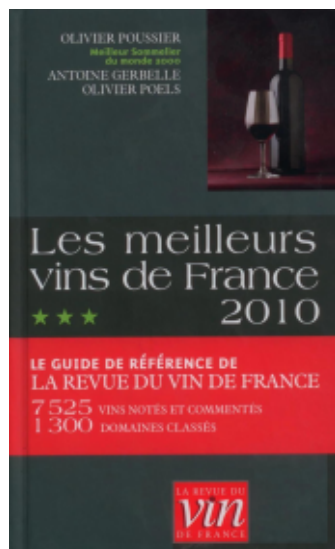
Guide de la Revue du Vin de France 2010

Olivier Poussier, Antoine Gerbelle & Olivier Poels

Domaine Le Soula

VIN DE PAYS DES CÔTES CATALANES

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Sur les belles terrasses granitiques d'altitude de la région des Fenouillèdes au nord ouest de Maury, Gérard Gauby et quelques associés ont acquis ce domaine cultivé en bio. Les vins rouges et blancs sont vinifiés en barriques sur la base de principes très naturels: levures indigènes, aucune acidification, aucune chaptalisation. Dès le début en 2001, Le Soula s'est distingué essentiellement par ses blancs que chaque millésime a portés un peu plus loin dans la pureté et l'intensité, constituant pour beaucoup une révélation. Jamais pris en défaut de fraîcheur ou d'élégance, les rouges ont su récemment combler leur

léger déficit de structure et de chair, diminuant leur part initiale de cabernet-sauvignon au profit de la syrah et du carignan. La deuxième étoile décernée cette année ne pourra être contestée que par les jaloux d'une des plus belles aventures vinicoles de la décennie.

Les vins : friandes, les cuvées Trigone ! Le blanc 2007 désaltère par son fruit vif et citronné et le 100% syrah rouge 2008, passé une légère réduction, constitue un vin de soif haute couture. Irrésistible dès sa jeunesse, le Soula rouge intègre, en 2007, une proportion accrue de syrah, modifiant le profil d'une matière devenue plus élancée et ferme, mais insufflant également un supplément de fraîcheur et d'énergie en comparaison du déjà excellent 2006. Quant au blanc, déjà magistral en 2006, il parvient encore à gagner en tension et en transparence de saveurs sur 2007, augmentant sa part de sauvignon blanc. Domptée par un élevage millimétré, sa haute maturité évite l'exubérance en véhiculant une énergie phénoménale – jusque dans sa finale tranchante, exhalant la minéralité.

□ VDP Côtes Catalanes Le Soula 2007	27 €	18,5
□ VDP Côtes Catalanes Le Soula 2006	27 €	18
□ VDP Côtes Catalanes Trigone 2007	9.40 €	15
■ VDP Côtes Catalanes Le Soula 2007	27 €	17
■ VDP Côtes Catalanes Le Soula 2006	27 €	16,5
■ VDP Côtes Catalanes Trigone 2008	9.40 €	16

30 meilleurs vins blancs	
Chapoutier - Sélection parcelles	Ermitage L'Ermitage
Charles Heidsieck	Brut Blanc de Blancs Millénaires
Château de Beaucastel	Château du Pape Roussanne Vieilles Vignes
Château Gilette	Sauternes Crème de Tête
Château Haut-Brion	Pessac-Léognan
Château Laville Haut-Brion	Pessac-Léognan
Château Pape Clément	Pessac-Léognan
Château Rayas	Château du Pape
Château Revelette	VDP des Bouches-du-Rhône Le Grand Blanc
Domaine Albert Boxler	Riesling Grand Cru Sonnenberg D
Domaine Bott-Geyl	Gewürztraminer Grand Cru Sonnenglanz VT
Domaine d'Auveneray	Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru
Domaine de Chevalier	Pessac-Léognan
Domaine Gauby	VDP Côtes Catalanes Courme Gineste
Domaine Jacques Prieur	Montrachet Grand Cru
Domaine Jean-François Coche-Dury	Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru
Domaine Jean-Louis Chave	Hermitage
Domaine Le Soula	VDP Côtes Catalanes Le Soula
Domaine Leroy	Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru
Domaine Marc Colin et Fils	Montrachet Grand Cru
Domaine Marcel Deiss	Grand Cru Schoenenbourg
Domaine Raveneau	Chablis Grand Cru Clos
Domaine Weinbach - Colette,	Pinet Gris Alenbourg Quintessence de Grains
Catherine et Laurence Fallier	Noëbles
Domaine Zind-Humbrecht	Gewürztraminer Grand Cru Hengst SGN
Egly-Ourlet	Brut Grand Cru Les Cuvées Blanc de Noirs
Jacquesson	Vieilles Vignes
Krug	Grand Vin Signature Dégorgement Tardif
La Ferme de la Sansonnière	Brut Clos du Mont
Les Jardins de Babylone	VDT Les Vieilles Vignes des Blanderies
Louis Roederer	Jureçon Modèles
	Brut Cristal

QUIET MOMENT

For those who want to commune with a glass as it releases its secrets

WHITE

28 ASTROLABE AWATERE VALLEY SAUVIGNON BLANC 2009 (£14.99)

Delicate and finely wrought expression of the grape, for sniffing and sipping thoughtfully at a fireside (Waitrose)

29 LE SOULA BLANC 2006 (£19.99)

An iconic wine from the foothills of the Pyrenees in Roussillon, its fragrance and flavour change constantly: fennel, oranges, resin, mango, caramel... (Berry Bros & Rudd, Justerini & Brooks)

