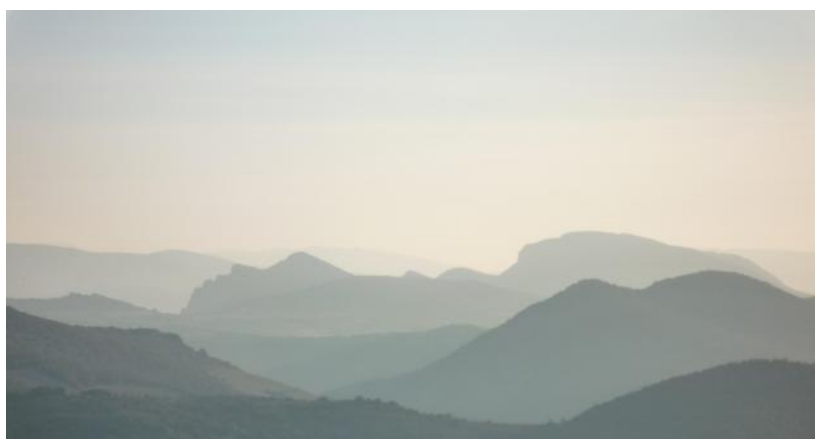




LE SOULA

Vin du Fenouillèdes - Terroir d'altitude



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Andrew Jefford

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LE SOULA MAGIC IN THE MOUNTAINS

Andrew Jefford travels to Fenouillèdes, one of the most inhospitable parts of the Roussillon, to meet the people behind Le Soula, an extreme-winemaking adventure seeking finesse amid the wild mountain country of the French Pyrenees



All photography courtesy of Le Soula

Most of southern France's vineyards can trace their existence back to the 30-million-year collision between the Iberian micro-continent and the southwestern portion of the European plate. That vast, slow, mangling embrace of rock, which began in the warmth of the Eocene world 55 million years ago and ended in the cooler Oligocene around 25 million years ago, not only left us the Pyrenees themselves, but its forces affected landforms far to the west and east of the present-day chain. One end of the wreckage lies in Spain's Asturias. The trail of twisted rocks then runs along the mountain chain through Basque Country and Gascony before crossing Languedoc to Provence, where the Pyrenean energies are subsumed by those of the slightly younger Alps. The impact and the long erosional narrative that followed it are the grand forces creating today's slopes.

Geologists divide the Pyrenees into different sectors, in order to render the impossibly complicated history of what has gone on here merely difficult. One of the most exciting of these sectors, for those who relish the copulative energies that accumulations of millennia bring, is the North Pyrenean zone. In wine terms, Roussillon is its cockpit. This zone was once a quiet marine trench, but it was violently squeezed and contorted as the mountains formed. This horse-like bucking of stone mingled the hard-rock basement deposits with softer-rock sedimentary material. Every traveler senses this struggle in weaving his or her way through the tortured hills, crags, slabs, slopes, and fissures of the Perpignan hinterland.

Three rivers dance their way down to the sea here: the Agly in the north, the Tet in the center, and the Tech to the south of the region. The Tech is a high, narrow, wet valley in

(veraison)

The spread of vineyards means that these wines are a picture of the high Fenouillèdes—with its decomposed granites, its implacable seasonality, and its howling winds—rather than a single distinguished site

the shadowy lee of Mount Canigou: a challenge for viticulture, at least until the terraces of the Albères foothills near the coast are reached in Les Aspres. The Tet is the most open of the three valleys—Roussillon's best general farming country. The most exciting viticultural land is overwhelmingly found along the banks of the Agly and its little gang of tributaries in Northern Roussillon; that's where the "Villages" sector of the AOC lies, as well as the named crus (Latour-de-France, Lesquerde, Caramany, and Tautavel).

Soils based on gravels, clays, and sands dominate the lower-lying east of Roussillon. In the high country to the west, though, the soils (where there are any—this is tough, bony country) are more highly contrasted. A sea of limestone welling down from Corbières in the north surrounds an island of black schist that links Espira d'Agly with Maury. Farther south, gray schist fights it out with the granitic sands and gneiss derived from the basement rocks. Roussillon has an austere Mediterranean climate: 20–24 in (500–600 mm) of rain a year falling overwhelmingly in autumn and winter, with generous sunshine (2,531 hours, or around 320 days a year) and a mean July temperature of 75°F (23.9°C). What distinguishes Roussillon from the Languedoc, though, is the prevalence of wind. Winds attack the region from at least five directions and blow strongly on one day in three throughout the year. They pummel and trounce the vines, desiccating what are already dry lands. Roussillon's wines can be beautiful, but they are rarely juicy. Growers struggle to coax yields up to a barely profitable 25 hl/ha. This is no Pays de Cocagne.

The landforms of the northern Roussillon are not easy to understand, even for those who live there. One important principle, though, is that the Maury (a tributary of the Agly, joining it at Estagel) has worked its way through relatively soft black schists and marls and so has created a much more open valley than the curving Agly (which fights its way through granite) has managed to do. Moreover, since the little Maury runs almost exactly west to east, it produces a fine run of south-facing slopes. That's one reason why Maury has an appellation of its own (for *vin doux naturel*)—and why many of the richest unfortified Roussillons are found in the Maury area. It's also why the main road (the D117) runs through Maury, while no road succeeds in following the battling Agly for its entire course. The D117 then presses on westward and upward toward the pastureland and forest of the vineless Pays de Sault. This upper sector of the Agly Valley (from Estagel inland, and including Maury) is known as the Fenouillèdes. It's tempting to hear the whistle of leggy fennel stems in the wind of this name, but in fact it's an abbreviation of the Latin *pagus fenolientensis*—"country of hay." Sweet, fresh hay... perhaps there was more rain back in Roman times.

Chez Gérard

Gérard Gauby is one of the pioneers of today's Roussillon, and he has worked with his UK agents Roy Richards and Mark Walford since 1990. The Gauby domaine (now 43 ha [106 acres]) of vines, though the difficulty of the terrain is underscored by the fact that it equates to around 200 separate parcels) is based in Calce, just to the west of Rivesaltes. Calce is a microcosm of its region, in that it's a kind of soil junction, with pebbly terraces to the east, black schist to the south and west, and calcareous soils dominating the north of the village; the Gauby vineyards lie between 490 ft and 980 ft (150–300 m) above sea level. It is, though, outside the Fenouillèdes.

Gauby had always looked at those higher lands to the west with interest. It was cooler than Calce, and even tougher—with different rocks, notably decomposed granite. Land in the 1990s was not expensive there; many wine growers were elderly, struggling toward retirement on the modest disbursements of cooperatives. The height of the area (up to 4,265 ft [1,300 m]) gives it an entirely different ripening profile to the Calce zone.

"I'd always said to Gérard," remembers Roy Richards, "that if he found anything interesting, then Mark and I would love to be involved before we became too old and addled." Richards had noted Gauby's curiosity about the high Fenouillèdes and its decomposed granites; he sniffed out a dream of "the Hermitage of the South," though perhaps Gauby would not have put it like that. Those lonely uplands were the obvious place for the three to work together. The first vineyard (abandoned vines in this case) was bought in 2001, and there are now 12 separate vineyard units, some of them subdivided further and some not yet planted, making a total of 22 ha (54 acres) in 25 parcels. The height of the plots varies between 980 ft and 1,970 ft (350–600 m). They're quite widely scattered; it takes Gérald Standley, who runs the domaine on behalf of Gauby, Richards, and Walford, a day to inspect all the plots as harvest nears. Five small groups of vineyards lie near St-Arnac, close to the Agly itself (Taoulade, La Bergerie, Le Pin, La Plantade, and Les Echalas): steep slopes between 1,180 ft and 1,310 ft (360–400 m), hidden from view underneath the twisting road across the Plateau de Taichac to the village of St-Martin. Le Pin was originally called "Lo Soula" in the land registry—hence the domaine name. There are two larger groups of vineyards to the west of St-Martin (Coutious and l'Estang, at 1,625–1,720 ft [495–525 m]), and three more groups of vineyards to the east of the village of Le Vivier (La Chapelle, Grand Macabeo, and Feilluns, at 1,605–1,675 ft [490–510 m]). The lowest-lying parcel (1,085 ft [330 m]) is at Lesquerde, north of the main groups of vineyards, and the final parcel is La Cloture, close



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LE SOULA



Top: Gérald Standley, Le Soula's winemaker, in one of its biodynamic vineyards; bottom: the steep slopes, often under a threatening sky, are painfully low-yielding

(veraison)

to Le Vivier: old-vine Carignan planted at 1,250ft (380m). La Cloture is the only parcel on black schist; all of the other parcels are on soils derived from decomposed granite.

Winter in Le Soula

I visited Le Soula with Roy Richards and Madeline Mehalko of Richards Walford and Gérard Standley shortly before Christmas 2010. As we drove up to the high Fenouillèdes, the air seemed to fill with fine ash particles, tumbling out of a pewtersky and billowing through the olive trees and the holm oaks. It was snow. By the time we got to the Grand Macabeo vineyard, the wind was so strong that you needed muscle to open a car door into it. That wind had a jet-stream iciness that sliced through clothes and flesh to the skeleton within; it made your teeth ache. The blizzard was, if anything, stronger still at the Feilluns vineyards, dissolving the horizon to a dismal gray swirl. Boars had been through the vineyards, tearing at the earth for sustaining life within, while above ground all was clamped, mute, locked into a grimace of endurance. The winery at Prugnanes farther north resembled a mountain refuge, tucked into its small valley. Paupiettes simmered in a pot on Gérard's wood-burning stove. Obviously this winterreise has nothing to do with the fruiting cycle or with vinification, but I mention it to convey some measure of the savagery and remoteness of this place. Indeed, summer is no less testing.

The vineyards are run biodynamically—something, Gérard Standley says, the boars haven't noticed, since they favor Le Soula plots over neighboring parcels, which seem to have a lower quotient of roots and worms. There are slightly more red varieties than white (12ha [30 acres] compared to 10ha [25 acres]), with 5ha (12.5 acres) of both Carignan (on average almost 70 years old) and Syrah plus 2ha (5 acres) of Grenache. White plantings are more diverse: 4ha (10 acres) of Macabeu is complemented by 1ha (2.47 acres) of Rolle (Vermentino) and half a hectare (1.2 acres) each of Marsanne, Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, old-vine Grenache Gris, and Malvoisie de Roussillon (Tourbat). The wild card is 2.5ha (6 acres) of Sauvignon Blanc, planted in 1991 in the L'Estang and Coutous vineyards. Richards, Standley, and Gauby feel that the Sauvignon works well in these high, granite vineyards—not least because it doesn't taste at all like Sauvignon Blanc here but has something of the stony asperity and scrubby scents of the other whites. Sauvignon provides the biggest single component in the white blends in most years (45 percent in the 2007, for example, and 38 percent in the 2008). The great struggle is to keep yields up: the red wine is usually based on yields of 15–18hl/ha, and the white on 15–20hl/ha. The decomposed granite is very low in organic matter; wind and drought take their toll. Organic fertilizer (≈30,000 worth in the first year) is one answer, but only one. Gérard Standley is trying to learn from the biotope. "Almost all our parcels are in the middle of the forest," he says. (For "forest," think scrub: holm oak, wild olive, cystus, juniper, strawberry tree, thyme, valerian, white heather, wild asparagus...) "The forests produce energy. You don't bring anything to them, but you take wood from them. We should try to do the same with our vines. What I'm trying to do in our viticulture is imitate the forest."

He's aiming for maximum ground cover in the vineyards by planting sward seed bonded in dried clay and cow manure, and by trialing wood-chip mulches in the vineyard.

More finesse and less oomph

And the vinifications? Before discussing these, it's perhaps worth telling a story first. Back in 1999, at the Richards Walford base in Pickworth in Lincolnshire, Roy Richards shared a bottle of Latour 1918 with Gérard Gauby. "It was youthful, fresh, balanced—and somewhere between 11.5 and 11.8%. You should have seen Gérard's face. What was obvious to both of us was that you didn't need high levels of alcohol to preserve the wine; what mattered was balance." Gauby's initial reputation had been made with his Muntada wine, then (in 1995) a "sexy" pure Syrah with generous levels of extraction and new oak. Gauby, though, was becoming disenchanted with that style, despite its popularity; he felt it didn't reflect Roussillon with the fidelity and precision he was looking for. Richards himself has a Burgundy-honed palate and a horror of extractive vulgarity; the 1918 Latour set Gauby thinking. From 2002, Gauby changed direction—toward much earlier harvesting for both Gauby and Le Soula, in order to capture that freshness and finesse he longed for. "I wasn't wholly happy with the results," remembers Richards. "You've got to carry your customers with you. But from 2005, Gérard has pursued a kind of middle way that works well, I think—more finesse and less oomph. Oomph is not what we're after." Everything, of course, depends on precise variety and site. Le Soula's vineyards are (because of their height) necessarily much later-ripening than the Gauby vineyards—and while Syrah can be picked early to rack up the finesse, Grenache and Carignan can't. Between 2004 and 2007, the Le Soula red wine has averaged 13%, while the white tends to be a little higher: 14% in 2007 and 2008.

All of the hard-won fruit is hand-harvested; the whites are predominantly whole-bunch pressed very slowly and gently, then predominantly barrel-fermented in 500-liter demijuds of which no more than 10 percent are new. It spends 10–15 months on fine lees before bottling. The reds are whole-bunch, too: no destemming in 2008 or 2009, and just 10 percent destemmed in the difficult (rain-affected) though surprisingly successful 2010 vintage. What about extraction? Forget it: This is a winery that has only done two red-wine pigeages in three years. Because the grapes are all on stems, no cap forms, nothing needs moistening. "We're searching for finesse," Richards reminds me. The juice is, though, run off the stems and skins about halfway through fermentation and finished in liquid form in both tanks and barriques. The blends of the grands vins of both colors vary considerably each year depending on the success of the different varieties; the balance goes into the second wine, called Trigone.

The spread of vineyards means that these wines are a picture of the high Fenouillèdes—with its decomposed granites, its implacable seasonality, and its howling winds—rather than reflecting a single distinguished site, though perhaps with time, outstanding vineyards will merit individual bottlings. There may, too, be further refinements



A vat of Carignan, the dominant red variety, from two nearby parcels—La Bergerie and Le Pin du Soula—which is whole-bunch fermented with minimal extraction

to the varietal mix. Location, varieties, harvesting strategy, vinificatory approach—all conspire to make Le Soula, both white and red, one of the most individual and in some ways challenging wines of Roussillon. The aromatic intricacy of both wines can be striking, but their balance (textural sparseness allied to searching acidity and restrained flesh) can be disconcerting. For me, the white is the more successful of the two, and not coincidentally the richer; perhaps my spirit isn't quite Burgundian enough, but I hunger for more contour, texture, and density in the red. A taste of both is essential, though, for anyone who wants to understand the last mountain fastness of north Catalonia.

THE WINES

2006 Le Soula Blanc

This vintage was a blend of 30% Sauvignon Blanc with 25% Grenache Blanc, 25% co-fermented Marsanne and Roussanne, 10% Macabeu, and 10% Malvoisie de Roussillon. It's full gold in color, with faintly oxidative aromatic notes of almond and truffle. There's a pronounced shaft of acidity on the palate, offsetting the otherwise summery flavors of grilled almond, apricot, and wheat straw. That shaft of acidity gives it a driving, insistent, characterful style that will leave few drinkers indifferent. A mountain wine of the south.

2007 Le Soula Blanc

This vintage of 45% Sauvignon Blanc with 15% each of Grenache Blanc, Marsanne, and Macabeu is complemented by 5% each of Grenache Gris and Malvoisie de Roussillon. Scents of lime pith and pounded stones pave the way for a crunchy, bright, edgy yet textured flavor of lunging energy, built around a core of searching lemon fruit and upland herbs. It's a vigorous and invigorating white wine, yet there's enough weight, glycerol, and richness to ballast its pungent asperities.