RED

30 THE MCNICOL CLARE VALLEY SHIRAZ 2000 (£16.49-£17.99)

After 10 years, it's showing the benefits of coming from grapes grown on high ground — alluring freshness balanced against fine chocolatey aromas and spicy-smoky flavours (The Wine Company, Adnams)

31 MAHI PINOT NOIR 2008 (£18)

One of NZ's most interesting pinots, with many dimensions — from deep plum to racy tropical notes — that gradually emerge from the glass (Wine Society)

SWEET

32 CHATEAU PIERRE-BISE COTEAUX DU LAYON BEAULIEU L'ANCLAI 2007 (£17.95 FOR 500ML)

Few people want a sweet wine, but this shouldn't be missed — its residual sugar balanced by bright

raciness and orangey-appley fruit in the hands of one of France's greatest winemakers, Claude Papin (Lea & Sandeman)

PORT

33 GRAHAM'S QUINTA DOS MALVEDOS 1999 (£26)

A good price for a vintage port that's bursting with cherry-edged fruit over deeper, darker flavours. Decant a day before you sit down with your first glass (Sainsbury's)

34 FLEURY ROSE NV (£26.22 IF YOU BUY SIX)

Substantial biodynamic pink champagne with a zesty raspberry core that makes it delicious throughout a meal. But hurry — it reverts to the full price of £40 tomorrow (Marks & Spencer)

SUNDAY TIMES ONLINE

Christmas came early. Watch the WineChap's seasonal special on alternative drinking, only at thesundaytimes.co.uk/style

MONEY NO OBJECT

Brazenly budget-busting for those who want to push the boat out

WHITE

35 B DE BASILIO BLANCO RIOJA 2008 (£28)

Extra-special new wave white rioja that completely breaks the musty old mould with a fresh fruitbowl of complex flavours and spicy top notes (therealwineco.co.uk)

36 TAPANAPPA TIERS VINEYARD CHARDONNAY 2008 (£35)

Work of art from Brian Croser, the Australian wine master. But still young, so pour into a jug for an hour to develop its flavours — stone, nuts, citrus, honey — and don't serve it too cold. About 12C ought to be right (Majestic)

RED

37 MARCHAND AND BURCH PINOT NOIR 2009 (£24.70)

The fresh climate of southern Western Australia has produced what the rest of the country struggles to create: a top-class pinot with nuanced flavours and lift (slurp.co.uk)

38 WAKEFIELD ST ANDREWS 2004 CABERNET SAUVIGNON CLARE VALLEY (£29.99)

Exquisitely fine nose — lead pencil and other classic aromas — followed by elegant, fresh, multilayered flavours make this one of the most memorable reds of the past year (cheerswinemerchants.co.uk)

SPARKLING

39 TAITTINGER PRELUDE GRANDS CRUS NV (£39.95)

Rose-petalled, slightly exotic aromas over sherbety, intriguing flavours that open out into lemon and nectarines (robersonwinermerchant.co.uk)

40 NYETIMBER ROSE 2007 (£45)

From the Sussex Downs, the first rosé by this English sparkling-wine producer. Very racy, with a burst of raspberry and lime over a streak of minerality (Harvey Nichols)



Going Out Food And Drink

Our glasses runneth over

Restaurant Review

28°-50° Wine Workshop & Kitchen ★★★★★

Recently, I was offered a high-profile wine-writing gig. Excuse me while I hoot with embarrassed laughter. Despite necking enough of the stuff to float an ark, I have managed to absorb very little real, functional information.

It's all so complicated. You think you can find your way around the various grapes – the cats' pee sauvignons, the rich, honeyed rieslings – but then there are a gazillion labels, blends, domaines and processes, and that's before you even touch on the vintages. The more I drink, the less I seem to know...

Anyway, the USP of 28°-50° is its wine list. Even the name refers to the latitudes that contain most of the world's wine production. So the only thing to do in these circumstances, in my experience, is hand yourself over to the staff.

In this chic, brick-lined basement, we're blessed with Riccarda, a lovely, clued-up gal who doesn't seem to mind us badgering her every five minutes for advice, recommendations or another glass

I know enough about wine to say with conviction that this is no commonplace wine list

of first-class vino, of which we have more than several. They come in smallish measures, OK?

I won't bore you with every one, we'd be here all day, but here are some highlights: with duck rillettes and a ham hock ballotine, both silky with fat and served with crunchy cornichons, we have a 2005 Celler Cal Pla, from Spain's Priorat region (takes deep breath, attempts wine-speak), a garnacha carineña grape mix of intense, fruits-of-the-forest succulence with a hint of oak.

Then there's onglet steak, chewy and iron-y, all smoky char and



Special: 28°-50° is one of a new breed of superior wine bars

depth of flavour with insanely excellent triple-cooked chips. This works wonderfully with biodynamic Soula Rouge Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, earthy and damson-fruity, its minerality a perfect match for the meat. (Spoddy aside: some of the nicest wines I've had recently have come from the French/Spanish border.) And a fine pissaladière swings along nicely with its peppery, voluptuous shiraz cabernet, a 2004 Parson's Flat from Padthaway, Australia.

Salt cod with chorizo and couscous is expertly done, the fish rich and unsalty, the grain fluffy and light; it should be married forever to the supremely elegant, complex Domaine Bru Baché Jurançon sec 2004.

There are sticky, rich pudding wines with luxurious pistachio crème brûlée and a dense almond cake with peach sorbet.

I know enough about wine to say with conviction that this is no commonplace wine list; also, thanks to an innovative collaboration between the

restaurant and wine collectors, the bottles are offered at unusually reasonable prices.

The owners of 28°-50° are award-winning sommelier Xavier Rousset and chef Agnar Sverrisson. They own Texture, one of London's least hyped and best upscale restaurants (you should see the wine list there).

28°-50° is part of a new trend of nouveau wine bars – Terroirs, the newcomer Bar Battu – that have given the old fusty, dusty-bottle-draped fossils a boot up the vintages. They're accessible and flexible: you can drink and eat as much or as little as you like (though bear in mind that portions are on the petite side). I love being able to try a multitude of new tastes rather than my default bottle of albariño.

Who knows, a few more visits and I might pick up endless new skills. Well, that's my excuse.

Marina O'Loughlin

Dinner for two with (lots of) wine, water and service costs about £100. 140 Fetter Lane. Tel: 020 7242 8877. www.2850.co.uk Tube: Chancery Lane

Theatre Review A Number ★★★★★

Caryl Churchill's coruscating two-hander about the nature of identity is given a jolt of raw humanity in director Jonathan Munby's production, as the actors facing each other as father and son(s) are

theatrical dream team Timothy West (pictured) and his real-life son, Samuel. The faint echoes of each other in their faces and gestures make this short, sharp, tricky tale of loss, love, betrayal

West Jr has the tough task of portraying both Bernards and one of the 19 other clones that, unbeknown to Salter, were created with Bernard's DNA.

As B2, learning suddenly he's not who he thought he was, he's in control of Churchill's rendering of

"But I'll just work



The butts sto

Now's the time to focus

There's lots of talk in the newspapers about rising to 66, 67... even 70. But delaying you delaying the inevitable. We're all living long could still have a retirement that lasts for 14 start investing for your future now. An Aviv It's simple, flexible and from a name you ca



Dossier sur le Roussillon, Vallée de l'Agly

Plus loin dans la vallée commence la région des Fenouillèdes. Nous poursuivons vers l'est, en grimpant en direction de Lesquerde, Saint-Paul et Saint-Martin-de-Fenouillet, jusqu'à Caudiès. Ici, des vigneron ont bien compris le bénéfice de la fraîcheur apportée par l'altitude et des terrasses granitiques offrant un supplément d'amplitude thermique (proximité des montagnes). Gérard Gauby, encore lui, s'y est associé avec ses importateurs anglais Richards Walfords pour développer le domaine Le Soula, expérimentation d'un patchwork de vignobles tardifs donnant naissance à des vins de soif haute couture (Trigone), des rouges charnus et fermes, et des blancs à majorité de sauvignon, époustouflants dans les derniers millésimes.

How to spend it

Yann Debelle de Montby

30 octobre 2011

how to
spend it



Derrick Santini

October 30 2010

Diary of a Somebody: Yann Debelle de Montby

The weather in Shanghai has dramatically changed in the past two weeks

The weather in Shanghai has dramatically changed in the past two weeks. It is getting really cold and as Shanghai is very humid like London, the cold weather is very unpleasant.

I started my day with a meeting with a potential new customer, a very big (but very young) developer who had actually seen two of my previous works (the Twin Villas project and Sheshan Golf Club) and wanted me to redecorate 18 new villas that he just built in Pudong, the other side of Puxi, which is all the new part of fast-developing Shanghai. Of course, like almost every new project which I work on in China, the developer wants everything done in the next few months! Very challenging indeed. And to finish the very busy week, that experience of writing a blog (my very first time).

I had dinner with some friends: Alexey Poznyakov and Galina Kotova, owners of Globus Wine (www.globus-wine.com), are selling some of my very favourite wine at the moment: Domaine le Soula, one of the rising stars in French winemaking, headed by the famous Gérard Gauby and backed by one of the most important wine merchants in the UK. Wines from Domaine le Soula have already gained a lot of reputation with sommeliers and wine professionals in Europe and they are proving to be very successful in China. Actually I discovered this wonderful wine through my friend Mark Walford, who is one of the owners of Domaine le Soula and a wonderful and passionate man, who I was lucky to meet last year during a dinner hosted by Mr de Vilaine, one of the owners of the legendary Domaine de La Romanée Conti.

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I had a real pleasure writing this blog during this week, which gave me the opportunity to share some special moments of my life in China. It did remind me of the time when I used to keep a daily diary, which looked like a *carnet de voyage*, and a little bit like my dear friend Peter Beard's diaries.

Click here to read the previous instalment of Yann Debelle de Monthy's Diary of a Somebody.

Harpers Wine & Spirit

27 août 2010



VERY IMPORTANT PRODUCER

LE SOULA

The winery

Le Soula is a joint enterprise between Languedoc-Roussillon winemaker Gérard Gauby and Richards Walford wine importers. Gauby shares the winemaking responsibilities with Gérald Standley who joined Le Soula in 2008.

The wines

Since the first vintage in 2001 Le Soula Rouge and Blanc have been made, though quantities are limited due to average yields of between 12hl/ha and 25hl/ha.

Winemaking philosophy

Gauby says: "The vines and land at Le Soula are worked organically, using biodynamic methods where possible. Manure from the horses is used to treat the vines according to the phases of the moon. All the grapes are harvested by hand. The focus is on using natural methods to allow the grapes to fully express the terroir."