2008 Le Soula Blanc

Some 38% of Sauvignon Blanc was complemented by 35% Macabeu, 19% Rolle, 6% of Grenache Blanc and Grenache Gris, and 2% Malvoisie de Roussillon. The wine is mid-gold in color, with an aromatic spectrum suggesting fennel, sage, wheat straw, and scrub plants. There's an apricot-fruit and nougat-like sweetness on the palate to begin with,

which momentarily suggests the Northern Rhône—yet that pure, driving, high-country acidity takes over, and the wine finishes in characteristically elemental style. Complex, arresting, unique.

2006 Le Soula Rouge

This blend of 45% Carignan with 20% Grenache, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon (from a rented plot), and 15% Syrah is clear red in color, with scents of red fruits and herbs. The palate is edgy and elegant, its bright plum-fruit flavors lent complexity by fennel, pine, chicory, earth, and stone, and riven by searching acidity.

2007 Le Soula Rouge

The wine in this vintage was composed of 41% Syrah with 40% Carignan, 13% Grenache and 6% Cabernet Sauvignon (the final vintage for the Cabernet). Compost-like and animal aromas precede a driving palate charged with elderberry and blackcurrant fruit: edgy, searching, vulpine—as penetrating as the winds that rack the vineyards.

2008 Le Soula Rouge

The 2008 vintage contains 55% Carignan balanced by 35% Syrah and 10% Grenache. It's a much deeper black-red in color than 2006 or 2007. Fresh-fruit notes (wild strawberry) mingle with notes of herb and crushed leaf litter. On the palate, the wine is pure, lifted, bright, elegant, concentrated, and vivid. Acidity is still more palpable than tannin, yet this has a broader structure and slightly softer balance on the palate than 2006 or 2007. The flavors suggest sloe and damson, seasoned with plant roots and wild herbs. Dramatically contoured finish.

CONTACT INFORMATION & PRICES FOR RECENT VINTAGES

Le Soula Blanc

Le Soula Rouge

Le Soula

66220 Prugnages, France

Tel: +33 4 68 35 69 31 • Fax: +33 4 68 28 74 18

www.le-soula.com

See Directory for stockists

under \$15/£10/¥10 \$15–30/£10–20/¥10–20 \$31–75/£21–50/¥21–50
\$76–150/£51–100/¥51–100 more than \$150/£100/¥100

How to spend it

Yann Debelles de Montby

10 février 2011

how to
spend it



February 10 2011

The Reconnoisseur: Daily intelligence

Not that long ago, I enjoyed an extremely long lunch at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons...

Not that long ago, I enjoyed an extremely long lunch at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons to celebrate a significant birthday. As ever, the food and service were more than up to scratch. So too were several wines, including one of particular note – namely Le Soula.

The French critic Michel Bettane describes it as the best white wine in the Languedoc. He's probably right. The 2005 I drank was almost Burgundian in its complexity, length and depth – but with an extra dash of vivacity and verve.

The reds aren't too shabby either, as I subsequently discovered at a tasting with one of Le Soula's owners, Mark Walford, who runs the importers Richards Walford. The 2006 is simply scrumptious and will age for some considerable time to come. The same goes for the 2007 and the 2008. But all three are distinctively different.

Walford and his partner Roy Richards created Le Soula more than a decade ago after they began working with pioneering local winemaker Gérard Gauby who was on a one-man quest to rejuvenate some of the abandoned high-altitude vineyards of the Agly Valley. Richards and Walford immediately saw the potential of Le Soula's unique terroir and promptly put up the required capital.

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Today, there are just 22 hectares planted with an eclectic mix of varieties including Grenache Blanc, Gris and Noir, Syrah, Carignan, Macabeu, Sauvignon Blanc, Marsanne and Roussanne. Only 30,000 cases are made each vintage.

What I love about Le Soula's reds and whites is their sense of place expressed through a fabulous freshness, elegance and ability to age. The wines are never over-ripe and always give pleasure. Best of all, they only cost around £20 a bottle from some of the UK's leading merchants (Majestic and Berry Brothers & Rudd among them; Le Soula's own website has a full list of stockists). However, the word is getting out about Le Soula. So my advice is to fill your boots – and fast.

Click here to read about the British winemakers who are giving champagne houses a run for their money.

Money Week Magazine

Matthew Jukes

23 septembre 2011

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Wine of the week: a sultry, juicy, Rhône red



by Matthew Jukes

2008 Le Soula, Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France (£21.95, Berry Bros & Rudd, 0800-280 2440; The Grape Store, 01386-438710; Amps Fine Wines, 01832-273502; A&B Vintners, 01892-724977).

I have long been intrigued by the wines of Le Soula. I cannot say that I am a slavish disciple, but I respect the natural path that they tread and I love the wild, herbal and untamed taste of

the wines. The moment that re-triggered my interest in this estate happened at Chez Bruce, Wandsworth Common, London – simply one of the most well-judged and delicious restaurant experiences one could imagine. Katie, the sommelier, was given the task of finding 'something interesting' for us to savour late into a lunch. She returned from the cellar

with a 2001 Le Soula White – at ten years old it should have been knackered, but it was sublime. The 2006 and 2008, both out now, are equally quirky, fascinating and rewarding. My wine this week is the newly released 2008 red. It is a sultry, juicy, Rhône recipe with more layers than I can explain in 200 words. Made by Gérard Gauby (a local legend) in conjunction with UK wine Lords Richards Walford, this is an unashamed wine-nerd wine, but I love it and I would venture that you will, too.

● Matthew Jukes is a winner of the International Wine & Spirit Competition's Communicator of the Year (see. www.matthewjukes.com).



The wines of Domaine Le Soula, Roussillon, France

Some of the south of France's most remarkable wines

Le Soula is one of the south of France's most exciting wineries. It's a partnership between Gérard Gauby, famed winegrower of the Roussillon, and UK wine merchants

Roy Richards and Mark Walford, based on old abandoned vineyards in the Fenouillèdes, which Gauby discovered back in 2001. To go with the vineyards, the three bought an old building in Saint Martin de Fenouillet, which they converted into a cellar in time for the first vintage (2001).

The operation grew, and in 2008 added Gérald Standley to the team as general manager, working alongside Gauby. They also moved the winery to an old co-op in Prugnanes, with some more space. I tasted these wines with Gérald.

The key to Le Soula is the quality of the vineyards. These are mostly small plots of old vines, spread out over quite a distance: there are 15 km between the furthest vineyards. 'It takes half a day minimum to visit all the vineyards,' says Gérald. They are all on decomposed granite, with the exception of one small parcel on schist. All have slightly different expositions, and the altitude ranges from 350–600 metres. Yields are low, ranging from 14–18 hl/ha.

Reds are made with whole bunches in the ferments. There is no acidification, and natural yeast ferments are employed. The wines are matured in large vats (1500 litres) and demi-muids (500 litres).

UK agent is Richards Walford, and retail prices are given in brackets.

THE WINES

Le Soula Rouge 2008 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France

Fresh, bright and expressive with lovely taut cherry and berry fruit. Fresh with some mineral notes and good acidity. Youthful and expressive with nice purity and lovely freshness. 93/100 (£20.99)

Le Soula Rouge 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France

Smoky, mineral, flinty edge to the pure red fruits nose. Lovely fresh, bright, supple berry and cherry fruits here. Expressive and mineral with lovely freshness and precision. 93/100 (£20.99)

Le Soula Blanc 2008 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France

Intense, fresh, quite pure fruit on the nose. The palate is textured yet fresh with tight mineral, spice and subtle flint notes. Real precision and intensity here. Potential for further development. 93/100 (£20.99)

Domaine Le Soula Blanc 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France

14% alcohol. From vineyards high up in the Fenouillèdes with decomposed granite soils. Very interesting, flinty, mineral, spicy, savoury nose with some bright citrus fruit. The palate is savoury and structured with fresh apple and citrus notes, as well as white peach and nice minerality. Complex and savoury with some nice matchstick reduction in the background. Quite profound. 92/100

Le Soula Blanc 2006 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France

Beautiful aromatics: herbs, apples, nuts and minerals. Taut and expressive. The palate is fresh with high acidity and a lovely savoury, nutty, mineral edge, as well as ripe apple notes. So fresh and complex. 94/100 (£20.99)



BOB TYRER ON THE BOTTLE

The deputy editor and I were enjoying a glass of The Sunday Times Wine Club champagne late one Saturday evening. It's gentle stuff, good for sloughing off the cares of the week while reading the first editions of rival newspapers. But like all champagne, it costs a fair bit (£24.99). We talked about tastes in wine. He's a claret man; I'll try any wine, but I prefer something that has been made with love and craftsmanship, and to drink it with food. "If I gave you £20," he said, "what would you buy to drink here now?"

"What, without food? Probably a budget champagne." I was thinking of something like the fresh and lively Marc Chauvet Brut Tradition (£19.99; therealwineco.co.uk). "Or I'd go down to Tesco and get a cool-climate Chilean sauvignon blanc, but that wouldn't cost £20." (Maycas del Limari Sauvignon Blanc 2010, £9.99.)

None of this sounded very original, but I find that wine costing £20 is usually such a step up in quality from cheaper swiggers that it screams for food to draw out its subtleties or soften its intensity. Of course, there are overpriced NZ sauvignon blancs in that bracket that would make nice sippers, but why pay the label premium?

What I needed for my £20 was a wine with lowish tannins, a nice bit of acidity and intriguing flavours that come and go in the glass. The first stop had to be Germany, classically the home of sipping whites. The Germans tend nowadays to pack power into wines that are brilliant with a hunk of black bread and a dollop of liver sausage, but a bit tough on the teeth on their own. I found a famous name that used to epitomise bad German wine — sugary and vapid — that has been transformed by new owners, at under £20.

Second, to the eastern foothills of the Pyrenees, where a new focus of French perfectionism has sprung up over the past 20 years, and a white wine that variously tastes of stone, herbs, quince, honey, pears and mangoes as one journeys down the bottle.

And third, to the cool Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia, where Brian Croser, one of Australia's greatest wine visionaries, planted pinot noir eight years ago and has conjured Burgundian subtlety from the young vines. It's worth the £20-plus premium.

LIQUID HUNCHES

✪ **Königin Victoriaberg Rheingau Riesling Trocken Joachim Flick 2010 (£16.99)**
Nectarines and a slash of acidity (thewineryuk.com).

✪ **Le Soula Blanc Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 2006 (£19.99)** A haunting beauty (Majestic).

✪ **Tapanappa Pinot Noir Foggy Hill Vineyard 2008 (£27.21)** Wreathed in spices, smoke and gentle fruit (everywine.co.uk).

What are you drinking? Tell me at wine@sunday-times.co.uk



THE SPECTATOR

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LIFE

Drink Life after Lafite Bruce Anderson



I had an old friend — now, sadly, dead — who spent his final years in terror of his wife. By the time he reached man's estate, he had developed a taste for good claret. As he became a good lawyer, he was able to indulge it. Jolly expeditions to Bordeaux, long sessions with old-fashioned wine-merchants, his own estimable palate: the outcome was an enviable cellar.

And an increasingly valuable one. My late friend refused to let counting-house considerations deter him from drinking his treasures; that attitude of mind was for billing clients, not opening bottles. Even so, he was astonished by the constant upward pressure on wine prices. He could no longer afford to buy his favourites en primeur, but as he said, that hardly mattered, for two reasons. In the first place — and, alas, he was right — he was unlikely to live to salute their maturity in his glass. Second, he was in a position to trade the odd case of Lafite, itself not yet ready, for up to 50 cases of serious wine. That is where the wife was a potential threat. Suppose she discovered that even one little box of that

*Most of us
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to take for
granted*

Lafite would pay a grandchild's school fees for a year...

Life has graver problems, and this column will address one of them. In the 1980s, Alan Clark complained that decent claret was costing £100 a bottle. For the wines he had in mind, try over £1,000 today, and counting. Empty bottles of Lafite are fetching \$150 in Beijing. Most of us will rarely be able to afford the wines that dons used to take for granted at high table. So how can we find substitutes?

Let us start in Roussillon, with the best thing to come out of that province since *All's Well*. There is a winemaker called Gérard Gauby, whose commitment, expertise and passion prepare one for the pleasure of his wines. He inherited a family property, Domaine Gauby, where he started exploring the potential of old vines and traditional methods. But he wanted to expand, and improve. In the 1990s, he found some abandoned vines high in the Agly valley: pretty countryside, surrounded by mountains, with the sea just over the horizon. The altitude, 1,500 feet, guarantees a crisp climate. The soil is decayed granite washed with limestone, rather like Hermitage.

Gérard was certain that he had

found a most promising location. He persuaded Roy Richards and Mark Walford of Richards Walford, the wine merchants, to come into partnership with him. None of them has regretted the decision. Under the label of Le Soula, they make both red and white wine, with local grape varieties, employing the old methods reinforced by modern viniculture. Early on, they used some Cabernet Sauvignon in the reds. I thought that this gave an additional complexity; no expert agrees with me. But as the vineyard gained in confidence, they discarded the Cab Sauv, which is not a local grape. Gérard has a profound loyalty to his terroir.

Both Le Soulas have structure, fruit, subtlety and a long harmonious finish. They are forward, but also long-lived. Although the whites can be drunk at about four years and the reds at five, there is no hurry. There have been attempts to compare them to Rhônes or Burgundies, yet this is irrelevant, except in terms of quality. They are their own wines, and about as good as any bottle that Provence has to offer. Obviously, we are not talking Lafite, but Le Soula can easily look a classed growth in the eye.

Except, thus far, in price. The wines can still be found for a little over £20 a bottle; not, one fears, for much longer. Le Soula is building a reputation; winning golden opinions. I hate summoning up the shades of the counting-house, but unless the world economy collapses, Le Soula will be an investment. If there is a crash, it will be a consolation. Le Soula is a rare oenophile redoubt, still resisting the march of plutocracy. Enjoy it while you can.



*'I love everything about an English summer, don't you?
Pimm's, cider, spritzers, punch, lager, G&T with ice and lemon,
scotch on the rocks, ice-cold Guinness...'*

Domaine le Soula

Propriété des négociants anglais Richards Walford & Co, le domaine du Soula, se situe sur la commune de Prugnannes. Bien que le domaine soit situé au delà de la vallée de l'Agly, il aurait été impossible de l'écarter de ce dossier.

Le Soula a été créé en 2001, avec le concours amical, et non moins actionnarial, de Gérard Gauby (Domaine Gauby). Ce dernier, en charge de trouver des vignes de qualité, a réalisé un travail admirable digne d'un historien à la recherche d'archives qui vont lui permettre de déceler un secret caché.

Le travail ne fut certes pas des plus aisés, mais les parcelles superbement placées, entre 330 mètres et 520 mètres, sont l'un des facteurs majeurs qui ont conduit le Domaine du Soula parmi les premiers de la région. La situation géographique et éparpillée de ces dernières est un véritable sacerdoce pour le nouveau gérant du domaine, qui apporte un soin très particulier à la viticulture.

Depuis 2008, Gérald Stanley, ingénieur agronome, oeuvre au domaine avec une volonté, une passion et une foi sans égale. Il est capable de vous parler à la fois d'agronomie, de viticulture, de bio-dynamie, d'oxydo réduction (RH2) ou des techniques modernes et ancestrales de conduite de la vigne. Passionné de biologie et d'homéopathie, il recherchait un vignoble pouvant lui apporter le sens de l'équilibre et la qualité de terroir dont il rêvait pour mettre en place une viticulture de grande qualité.

Adeptes, tel la famille Gauby, des pains liquides, il s'intéresse de plus en plus à la bio-électronique (voir encadré) et notamment au rapport d'équilibre d'oxydo-réduction dans la vigne, le fameux RH2.

Ce phénomène critiqué par de nombreux spécialistes donne des résultats encourageants sur les vignes. Il suffit de suivre Gérald à travers les routes sinueuses de la vallée, pour comprendre son amour pour la viticulture et son envie de travail de qualité. Loin d'être un «illuminé», les vignes parlent pour lui. Seules parcelles alentours à posséder de l'herbe, à avoir une vie microbienne et à être «attractives». L'envie de se balader dans les vignes est un gage de réussite et elles dénotent franchement des sols désertiques

Focus sur l'oxydo-réduction

Le sol peut être étudié par le pH qui donne une notion de l'état de la qualité des protons dans la relation $H \leftrightarrow OH$. C'est à dire le calcul du Potentiel électromagnétique d'Hydrogène (ou pH). Ainsi des connaissances sur l'acidité ou l'alcalinité permettent de mieux comprendre le type de sol et la nature des plantes à ajouter pour obtenir un sol sain (entre 6.5 et 7.2 de pH).