Vineyards and viticulture

The vineyards are high up in the Agly Valley at an altitude of between 450 metres and 600 metres above sea level, implying cool climate and late picking. There are currently 27ha planted; 15ha of red and 12ha of white, with parcels of Grenache Blanc, Gris and Noir, Syrah, Carignan, Macabeu, Sauvignon Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne and Rolle in and around Saint Martin.

Top people

Winemakers Gérald Standley and Gérard Gauby.

In association with the
International Wine Challenge



There are some great reds but they are not dissimilar to those made in the rest of southern France, Priorat, even South Africa. It is the whites that are so distinctive. They can often be too heavy but the better ones have the structure of white Burgundy with a much wider variety of flavours, ranging over the mineral and floral/herbal spectra.

There has been the most extraordinary influx of outside expertise into this quiet valley: Chapoutier, Thunevin, Tom Lubbe from South Africa, Monty Waldin from Tuscany and Masters of Wine Sam Harrop and Justin Howard-Sneyd.

Lafage, Cuvée Centenaire, Côtes du Roussillon 2009 ★★★★★ (16.5)

This creamy blend of Grenache Blanc and 20% Roussanne is based on 100-year-old vines. It may not owe its origins entirely to the Agly Valley but expresses the style well and is a real bargain. When sold for even less by Waitrose it may have provided the inspiration for Justin

Howard-Sneyd's Domaine of the Bee. Drink 2011–2014. **£10.49; You**

Roc des Anges, Vieilles Vignes, Côtes du Roussillon-Villages 2008

A blend of 50- to 80-year-old Grenache and Maccabeu vines and Marjorie Gallet's genius. It was aged in oak and fashionable cement and offers real spine and excitement. Wonderfully firm, bone dry, but with a hint of honey on the nose. Truly admirable. Drink now–2015.

£16.35; CPy, Nsn

Le Soula, Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 2007 ★★★★★ (18)

This joint venture between UK importer Richards Walford and local hero Gérard Gauby was the first great Roussillon dry white I tried, and various vintages are on the wine lists of some of France's most famous restaurants. Minerality incarnate, it evolves slowly but lasts impressively; the 2004 is still drinking well. Drink now–2016 **£22; ABt, BBR, Evy, J&B, Rae, WSo**

Le Soula - My how you've grown

Jancis Robinson

2 août 2010

I've been keenly following Le Soula, a joint venture between revered Roussillon winemaker Gérard Gauby and UK importer Richards Walford, since the debut vintage of 2001, a wine of the week back in 2003. This was the wine that spurred me a month or two later to go and take a look at the Agly Valley, where it is made, resulting in this 2003 Financial Times article chronicling the array of outsiders who had already staked a claim there - from Thunevin to Chapoutier via South Africa.

It was therefore with particular interest that I seized the chance to taste every vintage made, red and white, in London recently. I can only wish that I had laid in several cases of that 2001 white. It is still drinking superbly and should carry on doing so for many a year. The 2002 and 2004 are not far behind either.

Gérard Gauby started out in Calce, only a few miles up the valley from Perpignan airport, with just five hectares whose produce at the time all went to the local co-op. (See this World Atlas of Wine map to get your bearings.) Over the years, with his wife Ghislaine and now son Lionel, he has managed to expand his holdings to 75 hectares. With very obvious embrace of biodynamic principles (inc horse), though without official certification and now adapted to suit their own site, he has become something of a local hero.

As long ago as the late 1990s he realised that land higher up the valley, specifically in St-Martin-de-Fenouillet in wild country (see above) at 350 to 550 m altitude, had the potential to produce much more refined wines than those to which lower elevations were naturally suited. Thus was born the joint venture, with cash from Richards Walford and some initial input from local grower Eric Leguerre (who now has his own enterprise). Soils in the Agly Valley are extremely varied but up here they are largely limestone over decomposed granite - similar to those of Hermitage - which also seemed promising.

They managed to take over some vines planted as long ago as 1919 and planted vineyard holdings now total 27 hectares, of which 15 have red wine varieties Grenache Noir (the traditional red wine grape here), Syrah, Carignan and Cabernet Sauvignon and 12 have the white wine varieties Grenache Blanc, Grenache Gris, Macabeu, Sauvignon Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne and Rolle - although 'Malvoisie' rather than Rolle is cited in the white wine assemblages. (This red:white ratio is unfortunate in my view since so far the whites have been consistently more impressive than the reds.) Yields are very low, between 12 and 25 hl/ha, for this is one of the driest, sunniest parts of France.

Young winemaker G rald Standley joined the team in 2008, after working in New Zealand, Bordeaux and South Africa. I believe his brief is particularly to refine the reds, which have in the past been a little rustic and somehow lacking the obvious nobility of the whites. What I love about the whites is that they have something of the build of white burgundy (they are typically aged in 500-litre casks for between 10 and 15 months on fine lees, high up in the valley where natural clarification and slow malos are the norm) but with all the additional, mineral personality and wildness of the terroir here.

White wine blends are usually made up of Sauvignon Blanc, Macabeu, Vermentino or Marsanne, Grenache Blanc and Gris and 'Malvoisie', generally in that order - although no single variety, and certainly no oak, dominates what is always a complex, apparently well integrated, intriguing, slow-developing cocktail. This is very much a terroir-dominated rather than varietally dominated wine.

Le Soula Blanc has long been acclaimed in France, where it is listed on many a Michelin-starred wine list, and apparently this year became only the second Languedoc-Roussillon domaine to be awarded two stars in La Revue du Vin de France's annual guide to the best wines of France. (I suppose Daumas Gassac is the other.)

Red wine grapes are grown between 350 and 550 m on decomposed granite and schist and nowadays are usually aged for between 12 and 21 months in 600-litre casks. Red wine blends usually contain Syrah, Carignan, Grenache and Cabernet Sauvignon but the proportions have varied enormously, with each one of these constituting the most significant ingredient in each of 2007, 2006, 2005 and 2004 respectively. Definitely work in progress. The alcohol level is usually cited as 13% and these reds are very, very different from the rich, beefy, high-alcohol wines made lower down the valley around Maury.

Although this is one of France's most distinctive terroirs, it has failed to arrive at a name or names for itself, so although early Soulas were labelled Vin de Pays des Coteaux des Fenouillèdes, most of the wines made in the Agly Valley, no matter where, are now sold simply as Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes. Madness.

BLANC

Le Soula 2008 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17+ Drink 2012-2015

38% Sauvignon Blanc, 35% Macabeu, 19% Vermentino, 6% Grenache Blanc & Gris, 2% Malvoisie. Yield 15 hl/ha. 30% new French oak 500-litre barrels for between 10 and 15 months, on fine lees. Light filtration before bottling. 15,253 bottles and 81 magnums produced.

Embryonic lemon, honey nose with a hint of wet wool. More obviously Sauvignon than any other vintage. Medium body and not quite as tense as some earlier vintages. Almost fat at the moment. Needs to resolve a bit. 14%

Le Soula 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17.5 Drink 2011-2016

45% Sauvignon Blanc, 15% Grenache Blanc, 15% Marsanne, 15% Macabeu, 5% Grenache Gris, 5% Malvoisie. Yield 20 hl/ha. 30% new French oak 500-litre barrels for between 10 and 15 months, on fine lees. Light filtration before bottling. 15,400 bottles produced.

Lightly smoky and reductive on the nose with high acidity and minerality. Reminds me of a Chassagne. Lots of chew and excitement on the end. Neat finish opens out. 14%

Le Soula 2006 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 18 Drink 2009-2015

30% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% Grenache Blanc, 25% Marsanne & Roussanne, 10% Macabeu, 10% Malvoisie. Yield 19 hl/ha. 30% new French oak 500-litre barrels for between 10 and 15 months, on fine lees. Light filtration before bottling. 13,500 bottles produced.

Very pale straw. Starting to develop rather haunting honey-and-smoke tertiary aromas. Real nerve. Masses of acidity and extract. Very long. 13%

Le Soula 2005 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17.5 Drink 2008-2012

Light flowers and putty on the nose. Not as precise as the 2006. A little soft and certainly very flattering, and mealy in the way of many developed white burgundies. Slight smudgy finish but reasonably persistent. 13%

Le Soula 2004 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 18 Drink 2007-2013

Really quite evolved on the nose. Fermented honey and cold stones. Firms itself up considerably on the palate where it is positively steely. Lots of depth and interest. Lovely wine drinking beautifully now. 13%

Le Soula 2003 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17 Drink 2006-2011

Smells a little of damp plaster. Then a little weak on the palate - without the real density of the 2004 for instance. Fades a little fast but it is still a pleasure in lime-and-honey vein. 13.5%

Le Soula 2002 Vin de Pays des Coteaux des Fenouilledes 18 Drink 2008-2016

Awfully reductive and liquorice-like. More than a hint of Coche here with great density and life underneath. A little more luscious than the 2001. Lemony and long. Still quite tight and tense. Some astringency still too! 13.8%

Le Soula 2001 Vin de Pays des Coteaux des Fenouilledes 18 Drink 2008-2018

Still very pale. Not so different from an old white hermitage! Very complex on the nose with ramrod spine. Tight and minerally. A bit more austere than 2002. Even. Should go on for ages. 13%

ROUGE

Le Soula 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 15.5+ Drink 2014-2018

41% Syrah , 40% Carignan, 13% Grenache Noir, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon. Yield 18 hl/ha. 30% new French oak 600-litre barrels for between 12 and 21 months. Light filtration before bottling. 12,650 bottles produced. Light crimson. Simple, fresh and a bit brutal. Very embryonic indeed. 13%

Le Soula 2006 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 16 Drink 2013-2018

45% Carignan, 20% Grenache Noir, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Syrah. Yield 17 hl/ha. 30% new French oak 600-litre barrels for between 12 and 21 months. Light filtration before bottling. 12,000 bottles produced. Light to mid crimson. Broad with more obvious richness than the 2007 on the nose but the finish is very raw indeed. Not a charmer yet! 13%

Le Soula 2005 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 16.5 Drink 2012-2018

35% Grenache Noir, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Carignan, 10% Syrah. Yield 15 hl/ha. 30% new French oak 600-litre barrels for between 12 and 21 months. Light filtration before bottling. 8,400 bottles produced. Mid greyish crimson. Some sweetness and breadth. And certainly very honest and untarted and expressive. Though the toughness of Carignan kicks in on the finish... 13%

Le Soula 2004 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 15.5 Drink 2013-2017

40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Grenache Noir, 22% Carignan, 8% Syrah. Yield 15 hl/ha. 30% new French oak 600-litre barrels for between 12 and 21 months. Light filtration before bottling. 12,000 bottles produced. Deep crimson. Sweet and rich and rather overripe. Chewy and drying fruit. Picked too late? 13%

Le Soula 2003 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 15.5 Drink 2013-2015

Dark crimson/ruby. Heady and rich. Drying tannins on the finish and masses of alcohol and very drying. Rustic really. 14.3%

Le Soula 2002 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 16 Drink 2012-2016

Deep crimson. A little fresher than the 2003 and 2004. Very chewy tannins but attractive freshness. 14.2%

Le Soula 2001 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 16.5 Drink 2008-2014

Still a hint of purple in the crimson. Tastes almost like dusty claret! Very intense and only lightly dusty on the end. Much more core and fruit than most of these older Soula reds. 14%

For wine consumers, especially those who like hand-crafted, highly individual wines that express the place where they were grown and are sensibly priced too, Languedoc-Roussillon is the perfect playground.