La bio électronique amène une compréhension plus globale et va au-delà de la mesure du pH. Cette notion repose sur l'équilibre de bonne santé de la plante mesuré sur 3 valeurs :

- le pH
- le potentiel électrique E (redox) appelé ainsi car il est défini par la quantité d'électrons dans la relation $H_2 \leftrightarrow O_2$
- le taux d'activité cellulaire ou résistivité.

L'oxydo-réduction (redox) est un échange d'électrons et permet de comprendre les équilibres du sol. L'échange d'électrons est naturel et participe grandement à l'équilibre général de la plante, donc à sa bonne santé. En agriculture, les seules possibilités d'amélioration de ces équilibres sont sur la couche arable (entre 0 et 50 cm de profondeur) et sur la composition de l'humus qui est situé dans les 10 premiers centimètres là où la plante puise l'essentiel de sa nourriture. Pour équilibrer une plante en déséquilibre bio-électronique, il est donc nécessaire d'intervenir sur le sol. De ce fait, on peut intervenir sur les nutriments et les micro-organismes.

Si le sol est trop acide et trop oxygéné (labour trop important), le développement d'insectes et de moisissures cryptogamiques ne permettront pas la correcte assimilation des minéraux. Il n'y aura donc pas de minéralisation de la vigne qui sera peu acide et déséquilibrée car elle se mettra en souffrance à cause du dérèglement du sol. Par conséquence les raisins ne seront pas assez acides et assez réduits influant la qualité du vin par un déséquilibre à combler par des apports tiers (sucre, tanins, bisulfite...). Le principe d'oxydo-réduction intègre dans son raisonnement l'équilibre de la plante pour produire des raisins sains et ne nécessitant pas d'apports extérieurs.

On touche du doigt les philosophies taoïste, qui considèrent que l'équilibre est la source de la qualité. Il apparaît assez logique dans un contexte agricole, qu'une plante réagisse aux minéraux situés dans le sol.... Autre donnée importante à notre avis, c'est la volonté de redonner de l'acidité dans les vins. Cette acidité, très proche du terme de minéralité employé en dégustation, est un élément indispensable pour réaliser des grands vins. Elle apporte la fraîcheur et la structure permettant aux vins de tenir sur la longueur et de posséder une vraie densité «aérienne» afin d'éviter les vins lourds et pesants. N'oublions pas que le vin doit être bu et que la lourdeur, le déséquilibre par manque d'acidité, est un facteur de rejet et d'accentuation de la soif. Le vin doit désaltérer, c'est sa nature première afin qu'il soit digeste et «appétant».



« D'inspiration biodynamique nous cherchons à réaliser l'autonomie de notre organisme agricole et nous nous inspirons de l'équilibre d'oxydo-réduction qui nous apporte une information essentielle sur l'état du vivant »

Gérald Stanley

et ravinés que peuvent proposer les voisins.

Pour comprendre les vins du Soula, il est important de comprendre l'attachement de Gérald à la vigne et de se balader avec lui en l'écoutant expliquer ses méthodes culturelles. Sa volonté, d'une simplicité et d'une logique à toute épreuve, est de fournir un maximum de vie microbienne au sol et de limiter l'échange d'oxygène entre la plante et son environnement, pour qu'elle souffre et, par conséquent, que les racines plongent un maximum dans la terre pour aller chercher les éléments nutritifs. Plus la vigne souffre «correctement» plus elle produira des raisins d'une grande qualité.

Gérald Stanley propose une prise de conscience (que beaucoup de vignerons que nous avons visités ont mis en place) : pas de grands vins sans vignes de qualité.

Bien que les ambitions du domaine en biodynamie ne soient pas clairement définies, on ressent une envie d'aller jusqu'au bout de la philosophie de respect de la nature. Une volonté telle que des essais de BFR (Bois Raméal Fragmenté) sont actuellement en cours afin d'introduire une vie microbienne plus diversifiée et d'apporter des amendements naturels à la plante. ■

Domaine le Soula - Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes rouge 2006

Belle couleur rubis avec quelques reflets à peine tuilés. Le nez exhale de très beaux arômes de fruits. Une vraie netteté au nez permet d'identifier des arômes de kirsch, myrtille, épices. Les arômes sont francs et mûrs sans être confits.

La structure est parfaitement équilibrée. Le vin propose un soyeux et un velouté très agréable. Matière présente, compacte mais aérienne. De beaux arômes d'épices, de fraise et framboise s'estompent lentement.

La fin de bouche est longue, tendue et vivifiante.

Composé à 45% de Carignan, 20% de Grenache noir, 20 % Cabernet Sauvignon et 15% de Syrah. 17 hl/ha, production 8000 bouteilles. Elevage d'un tiers en barriques neuve et 2/3 en demi-muids pendant 14 mois. Prix : N.C.

Domaine le Soula - Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes rouge 2008

Superbe couleur rubis proposant une limpidité parfaite. Le nez resplendit de très beaux arômes croquants de fruits rouges mûrs mais pas surmûris. Quelques notes de myrtilles, fraises, d'épices ressortent du lot. La structure est parfaitement équilibrée, les tanins soyeux et veloutés. L'acidité présente dans le vin relève l'ampleur et donne un toucher de bouche aérien, équilibré et tendu. La complexité aromatique en bouche permet d'exhaler des notes de fumé, de graphite et une netteté de fruits superbe.

L'assemblage n'est pas encore déterminé, ni la durée d'élevage.

**Domaine le Soula - Vin de Pays des Côtes
Catalanes blanc 2006**

Belle couleur jaune avec des reflets or. Malgré le millésime la robe n'est absolument pas oxydée. Au nez c'est une farandole d'arômes avec quelques notes oxydative mais qui relèvent le tout. Abricot, acacia, quelques fragrances de chevreuille. La structure est parfaitement équilibrée et l'acidité donne une fraîcheur et un dynamisme très agréable. Le toucher de bouche est ample, avec une certaine densité, mais sans être lourd. La complexité aromatique est toujours présente avec des notes plus précises et plus fleuries en bouche.


Un vin très intéressant à déguster à l'aveugle car l'effet année joue au minimum.

30 % de Sauvignon, 25% Grenache blanc, 25% Marsanne - Roussane, 10% Macabeu et 10% Malvoisie. Elevage en demi-muids (500 litres) dont 30% de bois neufs. Prix : 27 €

**Domaine le Soula - Vin de Pays des Côtes
Catalanes blanc 2008**

Belle couleur jaune avec des reflets or. Le nez un peu exhubérant propose des arômes frais et nets d'anis, de fenouil, de fleurs blanches (chevreuille, acacia). Quelques pointes mentholées viennent donner une fraîcheur et une consistance à un nez déjà complexe. La structure est parfaitement équilibrée. Le boisé parfaitement fondu et la bouche est soyeuse et veloutée. De doux arômes de fleurs viennent relever une note de miel et d'épices (poivre blanc).

La fin de bouche est d'une belle fraîcheur avec une minéralité vraiment superbe. Une petite pointe de salinité est à noter en fin de bouche.

Ce vin est superbe, dense et fleuri. Un vin d'émotions et de gastronomie. 



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wineandco
www.wineandco.com

Une foule de grands châteaux bordelais chez Wineandco

Wineandco, l'une des vitrines les plus courues sur Internet, attaque cette édition 2011 avec des arguments aussi forts que les années précédentes : pas moins de 500 références. Une fois encore, la sélection mise avant tout sur le Bordelais, qui occupe plus de la moitié du contingent avec une foule de grands châteaux et quelques découvertes à petits prix. Mais on trouvera également de nombreux vins de la vallée du Rhône, de Bourgogne, du

Languedoc-Roussillon, de Corse et du Sud-Ouest. D'autres régions, comme la vallée de la Loire ou l'Alsace, sont en revanche réduites à peau de chagrin. De prestigieux domaines girondins, à l'image de **Smith Haut-Lafitte**, **Cos d'Estournel** ou **Sociando-Mallet**, à de jeunes ambitieux, tel **Nicolas Mariotti-Bindi**, un des vignerons corses les plus prometteurs, Wineandco affiche une gamme sérieuse et assez éclectique. Plus que jamais, l'enseigne se place comme l'un des mastodontes de la vente de vins sur la Toile !

L'AVIS DE LA RVF

ÉTENDUE DE LA SÉLECTION : ★★★★★(★)

Très large sélection, mais quelques régions délaissées.

QUALITÉ/ORIGINALITÉ : ★★(★)

Prime donnée aux grands châteaux bordelais, donc sans grande surprise.

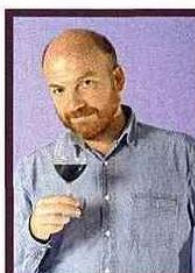
PRIX : ★★(★)

Des affaires inégales, de "moyennes" à "bonnes".

WINEANDCO Une gamme sérieuse et variée

RÉGION / AOC	PRODUCTEUR / CUVÉE	COULEUR	ANNÉE	PRIX
ALSACE				
Alsace Riesling d'Andlau	Marc Kreydenweiss	blanc	2009	11,95 €
BORDEAUX				
Bordeaux	Château Marjosse	rouge	2008	7,30 €
Saint-Émilion Grand cru	Château Grand Corbin-Despaigne	rouge	2007	21,50 €
Haut-Médoc	Château Sociando-Mallet	rouge	2008	24,90 €
Margaux	Château du Tertre	rouge	2007	26,10 €
Margaux	Château Boyd-Cantenac	rouge	2007	27,50 €
Pessac-Léognan	Château Carbonnieux	blanc	2007	28,40 €
Saint-Estèphe	Château Lafon-Rochet	rouge	2008	28,50 €
Saint-Julien	Château Talbot	rouge	2008	32 €
Pessac-Léognan	Château Smith Haut Lafitte	rouge	2007	39,95 €
Pauillac	Château Grand-Puy-Lacoste	rouge	2006	47,90 €
Saint-Estèphe	Château Cos d'Estournel	rouge	2005	225 €
BOURGOGNE				
Hautes-Côtes-de-Nuits	Les Colombières Domaine Patrick Hudelot	rouge	2009	8,99 €
Pouilly-Fuissé	Château du Clos	blanc	2009	15,80 €
Chambolle-Musigny	Domaine Laurent Roumier	rouge	2009	38 €
CORSE				
Patrimoine	Porcellese Nicolas Mariotti-Bindi	rouge	2008	17 €
LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON				
Coteaux-du-Languedoc	Coste d'Aleyrac Château de Lancyre	rouge	2009	7,50 €
Pic Saint-Loup				
Vin de pays des Côtes Catalanes	Trigone Domaine Le Soula	rouge	2007	9,40 €
SUD-OUEST				
Cahors	Cèdre Héritage Château du Cèdre	rouge	2009	5,95 €
Madiran	Château Montus Alain Brumont	rouge	2002	15,99 €
VALLÉE DU RHÔNE				
Côtes du Rhône	Réserve Perrin	rouge	2009	6,50 €
Costières de Nîmes	Les Grimaudes	rouge	2007	7,95 €
	Domaine Emmanuelle Kreydenweiss			
Crozes-Hermitage	Domaine des Entrefaux	rouge	2009	12,75 €
Lirac	Cuvée de la Reine des Bois Dom. de la Mordorée	rouge	2009	18,50 €
Cornas	Les Grands Mûriers Domaine Ferraton & Fils	rouge	2008	22,50 €
Châteauneuf-du-Pape	Les Sinards Perrin & Fils	rouge	2007	30 €

À noter : nous n'avons pas noté les vins de cette sélection, car ils n'ont pas été proposés à la dégustation par Wineandco.



LES COUPS DE CŒUR DE PIERRICK JÉGU

LA BOUTEILLE CHIC

LA BOUTEILLE CHOC

Château du Tertre 2007 Margaux



26,10 €

9,40 €



Dom. Le Soula Trigone 2007 VDP des Côtes catalanes

Le Soula

Gerard Gauby continues to advise 2001 co-originators and co-owners Roy Richards and Mark Walford (who also constitute the U.K. import company Richards-Walford), but since 2008, young yet internationally-experienced Gerald Standley has been calling the shots as Soula's vineyard and cellar manager. Blends and elevage continue to vary from year to year, as the numerous cepages - planted in many small parcels in the largely granitic northwestern limits and highest elevations of Roussillon - offer considerable flexibility, particularly in white, and the team here is both humbly and astutely conscious of their efforts being a work in progress. The range of microclimates and grape varieties also accounts for a generally protracted harvest; in 2008, for instance, black grapes were picked all the way from the 22nd of September to the 9th of October. If there has been - and there has - a widespread movement in Roussillon toward wines of enhanced freshness, one has to say that Soula was way out ahead of that curve. Demi-muids are favored over barrique, and the share of new wood employed has steadily diminished. Whole-berry fermentation is pursued for the red, with increasingly minimal attempt to extract polyphenols that are not liberated via infusion. The white 2010 Le Soula - as had been the case with its immediate predecessor - was very slow to finish fermenting, and so it was impossible even to assess its components on the occasion of my visit.

2008 Le Soula Le Soula Blanc

Rating : 90

The 2008 Le Soula is 38% each Sauvignon and Macabeu along with Vermentino and Grenache that grew together, and tiny amounts of several other cepages. Weighing-in at around 14% alcohol but a mere 3.2 pH, this smells effusively of fresh fig, pineapple, and grapefruit, all of which lusciously and juicily flood the palate, accompanied by high-toned inner-mouth profusion of mint, lavender, honeysuckle, and heliotrope. The leesy, barrel-inflected sense of creaminess here manages to compliment the wine's exuberant brightness, and it finishes both soothingly and refreshingly, if with a hint of heat. I suspect this will be best enjoyed over the next 2-3 years. (Tasted alongside, the 2007 - which included 15% each of Roussanne and Marsanne that I either failed to note or was not informed of when I wrote about it before bottling in issue 183 - retained its invigorating zest and sense of mineral impingement, but displayed a hint of finishing bitterness; marginally less refreshment; and considerably less perfumed allure than this 2008.)

2008 Le Soula Le Soula Rouge

Rating : 92

The red 2008 Soula is just over half Carignan; around a third Syrah; and includes only around 10% Grenache. One third of this was left in tank, the rest aged in demi-muids, of which a further two-thirds were new, and it was bottled - with a light filtration - after 21 months. An amalgam of fresh cherry and blackberry shadowed by their spirituous doubles, along with bittersweet floral perfume and almond extract, put me in mind of certain Pinot Noirs. And that's before getting this into my mouth, where it reveals bright juiciness and a subtly silken texture, along with mouthwatering salinity, leading to an exuberantly interactive and invigorating sense of mineral-fruit-flower exchange that leaves you (for a red wine) remarkably refreshed, not to mention intrigued and enticed to take the next sip.

This weighs in at 14% alcohol, though given how it behaves it could as easily be 13%. Richard opines that this is as close as he has come thus far to the ideal he had at least inchoately when he originated this high-elevation project. And as he is anxious to point out, 14 hectoliter per hectare was part of the price to be paid for the silk and perfume on exhibit here. (Tasted alongside, the finished 2007 - about which I wrote before bottling in issue 183, and which lived up to the lower side of my point spread - is strikingly different from its successors, given among other things its smoky, crushed stone minerality; its thicker texture and tannic stiffness; notes of garrigue; and a suggestion of tobacco that strikes me as having been the swan song of the Cabernet Sauvignon, a mere 6% of the blend though it is.)