For the region's producers, however, life is far from playful. Sales are unjustifiably sluggish, while costs continue to escalate. Vineyard land costs are some of the lowest in France, which has encouraged an influx of ambitious newcomers, so there are hundreds of fine wines available.

Yet for the consumer, it is a confusing region with no track record of making great wine, which has arguably kept prices lower than they deserve to be. There are just so many wines available – mostly in small quantities and from *domaines* too modest to have developed an efficient distribution system – that these gems are largely undiscovered. Within France, they suffer for having no established reputation, while too many overseas importers prefer to concentrate on their well-travelled routes to Bordeaux, Burgundy and the Rhône.

Try as the authorities might (and they have injected huge resources and effort into trying to restructure the region's nomenclature, now under the umbrella term "Sud de France", chosen to appeal to the US market), there is still no clear hierarchy of names. The best *domaines* may sell some of their best wines as lowly *vin de pays* simply because they are made from grape varieties not embraced by local *appellation contrôlée* regulations.

And then for every superb example of one of the principal *appellations* – from west to east Côtes du Roussillon, Fitou, Corbières, Minervois, St-Chinian, Faugères, Coteaux du Languedoc – there are dozens, if not hundreds, of lacklustre examples in mass distribution, almost invariably from

one of the wine co-operatives that still dominate production in the region.

Among the co-ops there has been a trend towards amalgamation. Apart from notable exceptions, such as the astute Mont Tauch group of co-ops around Fitou, co-op managements have generally been more concerned with local politics and the distribution of subsidies than with refining and finding a real market for their produce. Along with much-revived Sicily and Puglia in Italy, this is the region that European agricultural policy has most obviously been grappling with, so embarrassingly inconvenient have been their wine surpluses.

One of the most visible changes in the landscape of Languedoc-Roussillon is the dramatic reduction in area devoted to the vine, thanks to payments given to those prepared to grub up vineyards. Many of these have been on the unprepossessing plain in the immediate hinterland of the Mediterranean coast, but the payments available have also encouraged some older *vignerons* in the sweep of exceptional terrain on hillier land about 30 km inland to pull out some of France's oldest vines. This is regrettable, especially since in theory no new planting rights are granted in this region of over-production.

The strength of the euro has put yet another brake on sales of Languedoc-Roussillon wine. Hampshire importer Stone, Vine & Sun, for example, has long championed some of the region's more interesting wines, but at a recent tasting of their latest imports at the smart Sud de France showroom in the heart of London's prime shopping district (which must be quite a drain on the region's resources), the wines seemed noticeably, and not justifiably, more expensive than before.

Perhaps those who are doing best financially from selling Languedoc wine

are those top-quality producers who have worked out a way of selling direct to the end consumer. There is no shortage of northern Europeans who have established themselves on small *domaines* and are increasingly selling via their own websites or to just a handful of committed importers who are personal friends. Obvious examples are Ch Mansenoble in Corbières, Les Clos Perdus, also mainly in Corbières, and Domaine Gayda north of Limoux, run by an Anglo-South African team.

The region may have its structural problems but the wines could hardly be more *de nos jours*. A delightfully wide range of grape varieties thrive here, many of them – such as Syrah, Grenache of all three colours, Mourvèdre and old stumps of Carignan – highly fashionable.

Among white wine grapes, the region offers a panoply of really distinctive varieties such as Bourboulenc, Carignan Blanc, Clairette, Macabeu, Marsanne, Picpoul, Rolle/Vermentino, Roussanne, Viognier and even Terret, all of which have their own particular favourite areas and deliver flavours quite unlike regulation Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc (both of which can produce very respectable wines in the Languedoc).

Indeed just about the only varieties that do not thrive there are Riesling and the ubiquitous Cabernet Sauvignon. The pioneering Mas de Daumas Gassac's special all-Cabernet 2007 Cuvée Emile Peynaud, named after their original Bordeaux consultant, is, however, a fine wine by any measure – as well it might be at nearly £100 a bottle, truly the exception that proves the rule about the modest prices for some top-quality wines from this extensive stretch of southern France.

Roussillon, between Corbières and the Spanish border, has undergone the most extraordinary vinous transformation in recent years. Having been dedicated to producing strong, sweet wines such as Rivesaltes, it now makes a fascinating array of dry table wines, red and white, from ancient vines whose flavours are concentrated by the low rainfall here in this, the sunniest corner of France. Even in the wetter, more Atlantic-influenced far west of the Languedoc, rain rarely ruins a crop since winds tend to dry the grapes naturally immediately after a shower. This is a part of France truly blessed by nature. It's just a shame that it is paying for man's excesses and deficiencies.