2009 Le Soula Le Soula Blanc

Rating : (89-90)

The white 2009 Le Soula - composed primarily of Sauvignon Blanc, Macabeu and Grenache Blanc; and aged mostly in used demi-muids, with a bit left in tank - had been assembled but not yet bottled when I visited and tasted it in April. Heliotrope, honeysuckle, quince, pineapple, and Persian melon on the nose put me in a bit in mind of Grenache Gris or Chenin; although lime and grapefruit (with the nicely-integrated bitterness of their rinds), cassis and honeydew melon - all of which become more prominent on the palate - certainly point toward Sauvignon. I tasted this from a two day old bottle that displayed a slightly awkward juxtaposition of textural creaminess vanilla cream flavor with the wine's citric, bright elements; whereas when recreated in the moment, those aspects of the assemblage seemed harmonious. While less exuberant than its 2008 counterpart, this finishes with admirable refreshment and complexity, no doubt in part a testimony to the ability of these vineyards to offset the effects of 2009 heat, but also to the synergy of an unorthodox blend. I suspect one will want to enjoy this over the next couple of years.

2009 Le Soula Le Soula Rouge

Rating : (91-92)

Drink 2011 – 2021

Principally Carignan and Syrah, with a bit of Grenache - the Cabernet Sauvignon that once played a significant role here having been eliminated beginning with 2008 - the red 2009 Le Soula displays deeply-flavored, ripe, yet refreshingly tart-edged red raspberry and blackberry wreathed in bittersweet floral perfume and tinged with iodine and saliva-liberating salinity. A gamey note remains at complexifying but nearly subliminal level, while a somehow crystalline sense of mineral impingement sets up a kinetic, rather white wine-like finishing interplay with the fruit and flowers, recalling Richard's comment that the evolution at Soula involved "working out how to make the wine more feminine." This was 100% whole berry fermentation with no pigeage, and that probably goes a long way - when combined, of course, with the effects of cool nights at high elevation and the inexplicable but undeniable contribution of granitic soil - toward accounting for its infectious juiciness and uncanny alliance of density with lift. (I tasted this wine in two interestingly different variations representing the penultimate stage in determining the assemblage, but have based this note on the one that was chosen, which as it happens was not the one I - on the basis of this fleeting acquaintance and granting my total lack of experience with the cellar manner of Soula - would have chosen!) I suspect this 2009 will be worth following for the better part of a decade.



I really like this. It's the latest release from Roussillon producer Le Soula, a partnership between UK wine merchant Richards Walford and celebrated winemaker Gerard Gauby, who discovered this wonderful spot in the Fenouilledes. It's a blend of eclectic varieties – the vineyard composition of Le Soula reads as follows:

Macabeu 4 ha (on average planted in 1980)

Sauvignon 2,5 ha (1991)

Marsanne / Roussanne : 1 ha (2003)

Vermentino (Rolle) : 1 ha (1994)

Grenache Blanc : 0,5 ha (1990)

Grenache Gris : 0,5 ha (1957)

Malvoisie du Roussillon (Tourbat) : 0,5 ha (1984)

Like some other high end Roussillon whites (e.g. Matassa), there's a bit of matchstick reduction here, which works as a complexing factor. This isn't a cheap wine (I've seen the preceding vintage as high as £27 at Averys; Berry Bros and Rudd are a few £ cheaper), but it's serious stuff. UK agent is Richards Walford (unsurprisingly, given that they are partners in the venture).

Domaine Le Soula Blanc 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes, France

14% alcohol. From vineyards high up in the Fenouillèdes with decomposed granite soils. Very interesting, flinty, minerally, spicy, savoury nose with some bright citrus fruit. The palate is savoury and structured with fresh apple and citrus notes, as well as white peach and nice minerality. Complex and savoury with some nice matchstick reduction in the background. Quite profound. 92/100

The World of Fine Wine

Andrew Jefford, Michael Edwards and Marcel Oxford-Williams

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SAVOR: LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

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LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

Aesthetically, the tasting was a success. Languedoc-Roussillon unquestionably has a personality of its own—wild, unpredictable, characterful, ripe, and lush, with some of the headiest and most captivating aromatic profiles in France, often redolent of the herbs that grow profusely in the region's native scrub (the *garrigue*), as well as of citrus groves and blossoms. Most of the area's wines are ripe or very ripe reds, with high levels of alcohol and low levels of acidity. When carefully made, this gives them an easy, soft-drinking deliciousness and sensual allure to which drinkers respond well. Bacterial infection, though, is an ever-present risk and is something to which the appellation authorities should alert growers. French drinkers barely notice it, but international consumers increasingly will.

The other two tasters disagreed with me, but I would suggest that Languedoc-Roussillon remains almost hair-raisingly inconsistent, in part thanks to the intrinsic danger of the wines' balances. (A pH of 3.7 is regarded as low here.) I would still rather have that entertaining inconsistency, though, than the tedium that would result from acid adjustment and other ameliorations, while our tasting suggested that—for these three tasters, at least—Languedoc-Roussillon wines made in an avowedly "elegant" style, perhaps via early picking or modest

You could say, therefore, that we were looking at four sets of wines: those made in both Languedoc and in Roussillon from traditional and local varieties (notably Grenache, Mourvèdre, Carignan, and Syrah), and those made in both regions from immigrant varieties (notably Cabernet Sauvignon), alone or in blends. A further qualification is that Roussillon was known for much of the second half of the 20th century for its fortified wines, both red and white, while fortified Muscat has long been a Languedoc strength, too. The focus on unfortified table wines of high quality in both regions is recent.

Let's try to make a little statistical sense of the results. Of the 38 ambitious wines included in this tasting, 12 were non-AOC and 26 were AOC. So one might expect 33 percent of the top 12 wines to be non-AOC, but only two of the top 12 wines (or 17 percent) were non-AOC, and only one of those contained Bordeaux varieties. On the basis of this tasting, then, it seems as if the case for unorthodox blends—and in particular for Cabernet—in Languedoc and Roussillon remains unproven (though not demolished; all three tasters had at least one wine with some Cabernet in their top selections). The notes suggest that it is more difficult to manage ripeness successfully in Languedoc-Roussillon with non-local varieties than it is with local ones.

Most Languedoc-Roussillon wines are ripe or very ripe reds, with high levels of alcohol and low levels of acidity. When carefully made, this gives them an easy, soft-drinking deliciousness and sensual allure, to which drinkers respond well

extraction strategies, were less successful than those that embraced the potential for ripeness and extracted commensurately. A final risk is exaggerated sweetness, though this may help the wines in some markets. Alcohol levels, by contrast, are rarely obtrusive—a consequence of the fact that most of these wines are naturally articulated and amply fleshed. And they are, as Marcel Oxford-Williams repeatedly reminded us, emphatically wines for food.

It would be unwise to reach any definitive conclusions about the merits of different terroirs in this vast region from a tasting of just 38 wines. Côtes du Roussillon-Villages made a good showing (23 percent of the top 12 wines from only 13 percent of the wines scrutinized), and both Languedoc-Pic St. Loup and Minervois can be satisfied with their performance (17 percent of the top 12 from around 10 percent of the wines we looked at). There doesn't yet seem much point in aging wines from this region: over 18 percent of the wines we looked at were from vintages prior to 2007, yet our top 12 wines were all from 2007 or 2008. Statistically, one might have expected at least two older wines to feature in the top 12.

Average and range of scores

	Average	Range
Michael Edwards	16.5	15-17.5
Andrew Jefford	13.5	7-18
Marcel Oxford-Williams	15.5	10-19
All wines	15	13.5-17.5

Andrew Jefford's top wines

- 2007 Domaine Léon Barral Jadis Faugères 18
- 2008 Domaine de l'Hortus Grande Cuvée Pic St. Loup 18
- 2007 Les Trois Marie Côtes du Roussillon Villages 18
- 2009 Fontanel Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17.5
- 2008 Hecht & Bannier St. Chinian 17
- 2007 La Grange de Quatre Sous VdEP d'OC 16.5
- 2008 Adly Brothers Côte du Roussillon 16
- 2008 Mas Amiel Caveradas Côte du Roussillon Villages 16
- 2008 Le Clos des Frères Hervé Bizeul Côtes du Roussillon Villages 16
- 2008 Mas Julien Terrasses du Larzac Languedoc 16
- 2008 Domaine Jean-Baptiste Senat Minervois La Nèze 16

(savor)

WINES THAT ARE MOSTLY APPROACHABLE WITH ENJOYMENT NOW

LANGUEDOC-ROUSSILLON

THE ERRATIC POWERHOUSE OF FRENCH WINE

After languishing in viticultural no-man's-land for more years than it is polite to mention, Languedoc-Roussillon pulled back from the brink in the 1980s. Andrew Jefford introduces an ambitious tasting of recent offerings, with Michael Edwards and Marcel Oxford-Williams adding their notes

This was an ambitious tasting—a survey of the world's largest wine-producing region. Languedoc-Roussillon now produces around twice as much wine as Bordeaux and about eight times as much as Burgundy. It is the sometimes troublesome giant of French wine: politically costly and qualitatively heterogeneous, with its best wines little known outside France yet inspiring a fierce devotion in those who have come to understand and love them. What might the potential of those "best wines" be? Are local varieties or imported varieties best for conditions here? Do the wines age? And given that the favors of terroir are at all times sporadically and unequally bestowed, where might its future grands crus lie?

The recorded history of wine growing in Languedoc-Roussillon dates back to Greek colonial times in the 5th century BC. The creation of Pierre-Paul Biquet's engineering masterpiece the Canal du Midi ushered in an era of prosperity, after its locks opened in May 1681. By then, the Maander Minimum (a period of low sunspot activity between 1645 and 1715) was under way, with the worst weather of the Little Ice Age still to come. Languedoc was perfectly placed to supply the wine that dismal 18th-century summers eliminated farther north. The arrival of the railways in the second half of the 19th century stoked the boiler of Languedoc winemaking further. Then came the epidemic of phylloxera—and the disaster of replanting

afterward. Hybrids and productive "vine-passing" varieties replaced the traditional varieties eliminated by the insect; the struggle of hillside cultivation was replaced by the ease of increasingly mechanized viticulture on the plains. The era of *grais rouges*, of *pinard*, of *piquette*, of *vinasse*, and of *fige* had begun.

The rebirth began in the 1980s, when the tentative and wobbly achievements of the regions' *vins délimités de qualité supérieure* consolidated into the modest dignity of *appellation contrôlée* status. Now, quite properly, the market is in charge, and the region's greatest producers, appellations, and sites are slowly winning an international reputation, namely fame.

The region's appellation structure has long been a work in progress, and the distinction between straight appellations (such as Minervois), cru appellations (like Minervois-La Livinière), and appellations with subsidiary named zones (like Pic St. Loup, Terrasses du Larzac, or the overall Languedoc appellation, itself formerly called Coteaux du Languedoc), is a matter principally for theologians. It is, in truth, a bit of a mess. Roll on the day when every zone has its own appellation; a hierarchy can then be created by the market.

Almost uniquely among major French wines regions, though, two possible futures have beckoned Languedoc-Roussillon. One is the classic appellation journey; the other is to give varietal liberty through vin de pays legislation.



Original illustration by Charles Mérieux, L'Art de Boire Établissements Mérieux, Paris 1900

2007 Domaine Léon Barral Jadis Faugères (14% ABV) - 17.5

ME: Even ruby-purple to rim; powerful fruit under high-toned acidity on the nose, quite marked acidity, snappy. Good but needs to work out its balance. **16**

AJ: Saturated dark black-purple. After a run of rather odd wines, this restores some Languedoc classicism to proceedings:

graceful, shapely, and lifted aromatic Syrah, mainly characterized by sweet blackcurrant and raspberry fruit and floral charm but with a faint leafiness there, too. Wonderful *garrigue*-like classicism. Lush, intense, concentrated and profoundly aromatic, this is a remarkable wine of great grace and charm. It has lots of palate wealth and drive, yet the fruit retains that sweet, leafy, late-adolescent entitlement right to the end; it is simply textured yet supple, and the wine has a redeeming acid presence of soft supportiveness. Disarmingly good and utterly unique. **18**

MO-W: Lovely fruit here, sweet and syrupy. Lovely fruit; plenty of middle and length. This is lovely! **18.5**

2008 Domaine de l'Hortus Grande Cuvée Pic St Loup (13% ABV) - 17

ME: Fine, flowing wine, with approachable pure fruit. **16**

AJ: Saturatedly dark black-red. Gorgeous aromatic profile, evidently Syrah-led, of orange blossom, orange peel, and jasmine. Fragrant, enchanting, and refined; magnificent, heady, and seductive. Nowhere else in the world can do this. Soft, vivid, fresh, and supple, this wine has a magnificent core of soft, profoundly aromatic fruit in which those same notes of orange and jasmine are extravagantly present. It's not deep, or heavy, or weighty; it doesn't have a lot of palate wealth; the tannins are fine and supple; the acidity is present but unobtrusive. It is quite simply an aromatic tour de force. **18**

MO-W: Full fruit. Succulent and rich. Ripe blackberry and maybe a touch of olive and graphite. Delicious. **17**

2008 Mortiers Côteaux du Languedoc Pic St-Loup (14.5% ABV) - 17

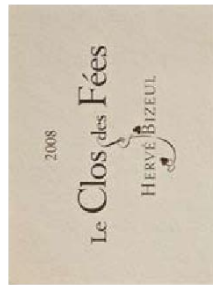
ME: More stuffing and core. Lovely fruit expression. **17**

AJ: Dense, saturated red-purple. Earthy, close-textured, gruff, badge-like or womb-like, this is a (Mourvèdre-rich?) wine with considerable presence and depth. Very much as the aroma suggested, this is a hugely dense, compact, multilayered, rather stony, and uncompromising wine of great though constrained force. Long, full, satisfying. It has sweet edges on the palate but otherwise does almost nothing to seduce the drinker; yet that vaguely disturbing aromatic profile that it has is so uncompromising and challenging that you keep going back to the glass again and again. A challenge but very rewarding. **15.5**

MO-W: Fab fruit, delicious, rich, and sappy. Complete. **19**

purple color here, with dense, color-stained streaks on the glass after you've swirled. Very ripe fruit and some evident oak aging here: warm, complex, resinous; the monastery library in high summer. Lush, full, slightly sweeter in style than the aromatic profile suggested, with armfuls, bagfuls, coaxed into lush, warm, super-ripe fruit, soaked into shape more by stony tannins than by any palpable acid presence. We are at the extreme limits of ripeness, yet there is nothing in this wine that suggests dangerous evolutionary paths ahead, and right now it is irresistibly exuberant, warm, full of the pine forest and the sunlit hill. Lovely stuff. Perhaps more concentration than any other wine in this tasting, and magnificent textures, too. **18**

MO-W: Plenty of brambly fruit here. Some richness, plenty of middle with some sweetness too. Not complex but well made. Finish a little dry. Drink young. **15**



2008 Le Clos des Fées Hervé Bizeul Côtes du Roussillon Villages (15% ABV) - 16

ME: Aromatic, attractive, damson plum nose; sprightly palate, light-framed, direct, focused, straightforward, pure. **16**

AJ: Saturated black-purple. Pencilly, oaky, but not exaggeratedly so, with bright firm fruits. This has an aromatic firmness and thrust to it, an uprightness—in some ways, a more Atlantic than Mediterranean aromatic profile. On the palate, it does seem truer to its place: That diagnostic softness of palate statement and tannic finesse are a contrast to the brisker, more ruffled tannins of the southwest. The fruit core is still a firm one, though, with attractively sweet edges and impressive concentration; a very long finish here. The deliciously natural balance gives the wine fine drinking qualities. **16**

MO-W: Good bright colors. Spicy and quite complex. Full flavor, rich and savory. Still firm and could do with another few months. Long finish. Pretty good **15.5**

2007 Mas Des Dames La Diva Vin de Pays des Côteaux du Murviel (5yr/Gr/Alcante) (15.5% ABV) - 16

ME: Slightly funky but promising nose. One senses that maybe, just maybe, one tastes the stems of the grapes. Character it doesn't lack. *A suivre*. **16**

AJ: Saturated black-purple. Fascinating aromatic profile: the only wine in this tasting to smell not of the ubiquitous thyme,

MARCEL ORFORD-WILLIAMS' VERDICT

This was generally a good tasting, showing some of the best sides of this amazing and complicated region.

Yes, there were weaknesses, such as a tendency to dryness and high alcohol, but the south of France is not the Loire, and the wines are indeed generous and full-bodied.

The Languedoc needs explaining, for there are innumerable styles and

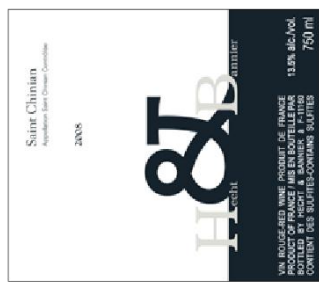
approaches to winemaking there. Wines of comparative simplicity sit side by side with wines that have more ambition, and all are equally valid. Maybe the best way to explain the Languedoc is through food, and in my experience, these are wines that, more often than not, truly reveal themselves when—in the right context and with food—and not just cassoulet!

Top wines

2008 Mortiers Côteaux du Languedoc Pic St-Loup 19	2006 Léon Barral Valinière Vin de Table Français 17
2007 Domaine Léon Barral Jadis Faugères 18.5	2007 Mas Belles Eaux Les Côteaux Languedoc 17
2003 Domaine Peyre Rose Clos des Cistes Côteaux du Languedoc 18	2007 Mas Des Dames La Diva Vin de Pays des Côteaux du Murviel 17
2008 La Pétra en Damaisiella Les Obriers de la Pétra Terrasses du Larzac Côteaux du Languedoc 17.5	2008 Domaine de l'Hortus Grande Cuvée Pic St Loup 17
2007 Domaine de Montcalmès Côteaux du Languedoc 17.5	2008 Domaine Matassa Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17
	2007 Domaine L'Oustal Blanc Glocoso Minervois 17

end. Lush and very chewy, by dint of extractive force, as well as of pure tannin textures. This is a very impressive, almost commanding wine, but the sense that the fruit has ended the season in a state of extreme, almost drying ripeness makes me wonder if the varieties here are perfectly adapted to their site. All of that said, I would enjoy drinking this wine of great breadth and texture, despite the very ripe fruits and the super-chewy tannins, and I'm sure the site is very good one. (Soria?) **16.5**

MO-W: Woody nose. Some spice but not much fruit. Decent enough on the palate, but the finish is mean and dry. Needs food to reveal itself! **14**



2008 Hecht & Bannier St Chinian (5yr/Gr/Mour) (13.5% ABV) - 16

ME: Again, a confit-of-fruits style on the

nose. Quite a lot going on on the palate; needs to work out the right balance. **15.5**

AJ: Saturated black-purple. Hugely seductive, Syrah-led perfumes of blowing floral sweetness, with lots of backing rosemary, thyme, and stone to lend aromatic depth. Few wines anywhere in the world have this level of centered charm: utterly Languedoc. At first, this might seem a little disappointingly light after the unrefusable invitation of the aromas, but give it some time in the mouth and you'll find it's soft, darkly ripe, with all of its aromatic charm sustained on the palate. In some ways, the palate it is almost pure-aroma, too; it definitely doesn't have the texture, fruit drive, and mid-palate weight of some of the warmer zones like La Clape. There's a modest but satisfactory tannic presence, and the soft acidity is perfect. A fascinating wine of huge charm. Pic St Loup, or somewhere else a little higher? Anyway, outstanding wine for anyone who loves aromatic Syrah. **17**

MO-W: Sound, fruity nose. Full, with plenty of flavor. A point but could still keep another year or two. Plenty of sweetness, though with a tendency to dryness on finish. Perfectly enjoyable glass. **16**

2007 Domaine L'Oustal Blanc Glocoso Minervois (14% ABV) - 16

ME: Denser than [2007 Mas de Daumas Gassac Cuvée Emile Peynaud], with deeper color, though less expressive. Plenty of substance and stuffing. Recaste in a few months. **16**

AJ: Saturated black-purple. Sweet, warm, lush aromatic profile of evidently ultra-ripe fruit. It's attractive in its own way, but if every season is delivering fruit like this, then it is probably time to think about different varieties that might provide aromatics where the fruit, rather than the ripeness itself, is the main point of interest. Soft, ripe, raisiny, yet not monotonous. Savory, with ample textural weight, low acidity, and very toothsome, sweet fruit. Some grippy tannins and a licorice finish. **14.5**

MO-W: Lots of weight here; alcohol, too, I imagine, but this is quite delicious, fruity, sweet, and ripe, and not heavy. Good finish, too. Probably best drunk young on its fruit, but there is plenty of wine here, so it might gain in complexity with another year in bottle. **17**

2008 Domaine Jean-Baptiste Senat Minervois La Nine (13% ABV) - 16

ME: Youthful, purplish ruby; sweet, ripe aromas of hedgerow fruits, blackberry, and even from the mulberry tree, most attractively scented. Fine mouthfeel, generous, *gras*, but also racy, with some tension. Class and style. **17.5**

AJ: Dense, saturated black-red, warm, comforting, a thick aromatic blanket of black-cherry fruit. There's a little qualifying cade and pine behind that fruit,

to make a balanced and intriguing aromatic profile. There's a discreet animal note, too. Soft, full, ample, with lots of dark fruit, though the tone of this is a little less luxuriously sweet than the aromas suggested. Moderate levels of concentration, with an attractive burned-rain edge of austerity to lift the palate overall. The tannins are quite dry and not wholly bonded to the fruit. This is nonetheless an immensely satisfying wine packed with Languedoc character, from one of the warmer and more generous sites. There is a stoniness in the finish. **16**

MO-W: Full flavor. Satisfying enough but pinched on the finish. Drink now **14**

2005 Les Bastides d'Alquier Faugères

(14.5% ABV) - 15.5
ME: Scented nose, completely different and scented, lovely depth and complexity on palate. **17**

AJ: Dark black-red. Stewy and underdeveloped, after a truly awful first bottle. Lush, full, and sweetly meaty. Full of gentle, broad-shouldered appeal. Textured, ripe, and gratifying, with ample though supple tannins. **15.5**

MO-W: Big and brawny. Cooked fruit, rich, with middle and length. Some freshness, too, and a long finish. Needs food. Dry finish. Second bottle: Full and sweet and much cleaner. **16.5**

2008 Belles Pierres Clauze de Jo Côteaux du Languedoc Rouge (14% ABV) - 15.5

ME: Solid, deep color to rim: corff-of-fruits nose, a touch of oak and smoke; quite forward and oxidative on nose but attractive and giving pleasure now. **16**

AJ: Deep black-red. The kerosene, herbaceous edge to the aroma of this wine suggests this was a challenging season for these varieties in this place. Those notes, though, are the shadow cast over what is sound, sweet, ripe fruit beneath. Good wine: soft, plump, full, rich, rounded, long, and satisfying. Lots of cherry, given enjoyable depth and tenacity by notes of thyme and cade, by an ample but beautifully extracted tannin profile, by discreet natural acidity, and by a qualifying stoniness. Very good, despite the aromatic difficulties. **15**

MO-W: This is good. Personality, presence, good middle palate, loads of fruit, spice, some structure and good balance. Finish is a touch dry. Needs food. Good length. **16**

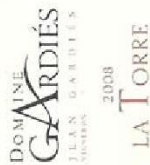
2009 Fontanel Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes (14% ABV) - 15.5

ME: Deep-purple opaque hue; confit, black-fruit aromas. Good acidity, linear and straight mouthfeel, ripe fruit. **15.5**

AJ: Saturated black-purple in color. A refined, sweet weave of red and black fruit, chocolate, cade, aleppo pine. Seamless, alluring, and distinctively Languedocien. Much more aromatic refinement than most,

with a purity that surely comes from low-yielding, gently handled fruit. Lush yet full, with stealthily present tannins and sustained, ripe acidity. Very shapely and poised in the mouth. Those elderberry-bramble fruits have impressive complexity. Masterful, beguiling wine that is both intimately of its place and fine by any international standard. You wouldn't want it any sweeter than this, but it's on a very beautiful cusp. **17.5**

MO-W: Nice deep color. Lovely nose. Sweet, ripe fruit. Full. Ripe blackberry, clean and well made. No great complexity. Alcohol a bit high but not unbalanced. Drink young. **14**



2008 Domaine Gardiès La Torre Côtes du Roussillon Villages (14% ABV) - 15.5

ME: Cooked black fruit, a touch acedulous on the nose, quite forward, attractively oxidative, quite expressive fruit, with straightforward, decent length. **15.5**

AJ: Deep purple-black. Very sweetly fruity—almost crystallized blackcurrants. Round, pool-like; a magnetic vortex of aroma, drawing you in. It's perhaps a little too sweet for complexity, though very attractive. Here, too, there is a smooth yet intense core of very ripe, blackcurrant fruit backed by tannins and a kind of grainy warmth. The aromatic sweetness is sustained on the palate, though the flavors of tannin qualify and redeem that sweetness. It's shapely, with gentle natural acidity to lift the fruit. Not the most complex, allusive, or Languedocien of the wines on show and some might find the sweetness a little overdone, but this still strikes me as a very delicious wine. **15.5**

MO-W: Some maturity here. Full and rich. Lots of spice, even pepper, some fruit, too. Muddled wine. Good length but tending to dryness. Needs food. **15**

2007 Mas Julien Côteaux du Languedoc (13.5% ABV) - 15.5

ME: Generous deep-ruby hue; an attention-catching nose, violets over a nervy energetic streak of acidity; palate confirms: *nervosité*, tension, dash. I like this. Finesse in the Mid. **17**

AJ: Dark black-red. The aromatic profile here is warm though slightly resinous, without a great deal of depth or subtlety.

Soft, lush, full, rich, expressive, tannin-clad, from an evidently warm site. Satisfying, reassuring, and heady wine whose blackberry and ripe damson fruits almost seem to have a branded warmth to them. This is another wine with very low acid levels, yet it is cleanly made, and the black fruits are agreeably qualified by the graphite flavors and textural sude of the tannin profile. **15**

MO-W: Good fruit, quite sweet. A bit dry on the finish but perfectly enjoyable. Needs food. **15**

2008 Domaine Matassa Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes (13% ABV) - 15.5

ME: Striking, deep, sustained purple-ruby to rim; you sense the warmth of the harvested grapes on the nose. Still youthful and angular mouthfeel but good acidity, spine, and potential to age. **16.5**

AJ: Saturated black-purple. A touch of fire and brimstone here. This doesn't have the aromatic purity, charm, and lift of the best. The fruit presence here has a very different register to most of the wines in this tasting—lots of Carignan? But the fruit is concentrated and assertive, with fat-cutting acidity. Little tannin and little mid-palate weight; it might have a story to tell, but its personality is not particularly beguiling or seductive. **12.5**

MO-W: Dry style. Plenty of freshness and some attractive crunch. Fruit without makeup. Very good length, with enough sap to do justice to some duck. Delicious. **17**



2008 M Chapoutier Domaine de Bila-Haut Occultum Lapidem Côtes du Roussillon Villages L'Atelier de France (14.5% ABV) - 15

ME: A pure vivid expression of blackberry fruit on nose and palate; ripe tannins, *gras*; round without heaviness. **16**

AJ: Dark black-red. Earthy, stewy aromas, with some stock-cube meaty saltiness, little evident fresh fruit. Moderate concentration and modest expression of mid-weight, mid-ripe fruit. Attractive finishing weight and some licorice complexities. It is present and correct but doesn't quite have the seductive qualities and sense of engaging excess of the best. Satisfying and drinkable wine made from evidently low yields, though, and of its place. **13.5**

MO-W: Simple but quite enjoyable. At its best now and beginning to go dry. Nice spicy flavors, with still plenty of sweetness. **15**



2007 Mas de Daumas Gassac Cuvée Emile Peynaud Vin de Pays de l'Hérault (Cabernet Sauvignon) (13% ABV) - 15

ME: Plum-ruby gradating to maturing rim; ripe plum-prune aromas, with even a hint of fig, gently evolving mouthfeel, plum-prune, aerated fruit from a good barrel, opening up and expressive. Jolly good. **16.5**

AJ: Saturated red-ochre-purple. Intriguingly rich and extrovert aromas of the smoked ham in the chimney breast and the basil pot on the table. Characterful more than classic. Rather dry and high-toned on the palate, without any freshness or purity of fruit and with little middle-palate width or depth. **11.5**

MO-W: Lovely herby fruit, dry but refreshing and not hollow. Good food-friendly style. Sappy and appetizing. **16.5**

2002 Domaine de la Garance Les Armières Vin de Pays de l'Hérault (13.5% ABV) - 15

ME: Broader, more largeness but less fine than [2007] Domaine le Soula Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes; very good, all the same. **16.5**

AJ: Saturated black-red. Sweet, grainy, herbal: basil and semolina. Soft, open, all its elements slowly sliding apart: fruit now, the throat rather, but there is no central palate wealth anymore, and I get the sense that this wine would have been better a few years earlier. **12**

MO-W: This is lovely, too, but on the dry side. There is complexity and maturity, and it will still keep, but food is essential in order for this to be allowed to come through. **16**

2006 Domaine de la Grange des Pères Vin de Pays de l'Hérault (14% ABV) - 15

ME: Yet again, a minty/eucalyptus scent, almost New World, lovely poised fruit on the palate. Very elegant and fine. Some stem character here, but like its positive nature. **17**

AJ: Dark black-red. Another wine with those rather kerosene-like, herbal aromas of imperfect ripeness. Soft, supple, full, this graceful wine retains some fresh fruit and has freshness and poise. The finishing tannins are licoricey and sustained, and the soft acidity is supportive. There is, though, little precision or nobility to it. **13**

MO-W: A late arrival but worth the wait. Full fruit, some richness. Mean finish, almost austere, yet with some sweetness. Drink now. **14.5**

2008 Metairies du Clos Vieilles Vignes Pic St Loup (14% ABV) - 15

ME: Solid deep color to rim. Interesting extracted aromas: fine black fruit and a note of dozing vinosity; fine complete mouthfeel of fruit, ripe tannins, and latent complexities. Real sense of elegant harmony, balance, *gras* generosity, and length. **17**

AJ: Saturated black-purple. Warm but a little feral. Lively, rounded, warm, with plenty of herbal complexities; more prominent acidity than many, and some brisk tannins. Satisfactory but unambitious compared to the aromatic complexities and mid-palate wealth of the best. Tasty though relatively simple wine. **13.5**

MO-W: Attractive and fruity. Vibrant and sweet, with tangy freshness. No great complexity, but perfectly enjoyable. Drink young and on the cool side. **14**

2008 La Péira en Damaisèla Les Obriers de la Péira Terrasses du Larzac Côteaux du Languedoc (14.5% ABV) - 15

ME: Confit black-fruit nose, slightly diffuse; mid-weight cooked brambly fruit; average length. Respectable rather than fine. **15**

AJ: Deep red-black. Warm, round, affable, slightly sweaty—needs air. More finesse required, too. Soft, full, with a core of dark earthy fruits, though there is also a slightly green note of mixed ripeness in here, too, and moderate concentration. **13**

MO-W: Funky nose. Carignan? Splendid fruit, rich, savory, sappy, with both weight and freshness. Genuine taste of the Languedoc here. Where is the cassoulet? **17.5**

2004 Mas Champart Clos de la Simonette St Chinian (14.5% ABV) - 14.5

ME: Firm, fine wine. Sleeping now, but it will open up with food. **17**

AJ: Dark black-red. Sweet, round, warm,

soft-contoured, yet now relatively inarticulate. Soft, mellow, open, but gently dissolving in the autumn breeze. Harmonious, close-textured, engaging, yet any sense of primary fragrance and youthful vivacity has now gone. It has a slightly salty dryness to it, and I am convinced that the slight increment in harmony truly compensates. In other words, I think this good wine would probably have been a little better when it was younger. **13**

MO-W: Very full and brawny. Dry and rather subdued by some aggressive oak, or so it seems. Finishes dry and a little hollow. Drink now. **14**

2007 St Daumery Belladonna Pic St Loup (14% ABV) - 14.5

ME: Deep-purple color, with black touches; marked intensity of black-fruit aromas but natural to the wine and not overextracted—in a winemaking sense. Fine, intense mouthfeel; rich but with a classic austerity and promise of complexities to come. Very fine. **17**