See tasting notes on more than 200 current releases on the Purple pages of www.jancisrobinson.com
More columns at www.ft.com/robinson

My favourite Languedoc-Roussillon producers

Domaine de l'Aigle,	Hecht et Bannier,
Château d'Anglès,	Domaine de l'Hortus,
Domaine d'Aupihac,	Château l'Hospitalet,
Léon Barral,	Mansenoble,
Bertrand Bergé,	Mas des Dames,
Borie de Maurel,	Mas de Daumas
Clos Centelles,	Gassac,
Les Clos Perdus,	Mas de l'Ecriture,
Clos du Gravillas,	Matassa,
La Combe Blanche,	Thierry Navarre,
Château Etienne	Château de la Négly,
la Dourrie,	Château d'Or et des
Domaine des Enfants,	Gueules,
Ermitage du Pic St	La Peira,
Loup,	Olivier Pithon,
La Forge (from	Peyre Rose,
Gérard Bertrand),	Le Roc des Anges,
Domaine Gauby,	Domaine du Soleilla,
Domaine Gayda,	Le Soula,
Domaine du Grand Crès,	Treloar

The Wall Street Journal

Will Lyons

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Roussillon : One to Watch

Too often, our search for the new takes us beyond Europe. To vineyards planted on soil outside the traditional wine-growing areas of the Continent. While it is fun and always interesting to discover pockets of terroir producing scintillating wines in countries such as Argentina, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, we sometimes forget those wines a little closer to home.

I'm not talking about the established wine-producing regions of Europe; of Chianti, Rioja or even Champagne. I'm talking about the ancient but unfashionable pockets of terroir that pepper our landscape. One such region is France's Roussillon, which lies at the base of Languedoc-Roussillon's arc from the Spanish border right up to the mouth of the Rhône. Roussillon lacks the glamour of Bordeaux, the prestige of the Côte d'Or and the popularity of the Rhône Valley. It has built a reputation as France's answer to the New World, with a host of winemakers from around the world jetting in to make cheap, drinkable red wine from grapes such as Carignan, Cinsault, Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah.

Yet it is here, in a small parcel of land on the arid, rocky slopes around the villages of Maury and Saint-Paul-de-Fenouillet, that the vine thrives, producing restrained, elegant wine that is anything but New World in character. Mas Amiel, Domaine Gauby and Cellier des Templiers are all worth searching out. But a few years ago I came across a wine from this unlikely region that made me sit up. The white was as complex in flavor as some of the wines from Montrachet and Meursault, and it was underpinned by a freshness and mineral structure that gave it the feel of a very fine wine indeed. There was a purity to this wine that made it eminently drinkable. The wine in question was Le Soula, a joint venture between English wine merchant Richards Walford and Gérard Gauby, a French winemaker who has gained a name for producing understated, elegant and smooth wines.

At €25 a bottle, this is by no means an everyday purchase. Yet if you compare it with wines of a similar quality from more fashionable regions, it is by no means extravagant. Indeed, compared with Mas de Daumas Gassac's Cuvée Emile Peynaud produced in Hérault, west of Montpellier, which can reach €120 a bottle, it looks a very interesting purchase indeed.

The story of Le Soula is worth recounting. It dates back to the late 1990s, when Mr. Gauby discovered that the soil in the Agly Valley—an area largely abandoned by

Drinking Now



Le Soula Blanc

Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France

Vintage: 2005

Price: about £21 or €25 or \$31

Alcohol content: 13.5%

Winemaker Gérard Gauby refers to this vintage as his Chassagne, a reference to the great white wine of Burgundy. The blend is 40% Grenache Blanc, 30% Sauvignon, 20% Marsanne/Roussanne and 10% Chenin, which, with time, impart a beeswax, caramel character.

viticulture—made up of decomposed granite washed over limestone, was similar to that found in Hermitage in the Rhône Valley. But the key to understanding these wines is the altitude, between 450 and 650 meters above sea level. In some places the vineyards sit twice as high as the Eiffel Tower. Granite is an acidic soil at altitude and this combination of very hot days and cool nights means the grapes don't overripen and produce too much sugar. In short, they impart the Holy Grail sought by every winemaker in the south of France—freshness.

The wines themselves are made with minimal intervention. There is no chaptalization (the process of adding sugar to unfermented grape must), no acidification and only natural yeasts are used. The result is wine of great delicacy and purity. The whites—a blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Grenache Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne and Chenin—steal the show, with flavors such as flowers, white fruit and honey. In the wine's youth, it is the Sauvignon blanc that expresses itself, giving the wine a taut, grassy flavor. But with age the wine takes on an oily texture, with notes of lemon, beeswax and vanilla. The richness of the fruit is balanced by the acidity. The reds, a blend of Carignan, Cabernet Sauvignon, Grenache Noir and Syrah, have certainly improved. The earlier vintages were a little overextracted, by that I mean quite tannic to taste, but they have refined over time. The 2007 red had the look and feel of an expensive Hermitage, with notes of thyme, rosemary, gorse and red fruits. I have a feeling the wines from Roussillon will grow in popularity and prices will rise. Catch them while you can.