AJ: Dark, saturated black-red. The Languedoc is characterful at all times, and this is another wine with a singular aromatic profile: cistus, dental gas, wheat-beer yeastiness, crushed lemon verberna leaves. Strange but oddly alluring in its own way. Soft, lush, full, tangy but rather dry, overly licorice fruit at the end. This lacks any sense of freshness or precision, though it's amply if dangerously characterful. **10.5**

MO-W: Full flavor. Tannic. Lots here, but it's not quite hanging together. Finish is hard and dry. Desperately needs food. Intriguing, though, and not without complexity. **16**

2008 Mas Julien Terrasses du Larzac Languedoc (13.5% ABV) - 14.5

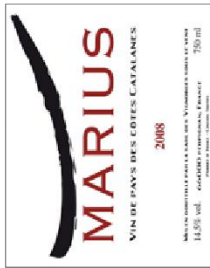
ME: Sustained, solid color to rim; pure black fruit, with an edge of underpinning acids, especially tannins (nose). A well-structured wine with broad shoulders that will develop with aging. **16.5**

AJ: Dark black-red. Aromatically, this seems at first slightly muddled, slightly stewy, without much purity and refinement, though with a number of different contributory strands: bacon, stones, sweet raisin fruits, late summer flowers. With time in the glass, though, it acquires refinement and poise. Firm, full, long, warm, concentrated tannin-backed, searching, faintly austere toward the finish: a finely crafted wine, with a well-developed sense of place to it. I love that

“Interesting extracted aromas: fine black fruit and a note of dozing vinosity; fine complete mouthfeel of fruit. Real sense of elegant harmony, balance, *gras* generosity, and length” —Michael Edwards on 2008 Metairies du Clos Vieilles Vignes Pic St Loup

finishing austerity, so full of the flavors of roots and woody spices. Unshowy but pure, true, and impressive. **16**

MO-W: Lean, techy nose. Bit pinched. Lean and dry on the palate. Dry finish and lacking charm. **10.5**



2008 Marius Vin de Pays des Côtes

Catalanes (14.5% ABV) - 14.5

ME: Deep purple-ruby to rim; distinctive aromas of mint? Eucalyptus? Pine? Or is it *garrigue*...? Substance yet, poised on the palate, good tannins, has appealing roundness and upright strength. **16.5**

AJ: Saturated black-red. A very nervous, menthol nose, with a rooky aromatic darkness behind but no obvious fruit notes. Arresting but monothematic. Concentrated, dark, and earthy—very earthy, almost as if it had been shaken through a spadeful of soil prior to bottling; a little haunting menthol behind. It's impressively concentrated. Well-made wine, but I get the sense that this is either a very challenging site or the variety may not be the perfect choice for this place. It doesn't have the expansive charm of the best, and while no one wants merely fruity wine from the Languedoc, some sense of fruit should be a part of any younger wine's appeal. **14**

MO-W: Much of the farmyard on the nose, with some horsey leather to boot. Not bad flavor; some sweetness, spice, and a dry finish. Needs drinking. **13.5**

2007 Roc d'Anglade Vin de Pays du Gard

(13.5% ABV) - 14.5

ME: Very fine juicy black-fruit aromas, yet vinous. Sprightly palate, close to sense of harvest but with lots of vinosity. **17**

AJ: Dark black-red. Sweet, warm, but rather feral. Soft, lush, full, gently pleasing, but without any refinement, concentration, or precision. **10.5**

MO-W: Lovely fruit. Sweet, with some tannin;

good middle, with some dryness on finish. Delicious but needs food (again!). **16.5**



2008 Agly Brothers Côte du Roussillon

(14.5% ABV) - 14

ME: Balanced, generous, harmonious nose; mouthfeel shows fine balance of sweet ripe fruit, elegant tannins. Some style here from light-touch winemaking. **16.5**

AJ: Dark black-red. Fresh fruit notes (more red than black), with a slight kerosene warmth to them. Open, artless, generous. Soft, lush, vivacious, and fresh. That kerosene hint on the nose now seems more resin—the sun in the pine trees. This is very soft and gently extracted, and the fruits are very ripe, dark, and fading toward herbal notes and licorice-root warmth at the end. This is a graceful and articulate wine that almost merits an outstanding score and would do so with a little more aromatic refinement, mid-palate weight, and fruit density. Very Languedoc nonetheless. **16**

MO-W: Dull looking. Spicy nose but totally clean. Taste is better, but there is a lack of fruit, and the finish is dry. No real pleasure here. **10**

2006 Léon Barral Valinière Vin de Table

Français (14% ABV) - 14

ME: Deep, striking intense color; a seamless integration of mint, eucalyptus, and something more grown-up on the nose; fine acidity, fine tannins; needs food, but excellent. **17.5**

AJ: Saturated dark black-red. Softly sweet, gently herbal licorice, celery, attractive, but muddled and fading now, losing its precision. Hard and empty; dismal wine, alas, with a bitter-acid edge at the finish. **7**

MO-W: Fabulous fruit. On the ball. Fruity, structured, balanced, and long. Delicious. **17**

2008 Gérard Bertrand La Forge Corbières

Boutenac (14.5% ABV) - 13.5

ME: Stewed, brambly fruits on the nose, in a good way, such as you'd find in a blackberry-and-apple crumble; palate confirms with a good edge of acidity, mid-weight. **16**

AJ: Dark, saturated black-red. Slightly strange yet intriguing aromas of sherbetty fruits and sweet herbs; there's almost a rotten-ripe sheen to the black fruits. Juniper and cade behind. It might well have just too much personality for some, but I like this, and it could hardly come from anywhere but Languedoc. Very sweet and ripe on the palate, super-soft, with acidity levels almost subterraneanly low; this is a gratifyingly dangerous wine that would be best consumed soon. Fortunately, its opulence means that this wouldn't be difficult. Lush, almost deliquescent black cherry and blackberry; resinous whispers; soft tannins; some alcoholic warmth; an almost total lack of finishing austerity. Kinky but intriguing. **15**

MO-W: Prune jam. Hollow and dry. Alcoholic, too. **10**

2006 Matassa Cuvée Romanissa Vin de

Pays des Côtes Catalanes (Gr/Car/Mour/

CS) (13.5% ABV) - 13.5

ME: Agreeable touch of brûlée fruit on the

nose; fresh on palate; linear definition. **16**

AJ: Dark black-red. Warm, sweet, round, and earthy, but rather generalized now, with any inherent aromatic focus lost. Soft, tangy rather featureless red wine, with a southern French cast but no obvious qualitative interest. Hard tannins. **8**

MO-W: Pretty good. This is fruity, with quite complex flavors. Ripe, sweet, and quite ready. Finishes sweet and long. Some finesse here, though finish is dry. **16.5**

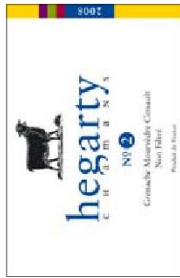
2007 Domaine le Soula Vin de Pays des

Côtes Catalanes (13% ABV) - 13.5

ME: Very good, even ripe color; solid, constant nose of red/black fruit, very healthy and deep. Sleeping a little on the palate but with plenty of latent, potentially rich, and durable flavors. **16.5**

AJ: Saturated black-red. Lifted and warm; a compost of herbs, with some further furry feral intrigue for those who like that kind of thing. This is, in fact, one of the lightest wines in the tasting in terms of its concentration and depth of fruit, which, combined with the dangerous aromatics and recessive tannins, makes it relatively disappointing. **10.5**

MO-W: Somewhat raw. Good middle and fruit, but finish is dry and a little lean. Needs food. **14**



2008 Hegarty Chamans No.2 Minervois

(Gr/Mour/Cin) (14.5% ABV) - 14

ME: Up-front, brambly fruit; pleasurable and straightforward. **15.5**

AJ: Deep black-red in color. Full, warm, meaty sweet; this is another of those wines where one has a sense of an aromatic compost rather than aromas of precise, fine-drawn focus.

Generally attractive, nonetheless. Soft, quite light, and with some sweet fruit presence and ample supporting tannins. Toothsome. **12.5**

MO-W: Touch of volatility on the nose. Very ripe and sweet. Full and rich. Finishes dry. Drink now. **13.5**

2007 Domaine de Montcaimés Côteaux du

Languedoc (14% ABV) - 14

ME: Almost a touch of tar and tobacco on the nose—oak or terror? Good sinewy structure. A keeper. **16**

AJ: Deep black-red. A little dry and stringy already, there is not a lot ahead for it. Soft, light, and forgettable. This is a wine that has lost all freshness and never had much mid-palate wealth or depth. **9**

MO-W: Again, sweet and delicious, with some fat, middle, and length. Noticeable alcohol, too, so you might need a nap afterward, but very enjoyable. **17.5**

2003 Domaine Peyre Rose Clos des Clètes

Côteaux du Languedoc (14.5% ABV) - 14

ME: Purple-black intensity. Minty, eucalyptus character is beguilingly asserting itself again. Black-fruit intensity on palate—any Cabernet Sauvignon? Very fine. **17**

AJ: Saturated black-red, though without any brightness of hue now. Quiet aromas of the terminus; soft, gentle fruit out of which the acidity is beginning to prickle. Tired and astringent, lacking any element of fruit, lift, or poise. I'm afraid this wine needs a complete rethink. **7**

MO-W: Lovely fruit here. Complex and long. Well high perfect and a point. There is some dryness but this is screaming for food. Lovely and complete. **18**

2008 Domaine La Tour Vieille La Pinède

Collioure (14.5% ABV) - 13.5

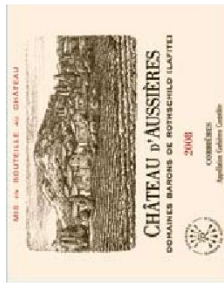
ME: Intriguing color; positive with a brilliant shimmer some limpity—not overextracted. Sweet, elegant aromas of fine-drawn red fruits; quite sprightly, even, lightweight palate, but the impression of elegant, easy refinement is refreshing. Pleasure. **16**

AJ: Deep, clear red-black. Reduced and lacking in aromatic lift and finesse. Soft, relatively light, with very warm fruit that lacks the inner poise of the very best.

Smooth, warm, with a central-palate tang and some finishing herbal austerity to provide interest. Not an ambitious wine, though. **12**

MO-W: Not a lot of depth on color. Some maturity. Spice. Not wholly clean. Tetchy, tannic, and dry. Needs drinking. **12**

The following two wines arrived after the main tasting but were tasted blind by Andrew Jefford shortly afterward.



2003 Château d'Aussières Corbières - 16

AJ: Deep, glowing black-red, though not opaque. Sweet-scented red fruit, crushed thyme, animal fur, an attractive, harmonious, and enticing aromatic profile. Warm, full ripeness without being hot; top-heavy, or ungainly. On the palate, this is smooth, svelte, deep, and long. Fine depth and concentration of herb- and olive-infused red fruits and a soft and supple tannin profile. Modulates in the mouth toward something a little drier and leaner, with a subtle cleansing bitterness and sense of flavor-related (rather than textural) grip. Polished, harmonious, and graceful red wine. **16**

2007 Château d'Aussières Corbières - 15

AJ: Deep, dark black-red in color. Full, ripe, savory scents of calfskin, autumn leaf, and dried flowers. Gracefully expressed yet very Languedocien, too. Smooth, soft, full, and harmonious, this is a supple, seamless wine with a flavor weave that includes flavors of thyme, tapenade, and air-dried meat. Not hugely fleshy (some age here?) and in a year or two it will be drier still, but it's very lithe and digestible just now. Delicate acidity points up its edges to finish, and as with nearly every wine in this tasting, there is a refreshing herb-related bitterness in the aftertaste. **15**

MICHAEL EDWARDS'S VERDICT

I don't have the opportunity as often as I'd like to taste the wines of Languedoc-Roussillon. This was one of the most enjoyable tastings I can remember, a vivid illustration of how much good and sometimes great wine there is now, in what we used to call the Midi—the word in wine terms bringing back grisly memories nearly half a century ago of head-thumping rouges in Relais-Routiers cafés en route from Béziers to Bordeaux. The wines in this lineup often needed food, but what vivid character, generous fruit expression, and agile use of oak across the board. My scores tell the story: not one, I think, under 15 and a brilliant streak in the middle of the tastings of ten exceptional wines at 17/17.5.

Top wines

2006 Léon Barral Valinière Vin de Table Français 17.5	2004 Mas Champant Clos de la Simonette St-Chinian 17
2008 Domaine Jean-Baptiste Senat Minervois La Nine 17.5	2007 St Daumery Belledonna Pic St. Loup 14% 17
2007 La Grange de Quatre Sous Vdpd d'Oc 17.5	2006 Domaine de la Grange des Pères Vin de Pays de l'Hérault 14% 17
2008 Mas Amiel Carcerades Côte du Roussillon Villages 17	2007 Mas Julien Côteaux du Languedoc 13.5% 17
2005 Les Bastides d'Alquier Faugères 17	2008 Metairies du Clos Vieilles Vignes Pic St. Loup 17
2007 Mas Belles Eaux Les Côteaux Languedoc 17	2008 Mortiers Côteaux du Languedoc Pic St-Loup 17

"This is a graceful and articulate wine that almost merits an outstanding score and would do so with a little more aromatic refinement, mid-palate weight, and fruit density. Very Languedoc nonetheless — Marcel Orford-Williams on 2008 Agly Brothers Côte du Roussillon

Tom Cannavan's wine-pages.com

Tom Cannavan

November 2011

The Wines of Le Soula

Tom Cannavan

Tom Cannavan's wine-pages.com – Novembre 2011

Gérard Gauby was a pioneer of modern winemaking in the Fenouillèdes region when he discovered a long-abandoned vineyard high in the hills of Roussillon in 2001. When he told his UK importers, Roy Richards and Mark Walford, of this discovery, a joint venture was born which they named 'Le Soula'. From their first vintage it was clear this project was capable of producing quite profound wines from native grapes including Macabeu, Grenache Blanc, Grenache Gris and Malvoisie du Roussillon for



white wines and Carignan, Grenache and Syrah for red wines. There is also less traditional Sauvignon Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne and Vermentino in the white grape portfolio. The oldest vineyards are truly ancient, dating from 1919, though the majority were planted in the 70s.

Though not certified organic or biodynamic, no synthetic chemicals are used in Le Soula's vineyards and the estate follows biodynamic principles, including respect for the lunar cycle. The estate produces only four wines: Le Soula Blanc and Rouge, and second label (not tasted here) called Trigone, again a Blanc and a Rouge.



By 2008 Le Soula had outgrown its original home in the village of Saint Martin de Fenouillet and relocated to the renovated cellars of the ex-cooperative at Prugnanes. Winemaker G rald Standley joined the team, working alongside Gauby as day-to-day manager of the domaine. I have tasted these wines regularly since that first 2001 vintage, and they are remarkably fine, intriguingly powerful and yet subtle wines that age quite beautifully. By coincidence, the 2003 red was on the list of The Square restaurant where I ate a couple of evenings before publishing this review, and it was such a fine gastronomic wine, not showing the

heat of 2003 in particular, its berry and lightly gamy qualities matching beautiful with a wild mushroom and roast partridge risotto.

These are indeed great food wines, but more than that, with their herb and subtle garrigue influences and their old vine, high altitude and mineral concentration they are indeed 'terroir wines' that say something not only about the grapes they are made from and the hand of the men behind them, but about the place they come from.

the wines

The wines are imported into the UK by Richards Walford, and have fairly good distribution through independent wine merchants and restaurants. They are priced around £20 per bottle. See all stockists on wine-searcher.com.

Le Soula, Blanc 2008, France

A blend of many grapes, but principally Sauvignon Blanc (38%), Macabeu (35%) and Vermentino (19%). The 14% alcohol in this wine is a typical and unavoidable by-product of fully ripening grapes in the hot, dry Roussillon. Ageing in large oak barrels, the majority of older oak, has added a crushed oatmeal and gently honeyed toast to white flower and firm apple and mineral notes. On the palate the oak adds just a supporting breadth and very discreet toast, the substance of this wine being the pure old-vine concentration of its fruit and the searing core of mineral acidity that runs through it. Yes, there is a trace of alcohol heat in the finish, but it is the clarity and purpose of the finish that drives this. 91/100. £21.95, Berry Bros & Rudd.

TASTED

Le Soula, Blanc 2006, France

The composition here is quite different, still led by Sauvignon Blanc (30%), but with 25% Grenache Blanc, 25% Marsanne and Roussanne and 10% each of Macabeu and Malvoisie. Ageing in 500-litre demi-muids, only 30% of which were new. It is immediately mellower and more integrated on the nose, with a fine, vegetal and gravel edge of minerality, but a warmth and peachiness to the fruit. On the palate this has that tremendous precision again, but it has a slightly more exotic tone to the fruit and slightly more sweet-edged attack that is delightful. The creamy and lightly spicy oak is there in the finish, but so too is that powerhouse of concentration and lemon and mineral acidity. Long too. 93/100.

Le Soula, Rouge 2008, France

The red blend for 2008 is 55% Carignan, 35% Syrah and 10% Grenache Noir and the wine is aged for 18 months in demi-muids - large, 600-litre barrels. It has a very fresh, crimson colour and a delightful nose, the ripe summer berry fruit aromas melding with touches of smokiness and tobacco, and an almost imperceptible gamey nuance. On the palate it is quite a substantial wine. Medium- to full-bodied and with a creamy texture, 14% alcohol perhaps adds to the slippery texture, and there's a taut spine of tannin and acidity at the core. But the fruit - sweet, but tight and a little lighter than the 2008 - is sharp and focused into the long, lightly-spiced finish. 93/100. £21.95, Berry Bros & Rudd.

Le Soula, Rouge 2006, France

The 2006 rouge is composed of 45% Carignan, 20% Grenache, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon and 15% Syrah, and 12,000 bottles were produced. The alcohol is a modest 13%, and that brings a certain cool fine's to the wine. The nose is delightful, almost Burgundian with truffle and a hint of forest floor, and a back-up of spicy, fudge-like berry fruit depth. On the palate this strikes with quiet authority, its wonderful core of tight, creamy tannin and acidity giving those gamy and truffle-sweet tones and the more rounded, sensual black fruit beneath fine support. This has flesh and mouth-filling sweetness of fruit, yet it has great precision and backbone too. A truly terrific wine. 95/100.

See all stockists on [wine-searcher.com](http://www.wine-searcher.com).

Wine Okoku

Kimiko Anzai

Décembre 2011

French Cuisine(s) Michel Troigros

連載第15回「旬感レストランへの招待」

フランス料理 キュイジーヌ[S] ミツシエル・トロワグロ

ワインと料理 魅惑のシンフォニー

text by Kimiko ANZAI
photographs by Kourai KADOWAKI



写真に登場するソムリエがワインのコースをお勧めします



★ マリアージュコース
スペイン産4種と
ベストマリアージュするワインのコース



★ ベストプライス・スマートコース
比較的リーズナブルで、
気軽にマリアージュを楽しめるワインのコース



★ ゴージャスコース
財布を気にせず、
思いっきりゴージャスにマリアージュを堪能するワインのコース

フォワグラのビロード、うなぎ、ライム

Velouté de foie gras et anguille, citron vert

フォワグラのフランの上に鴨のジュ(肉汁)のコンソメを張り、蒸して甘辛く味付けしたウナギとカブのすりおろし、ライムを添えた一皿。フォワグラの濃厚さと鴨のジュのピュアな旨味が重なり、奥深い味わいを生み出している。「よく斬新」と評されますが、フォワグラとウナギの組み合わせはかつてエスコフィエが作っていた料理。それを優しくアレンジしています」とリオネル氏。大根とライムでフレッシュな味を演出、クミンでアクセントを付けている。

南フランスの白らしい果実の甘味が フォワグラと鴨の濃厚さをやさしく包む



● マリアージュ・ポイント

「この料理は味わいが多彩。また、個々の味のリエゾンによってさらに新しい味のハーモニーが生まれますから、合わせるのは芳醇でありながらデリケートなワイン」とダミアン氏。フォワグラのkokは果実の甘味、大根おろしとライムはさわやかなミネラルとシトラスの香りで支えるという。これに加え、ワインの熟成感がさまざまな味を一つにまとめてくれる。

ル・スーラ

VdP コート・カタラン・ブラン 2007年

Le Soula Blanc

生産者：ル・スーラ

レストラン提供価格：1万円(グラス1800円)、お問い合わせ先：W・Lagrange

南フランス、ルーション地方。ソーヴィニヨン・ブラン30パーセントに、マルサンヌ、ルーサンヌ、グルナッシュ・ブランなど全6品種をブレンド。「ル・スーラ」を手掛けるジェラルド・ゴビ氏は、ルーション地方のピオディナミの先駆者で、テロワールの特徴を巧みに表現する造り手。洋ナシなどの白い果実、白い花、ヘーゼルナッツの香りを持ち、デリケートで奥深い味わい。しなやかなミネラルが長く続く。

※オーストリアの天文学者ルドルフ・シュタイナー氏が提唱する有機農法の一つ

性。どんどん挑戦して欲しいですね。

ダミアン 僕は、いくつかグラン・メゾンを経験していますが、シテは、料理人としてハートでワインを知っている人だと、尊敬しています。そして、突出してエレガントな精神を持っている。だからこそ、自由さの根底では「メゾン・トロワグロ」らしい優雅さを忘れてはいけないと思っています。

——— リオネルさんとダミアンさん、お2人の気概が、2ツ星につながったんですね。

リオネル いや、チームの勝利ですよ。ミシユランは、フランス人の料理人なら誰でも気になると思います。あの時は来日した時より大きなプレッシャーを感じました。3日間ぐらいいほとんど眠れなかった。だから2ツ星と開いた時は、うれしかった。うよりホッとした。(笑)

ミシユル その後、彼と「2ツ星」というのは適正な評価だったね」と話しました。まだ5年目、「成熟」が足りないのでしょう。

リオネル でも、新たな目標が見えてきたことで、気持ちがリセットされました。もっと前進するために、自分もますます精進しなくては、と思っています。

ミシユル 心強い限りです。むしろ、私のほうが日本に来るとリオネルの日本の食材使用に刺激を受けることも多いのですよ。私は、この店に「キュイジーヌ[s] ミシユル・トロワグロ」という名前をつけました。複数形を意味する[s]は、世界中のさまざまな料理に対する私の興味と尊敬が込められている。ここには「メゾン・トロワグロ」がまた新たな形で息づいています。私は、2人が東京という土地で、また別のフランス料理の文化を花開かせてくれることを願っています。

モダンな一皿の精神は あくまでもクラシック 美食都市東京で新たに輝く 名店のエスプリ

フランスの巨匠、ミッシェル・トロワクロの料理哲学が生きた香りめき料理と、
いなりのあるワインのマリナージュを楽しむのが、
根拠のフランスを誇る「キエウジヌ」ミッシェル・トロワクロだ。
東京の美食シーンにおいて、常にトップを走り続けるこの店の魅力の秘密に迫った。

ミッシェル・トロワクロ氏



フランスの名店「メゾン・トロワクロ」の
オーナー・シェフ、ミッシェル・トロワクロ氏
監修のレストランが新宿「ハイアットリー
ジェンシー 東京」に「キエウジヌ」[ミッ
シエル・トロワクロ]として登場したのは
2006年のこと。トロワクロ氏の薫陶を
受けたリオネル・ベカ氏の料理は、ロアンヌ
本店の味を知る美食家たちから「トロワク
ロの料理哲学を皿の上に反映しつつ、かつ
斬新」と高い評価を受けた。そして「ミシ
ランガイド東京2008」では、オープン2
年目にして2ツ星に輝くという快挙を成
し遂げた。来日したトロワクロ氏を迎え、
話を聞いた。

——オープンのきっかけは？

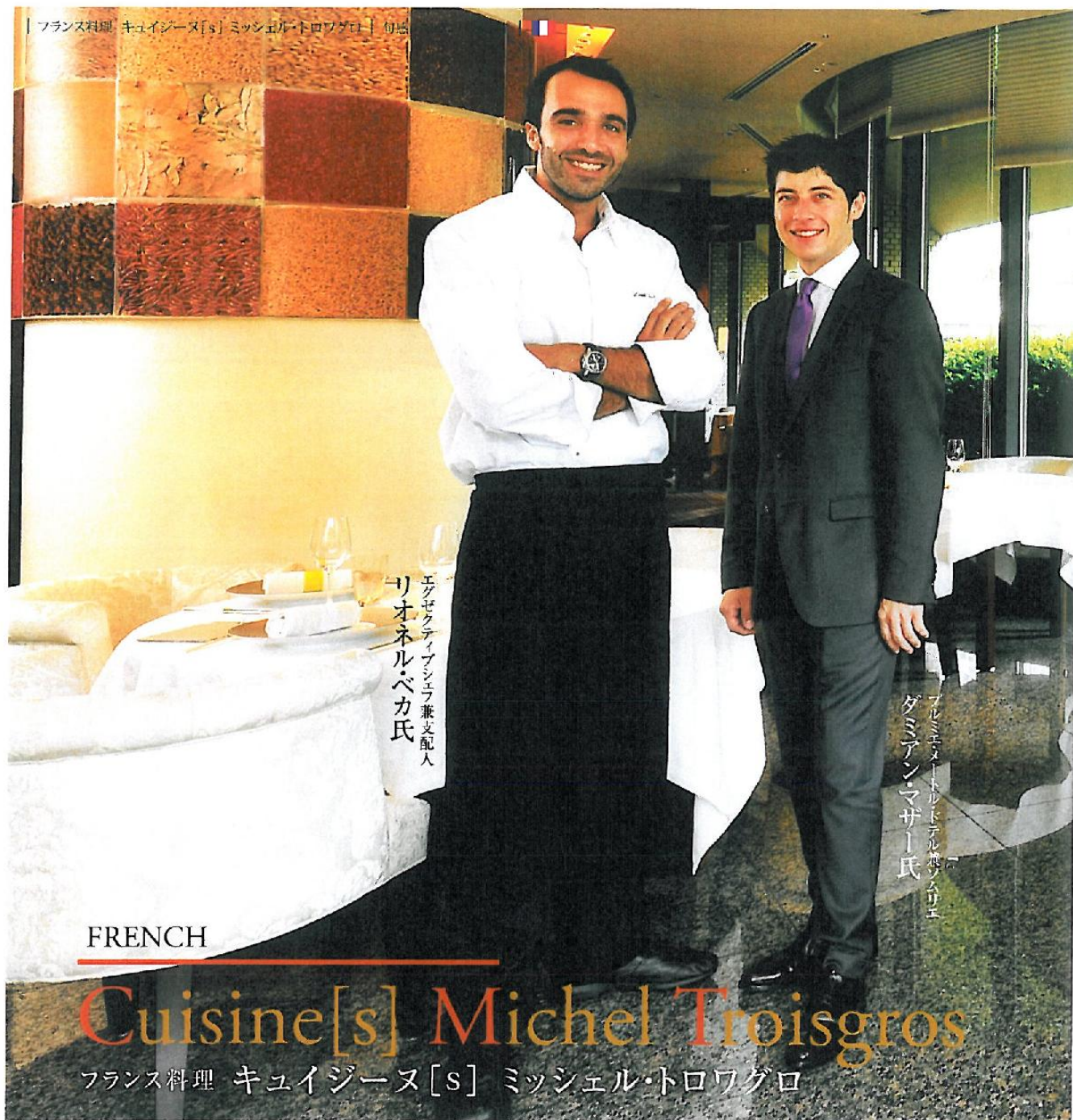
ミッシェル 父が「銀座 マキシム・ド・バ
リ」の初代料理長でしたから、もともと日
本とは縁がありました。父からの絵葉書
やお土産がとても楽しみでした。ですか
ら、日本出店はとても自然なことでした。

——ロアンヌと東京、連携はどのように？
ミッシェル 東京は、全権をシェフであり、
支配人のリオネルに委ねています。

——全面的に信頼されているんですね。

ミッシェル はい。出店を決めた時、彼は30
歳で料理人として脂が乗っていましたし、
何より知性と素直さがありました。それ
に「メゾン・トロワクロ」で私の右腕として
働いていたので、誰よりも私の料理を熟知
している。全く不安はありませんでした。
リオネル 最初は、自分に務まるのかと
不安でした。でも、シニアのアシスタントと
して何度か来日していたのでなじみがあ
りましたし、好きな国だったので「これは
素晴らしい挑戦になる」と思い、来日を決
意しました。

*1 フランス・ロアンヌで、1968年から「ミシュランガイド」3ツ星に輝き続ける名店。1970年代に現代フランス料理の潮流を作った
「ヌーヴェル・キュイジーヌ」を代表する店として、世界中から美食家が訪れる



エグゼクティブシェフ兼支配人
リオネル・ベカ氏

ブルミエメートリッドホテル兼ウヰリエ
ダミアン・マザー氏

FRENCH

Cuisine[s] Michel Troisgros

フランス料理 キュイジーヌ[s] ミッシェル・トロワグロ

ミッシェル トロワグロの料理をどう再考するか。日本で自由に挑戦してくれればそれでいい。彼にロアンヌと同じ料理を作れとは言いません。レシピも渡していないんです。料理とはレシピに閉じ込められているものではありませんからね。

リオネル シュフにそう言っていたけるとうらしい。本当に自由にやらせてもらっています。「メゾン・トロワグロ」の料理は「見革新的に見えますが、クラシックの手法に裏付けられた料理を再構築してモダンに表現している。例えば、伝統的なソースはきつちり作りますが、バターの量を調整して軽やかに仕上げたり、ハーブやスパイスで味を多層にしたりと、伝統を守りつつ今の時代に即していると思っています。」

前菜の「フオウグラのピロッド」うなぎ、ライムもとてもモダンな品ですね。

リオネル ありがとうございます。でも、実はフオウグラとウナギの組み合わせは、20世紀初頭の大料理人、エスコフィエが試みているのですよ。僕はそれに日本ならではのカブのすりおろしやライムを合わせて「モダンな味」を狙ったんです。

——日本らしい食材などは、積極的に取り入れていますか？

リオネル ケース・バイ・ケースですね。例えば、ハマグリはフランスにはありませんが、食感が楽しい貝なので、今回のメニューのように取り入れることは多くあります。でも、ユズや味噌、醤油といった食材は使いません。フレンチであることの「レゾン・デットル」は忘れたくありませんから。温故知新を探りつつ、日々進化していきたいですね。

——こちらでは、ワインのセレクトも話題

*2 1993年、パリに創業したフランス料理店「マキシム・ド・パリ」が1966年に東京・銀座にオープンした支店。ミッシェル氏の父、ピエール・トロワグロ氏が初代料理長を務めた

*3 ジュルジュ・オーギュスト・エスコフィエ(1846-1935)。フランス料理を体系化したフランス人シェフ。著書「Le Guide Culinaire」は、伝統的なフランス料理の教科書として現代も用いられる

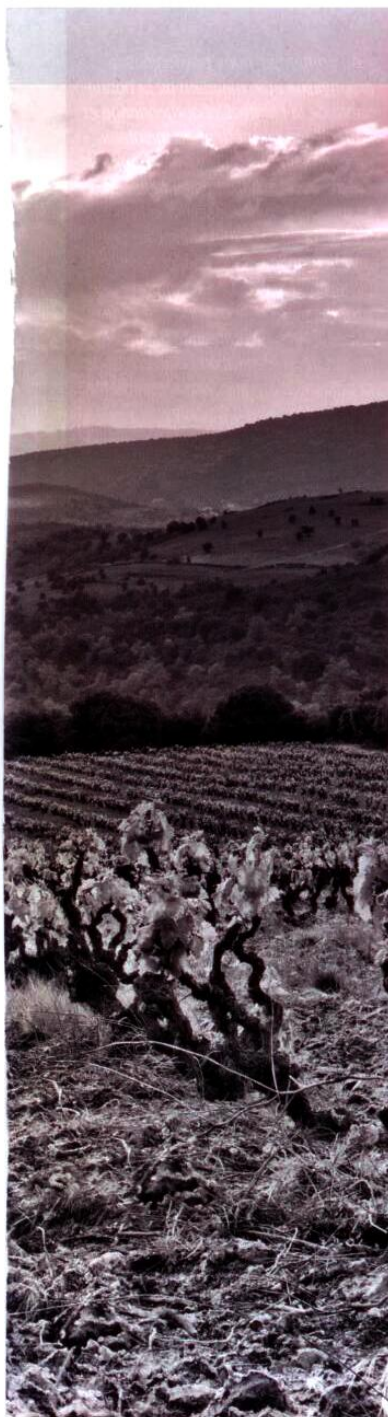
vin une cuvée à l'affiche

**DOMAINE LE SOULA (PYRÉNÉES-ORIENTALES) VIN DE PAYS
DES CÔTES CATALANES, SOULA ROUGE 2008**

De l'altitude pour la vigne et l'esprit

Unis par la passion du vin et la confiance dans le terroir des Fenouillèdes, Roy Richards, Mark Walford et Gérard Gauby s'associent en 2001 pour donner naissance au soula. Avec l'arrivée de Gérard Standley en 2008 au poste de cogérant, le domaine poursuit dans sa direction et gagne en constance, dans un objectif de vins de garde, sur la subtilité et l'élégance. Esprit d'équipe et respect du vivant sont ici au service de la mise en valeur d'un terroir d'exception.