Write to Will Lyons at wsje.weekend@wsj.com

The Scotsman Magazine

Rose Murray Brown

15 Mai 2010

ST CHINIAN 2008 ALAIN CHIGNON
(£6.99, Waitrose)
Expect a soft lush succulence, herby spice and easy approachable style in this red. **15/20**

MAURY 2005 DOMAINE SOULANES
(£11.75, www.terroirlanguedoc.co.uk)
Lush, sweet cherried, velvet smooth red; the 15.8 per cent alcohol is extremely well-balanced, delicious with dark chocolate mousse. **17.5/20**

Luxury

LA SOULA BLANC 2007
(£20.95, www.terroirlanguedoc.co.uk)
Floral apricot honeysuckle bouquet with vivid minerality. **16.5/20**

DEUSYLS DE LA PEIRA BLANC 2007
(£23.49, www.bbr.com)
A clear winner among the whites at our recent tasting. Fennel and lemon bouquet, velvet smooth palate. **17.5/20**

GRAND CUVÉE BLANC 2007 DOMAINE DE L'HORTUS
(£14.95, www.terroirlanguedoc.co.uk)
This oaked chardonnay/roussanne/viognier blend is weighty, textural and exotic. **16/20**

NUMERO UNO 2006 CLOT DE LOUM
(£30.95, as above)

Remarkable spicy meaty minerally syrah/carignan blend from near Maury in Roussillon. **17.5/20**

MAS D'LECRITURE ROUGE 2001
(£29.95, www.terroirlanguedoc.co.uk)
Like a wild version of Chateaufort du Pape with wild fennel, sweet herbs and spicy oak. **16.5/20**

MAS DE DAUMAS GASSAC 2006
(£22.95, as above)
Gassac's top reds need time to develop their spice, beef and elegance. **16.5/20**

For beginners wine courses in Edinburgh and Glasgow, see www.rosesturmeybrown.com







Rye crispbreads
studded with seeds

Pour the yeast mixture into the flour and stir. The result will be sticky, stiff and wet. Cover the bowl with clingfilm or a cloth and leave in a warm place for an hour, during which time it will rise a little. Don't expect the rise to be as voluminous as with white dough – it should just be a little puffed up.

Line a baking sheet – or better still, two – with baking parchment. (You will need to bake these large breads in batches.) Set the oven at 200C/gas mark 6.

Roll out about a 12th of the dough into a rough disc the size of a side plate. It will be difficult to roll, so you might like to do this on the baking sheet rather

than on the work surface. You can cut the edges using a plate as a template if you wish, though I tend to leave mine rough. Pierce the surface of the dough all over with holes, using a fork or skewer. Bake for 15–18 minutes until the bread is truly crisp. Remove and continue with the rest of the dough. Once cool, the bread will keep in a biscuit tin for a few days.

To add to the breads

Put a pinch of pumpkin seeds, nigella, sesame seeds, anise or caraway seeds into each piece of dough as you roll it, then scatter a further pinch on top before baking, pressing it down lightly with the back of a spoon.

NIGEL'S CLASSIC PRAWN COCKTAIL

The prawn cocktail has been around now for a good 30 years, and has spent most of it see-sawing from the height of fashion to the laughably passé. This mixture of lettuce, prawns and Marie Rose sauce has seen countless amounts of tinkering, not all of it wise, and now tends to make its appearance with something of an ironic wink. The truth is that properly made, with sweet lettuce hearts and juicy prawns, it is the perfect way to start a summer's lunch. If it could leave its 70s baggage behind, it could get on with being what it is – a thoroughly delicious little salad.

THE RECIPE

Shred a gem lettuce heart and pile it into a couple of chilled glasses. Peel and dice a cucumber and add it to the lettuce. Mix 4 tablespoons of decent mayo with 2 heaped teaspoons of tomato ketchup and a good shake of Tabasco. Toss with 250g plump peeled prawns, a squirt of lemon juice and pinch of paprika. Pile the dressed prawns on top of the lettuce and serve with a lemon wedge balanced on the side of the glass.

THE TRICK

It is all in the sauce. Too many restaurant versions try to add the chef's signature, usually chopped

skinned tomatoes, tarragon or gherkins – in a stroke, turning a classic into a travesty. The true sauce is principally mayonnaise, tomato ketchup and a couple of shakes of Tabasco. Simon Hopkinson, for whom this is something of a signature dish (he named one of his books after it), adds a heartening dash of Cognac. "You shouldn't muck about with it too much," he says.

THE TWIST

Well, of course, there shouldn't really be one. Most twists involve swapping the prawns for crayfish tails or bits of lobster, but better surely is to rethink it entirely. I make a version in which I ditch the Marie Rose sauce altogether, then use diced cucumber, coriander leaves and red chillies as the base, seasoning the prawns with fish sauce and lime juice to produce a clean-tasting, Thai-inspired version. But I wouldn't dare call it prawn cocktail. ■



THE RECIPE

Serves 2

1 gem lettuce heart
1 cucumber diced
4 tbsp mayonnaise
2 tsp tomato ketchup
a shake of Tabasco
250g plump, peeled prawns
1 lemon
a pinch of paprika

WHAT I DRINK AT HOME

SAM AND EDDIE HART, OWNERS OF QUO VADIS

The initial nose of white flowers in a 2006 Montlouis-sur-Loire Sec, "La Volagère" (lescaves.co.uk, £26.49) gives way to fleshier parts of such fruits as quince, apple and pear with a suggestion of fig, honey and cinnamon. From Sicily, the 2007 Cerasuolo di Vittoria Classica

(lescaves.co.uk, £18.49) has an intriguing floral bouquet with flavours of blackberry, hints of earth and mineral balanced by fresh acidity and silky tannins. Le Soula White 2006 (lbr.com, £22.95) is made by our friend Roy Richards and is a brilliant wine with amazing mineral complexity. It ages really well and can be drunk with almost anything from fish and seafood to chicken or guinea fowl. quadvadis.co.uk