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“ Nous avons la chance d’avoir des raisins bourrés de matières. Notre mission est d’extraire juste le plus beau. En 2008, nous avons fait quelques rares pigeages, car il n’était pas nécessaire d’aller plus loin, les bons tanins venaient seuls. ”



PHOTOS : LE SOULA

Associés dans le négoce de grands vins en Angleterre, Roy Richards et Mark Walford se lancent en 2001 aux côtés de leur ami vigneron Gérard Gauby, conscients du magnifique potentiel du terroir des Fenouillèdes. Ils achètent 22 ha de vignes situées entre 350 et 600 m d’altitude et une vieille bâtisse sur la commune de Saint-Martin-de-Fenouillet, le soula est né. Avec l’arrivée de Gérard Standley au poste de cogérant du domaine et le déménagement de la cave dans les locaux réaménagés de l’ancienne cave coopérative de Prugnanes, 2008 est une année décisive dans l’histoire du domaine. Ce passionné de vin et féru d’agriculture biologique a trouvé

« dans les Fenouillèdes, un domaine en agriculture biologique, des vins d’exception et un lieu magnifique pour ses paysages et ses habitants ». Car pour Gérard Standley, l’humanité et le respect du vivant ne sont pas de vains mots. Si le vignoble est conduit selon les principes de l’agriculture biologique depuis la création du soula, le jeune ingénieur œnologue se plaît à cultiver une ambiance de travail en équipe chaleureuse, et un climat de confiance et d’échange indispensable à la naissance de vins d’exception : « Avec Patrice Barcelo, Philippe Salvat, Jurgen Wolf et Julien Kühn, nous œuvrons en synergie pour produire des vins de garde élégants, dans le respect de l’identité de notre terroir. »

une cuvée à l'affiche

À LA VIGNE, LAISSER PARLER LE TERROIR

Pour un vignoble de 22 ha, le vin rouge représente 12 ha plantés en syrah (5 ha), en carignan (5 ha) et grenache noir (2 ha). Si le parcellaire est particulièrement morcelé, la majorité des parcelles sont installées sur terroir drainant de granite décomposé ou arène granitique. Autre singularité : une altitude comprise entre 350 et 600 m confère aux nuits estivales toute la fraîcheur nécessaire à l'accumulation de la couleur et à la préservation de la fraîcheur et des arômes des raisins. En cette zone de Piémont, le régime hydrique est marqué par les

marinades, vents marins apportant une ambiance humide parfois pluvieuse, et les ramades, bourrasques de pluie aussi brèves que denses apportées par la tramontane. Respecter ce terroir d'exception pour favoriser son expression au travers des raisins, voilà comment se conçoit l'agriculture biologique au Soula. Un unique travail du sol annuel pour l'ensemble des rangs et inter-rangs assortis d'un entretien à l'intercep (lame) sous le rang et à la tondeuse entre les rangées. Les pentes peuvent être importantes et l'utilisation du chenillard nécessaire.

« Au printemps, nous privilégions la prophylaxie et le maintien de la bonne santé de la plante. L'ébourgeonnage et l'effeuillage permettent de maintenir un microclimat sain pour nos grappes. Cuivre, soufre, huiles essentielles et tisanes de plantes assurent la protection contre les maladies. Une préparation de levain liquide, présentant un fort pouvoir réducteur, apporte une véritable cure de jouvence à la vigne qui se trouve en ambiance oxydante du fait de la respiration cellulaire et de la pulvérisation de cuivre », commente le cogérant, Gérard Standley.

À LA CAVE, VINIFIER EN GRAPPES ENTIÈRES

Depuis 2006, le domaine expérimente la vinification en grappes entières et le millésime 2008 en est d'ailleurs son entière expression. « Nous avons remarqué que cette technique donnait des vins fins et élégants », explique Julien Kühne, présent au domaine et plus particulièrement au chai depuis 2006. La macération en grappes entières n'est pas de la macération carbonique : pas de température élevée ni d'activité enzymatique. « La faible présence de jus empêche tout emballlement de la fermentation, ce qui nous a permis de fermenter entre 20 et 25 °C sans l'utilisation de moyen de refroidis-

sement. Côté extraction, inutile de forcer, nous avons fait quelques rares pigeages car il n'était pas nécessaire d'aller plus loin, les bons tanins venaient seuls », ajoute Gérard Standley. Le matériel et le process ont été réfléchis pour préserver l'intégrité des grappes. Les raisins sont vendangés à la main, acheminés dans une benne à fond vibrant et déposés dans les baquets. L'encuvage se fait par gravité, grâce à un chariot élévateur à tête pivotante. Inutile de préciser que les levures sont indigènes et les doses de SO₂ limitées : 2 et 5 g/hl à l'encuvage, puis plus rien jusqu'à la mise en bouteille.



ÉLEVAGE : 21 MOIS EN DEMI-MUIDS DE 500 LITRES POUR LES DEUX TIERS DE L'ASSEMBLAGE

L'objectif est le même, rester fidèle au raisin et au terroir. Un tiers de la cuvée est élevé en cuve. L'achat de barrique est volontairement limité pour éviter une trop forte présence de bois neuf. En 2008, le déménagement de la cave a néanmoins conduit Gérard à se séparer d'un certain nombre de barriques et à acquérir l'équivalent de la moitié du volume de la cuvée en demi-muids de 500 litres neufs. Le sixième restant est passé en demi-muids de 500 litres d'un à six vins. Le soula rouge sera élevé 21 mois. Seuls les vins ayant été entonnés avec des sucres résiduels (la FA se terminant en barriques) seront soutirés pendant l'élevage. « Les lies sont très réductrices. L'élevage sur lies permet de maintenir l'équilibre oxydo-réducteur du vin et de ne pas sulfiter. Le soufre n'est réajusté qu'à la mise en bouteille », précise le cogérant.

COMMERCIALISATION :

UNE NOTORIÉTÉ RECONNUE AUPRÈS DES ANGLO-SAXONS

Le soula rouge 2008, c'est 13 700 bouteilles. « Les exportations représentent 80 % de nos ventes, avec évidemment l'Angleterre comme premier client. Les États-Unis, suivis du Japon, de la Chine, de l'Europe du Nord (avec l'Allemagne, la Suisse et la Norvège) et de l'Australie pour nos autres marchés », explique Gérard Standley. Les 20 % que représente le marché français se composent d'une clientèle de grossistes, cavistes et CHR. La vente directe n'est pas du tout mise en avant, du fait d'une situation géographique peu favorable. « Nous abordons le marché français petit à petit pour privilégier les relations durables et parce que nous avons remarqué que c'est un marché conservateur qui a besoin de recul. Malgré de bonnes critiques, il faut avoir fait ses preuves dans la durée pour vendre au prix que nous imposent nos conditions de production. De plus, au Soula, nous sommes en vin de pays ce qui est un handicap sur le marché français, quand on n'est pas encore reconnu. En revanche, cela ne nous pose aucun problème sur les marchés anglo-saxons », continue-t-il.

regards croisés



LE COGÉRANT

GÉRALD STANDLEY

“ Ce que je cherche avant tout, c'est la qualité des rapports humains. Elle conditionne la qualité du travail et participe à l'équilibre de nos vins. Nous sommes une équipe et les idées de tous sont prises en compte. Mon rôle est véritablement celui d'un chef d'orchestre. J'essaie de favoriser les échanges entre tous les membres de l'équipe. À la vigne, notre travail en harmonie avec le vivant me paraît fondamental pour faire des vins qui portent l'identité de leur terroir. Nous avons la chance d'avoir des raisins qui sont bourrés de matière. À la cave, notre mission est d'extraire juste le plus beau. Est-ce le choix d'une technique qui permet de n'extraire que le meilleur ou faut-il juste savoir rester en retrait. C'est notre questionnement permanent qui alimente de nombreux échanges en vinification. J'avoue être plutôt partisan de la deuxième solution, d'autant qu'en 2008 elle a fonctionné. Pour les millésimes suivants, nous avons décidé pour gagner en complexité, de vinifier une partie en grappes entières, mais de tirer aussi parti de l'égrappage pour apporter un peu de densité. ”



AGNÈS PIPERNO, ICV

Avec l'arrivée de Gérald, le domaine poursuit sa ligne et gagne en constance. Si les vins sont tous empreints par le millésime, il souhaite garder le cap sur un profil de vin de garde tout en finesse et élégance. J'accorde beaucoup d'importance à la qualité des arômes et je trouve que le soula 2008 se distingue par une harmonie au niveau des sensations olfactives et gustatives. L'attaque est élégante et aérienne, à la fois florale et sur les notes de petits fruits rouges. Ce vin est subtil, sans exubérance, avec une finale persistante et torréfiée. Avec le temps, je trouve qu'il a peu évolué, juste gagné ce qu'il faut de complexité. La vinification grappes entières et la limitation volontaire du travail d'extraction sur un millésime, tel que 2008, expliqueraient en partie cet équilibre. L'autre particularité au Soula, c'est le côté humain et la diversité des points de vue, des sensibilités. Il n'y a pas d'a priori, ce qui ouvre le champ des possibles. En cours de vinification et au fil des dégustations, nous nous remettons sans cesse en question sur le niveau d'intervention que nous pensons nécessaire. ”



L'ŒNOLOGUE CONSEIL



CHANTAL LAURENSPÉL IMAGE

Côtes catalanes

Philippe Defleur, sommelier et fondateur de la société Coach Vins, nous fait partager son plaisir d'accorder vins et plats aux saveurs de terroirs. Douze ans d'expérience dans des prestigieux restaurants tels que le Plaza Athénées, la Tour d'argent ou encore le Palais de l'Élysée...



DÉGUSTATION DOMAINE LE SOULA

Cette cuvée offre, lors de sa dégustation, une robe rouge profonde, brillante aux reflets cerise noir, limpide, avec des larmes grasses. Le nez est ouvert et présente un éventail d'odeurs avec des notes fruitées, comme la liqueur de cassis, la griotte, le pruneau ; il y a aussi des notes de pain grillé, de poivre et de réglisse. La bouche développe une attaque capiteuse soutenue par des tanins chargés et soyeux, la rétro-olfaction est plus marquée que le nez sur les notes cassis et de réglisse et de griotte. Une cuvée avec un incroyable équilibre du fait de sa fraîcheur qui persiste jusqu'à la finale qui est longue et volumineuse, avec une note de poivre.

GARDE DURANT CES QUATRE PROCHAINES ANNÉES

Cette cuvée est gourmande dès à présent, mais je vous conseillerais d'attendre trois ou quatre ans afin qu'elle s'épanouisse davantage. La gourmandise est au rendez-vous maintenant avec un bel équilibre. Les tanins sont chargés et ils méritent de s'affiner encore un peu soit avec du temps soit dans une carafe.

SERVICE EN CARAFE

Je conseille de servir ce vin autour de 18 °C et deux voire quatre heures de carafe si vous l'ouvrez prochainement, il s'épanouira sur ces notes de fruits. Pour le choix de la verrerie, je vous conseille des grands verres style bordeaux.

POUR QUI ?

Aux amateurs de moments gastronomiques, qu'ils soient caviste, sommelier, restaurateur ou même gourmand. Cette cuvée séduira les réticents des vins du sud de la France.

ACCORD TAJINE DE BŒUF AUX FIGUES

J'ai lu beaucoup d'article sur ce vin qui parle de grillades, de côtes de bœuf... oui cela est tout à fait réalisable, mais je pense que la finesse et la qualité de ce vin peuvent nous emporter sur d'autres gastronomies et même nous invite au voyage dans les pays de soleil. C'est pour cela que je vous propose un tajine de bœuf aux poivres rouges et aux figues. Plus il avancera dans le temps plus ce vin méritera des plats en sauce avec des viandes tendres et confites comme des tajines ou des viandes plus fortes comme l'agneau. L'agneau de sept heures serait un plat à prévoir avec ce vin. Une cuvée qui appelle à la patience pour mieux se régaler. Si toutefois vous désirez le déguster aujourd'hui, la viande rouge grillée reste une alternative ou bien un bon cassoulet. Les épices ont trouvé un terrain de jeu.

SOMMELLERIE ÉVOLUTION

Il lui faut un peu de temps pour que le vin s'arrondisse, notamment les tanins soyeux mais présents. L'indice de potentiel de garde est là, il ne faut que de la patience pour le voir évoluer et offrir toute la dimension qu'il a à nous offrir. J'imagine très bien ce vin dans trois ou quatre ans toujours aussi soyeux et ample avec des notes de pruneau et de sous-bois, réglissé et aux notes de tabac ; le moelleux présent pour finir sur une sensation d'équilibre. Alors, à ce moment-là, je préparerais mes cocottes afin de lui faire honneur avec des plats comme un agneau confit aux cèpes, ragoût de bœuf façon basque... Ce vin a le temps, aurez-vous la patience ?

High-altitude wines that are the height of elegance
The little vineyard that makes big wines

Not that long ago, I enjoyed an extremely long lunch at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons to celebrate a significant birthday. As ever, the food and service were more than up to scratch. So too were several wines, including one of particular note – namely Le Soula.

The French critic Michel Bettane describes it as the best white wine in the Languedoc. He's probably right. The 2005 I drank was almost Burgundian in its complexity, length and depth – but with an extra dash of vivacity and verve.

The reds aren't too shabby either, as I subsequently discovered at a tasting with one of Le Soula's owners, Mark Walford, who runs the importers Richards Walford. The 2006 is simply scrumptious and will age for some considerable time to come. The same goes for the 2007 and the 2008. But all three are distinctively different.

Walford and his partner Roy Richards created Le Soula more than a decade ago after they began working with pioneering local winemaker Gérard Gauby who was on a one-man quest to rejuvenate some of the abandoned high-altitude vineyards of the Agly Valley. Richards and Walford immediately saw the potential of Le Soula's unique terroir and promptly put up the required capital.

Today, there are just 22 hectares planted with an eclectic mix of varieties including Grenache Blanc, Gris and Noir, Syrah, Carignan, Macabeu, Sauvignon Blanc, Marsanne and Roussanne. Only 2,500 cases are made each vintage.

What I love about Le Soula's reds and whites is their sense of place expressed through a fabulous freshness, elegance and ability to age. The wines are never over-ripe and always give pleasure. Best of all, they only cost around £20 a bottle from some of the UK's leading merchants (Majestic and Berry Brothers & Rudd among them; Le Soula's own website has a full list of stockists). However, the word is getting out about Le Soula. So my advice is to fill your boots – and fast.

Berry Brothers & Rudd, www.bbr.com. Le Soula, www.le-soula.com. Majestic Wine, www.majestic.co.uk.