



Wine Club Tasting Notes

April 2008

2005 Chateau de Lancyre “La Coste d’Aleyrac” Pic Saint-Loup

I drink A LOT of wine, all in the name of work. (Riiight.) So over the years I’ve learned that I enjoy certain wines from certain regions. For instance, I prefer Alexander Valley over Napa for Cabernets, prefer Mosel-Saar-Ruwer for Rieslings and when it comes to Grenache/Syrah blends, nowhere on earth does ‘em like certain pockets in France. The Rhone Valley would be one ‘pocket’ and the other is a little sub-region of the Coteaux du Languedoc known as Pic Saint-Loup located in the south of France. Because the immediate region is the transition point from the coastal plain to the higher, inland plateau, its climate is noticeably cooler than many other Languedoc wine growing regions. There are also a range of different microclimates in close proximity, making it possible to ripen the heat-loving Mourvèdre grape in one vineyard area while using the cooler sites to produce elegant, strikingly northern-Rhône-like Syrah (the other key grape here is Grenache, while some Carignan and Cinsault are still grown). Therein lies the appeal of the red wines from this beautiful rugged region. Typically, they show lots of color, good concentration and beautiful spicy, meaty, earthy complexity. The wines here normally show more elegance and refinement than those from the hotter Languedoc plains. Pic St. Loup has been buzzing recently – so much so, that it is soon to become an appellation in its own right. There are plenty of ambitious, over-achieving producers here, such as Bernard Durand.

Bernard is a ruddy-faced man in his late 60’s, one of the co-owners of Lancyre, and his roots in Pic Saint Loup are deep. Durands have been growing wine here since the 1700’s, Bernard personally since 1960. After 20 years, he has given up his position as head of the grower’s association. He has always believed that Pic Saint Loup was capable of making great wine. He has gone about transforming his Chateau and to some extent the whole district in a quiet but very determined way. When he started, the family had 30 acres of vines, half in Pic Saint Loup, which had no reputation for quality. The wines sold for 10% more than the most basic table wines of the region. A half century later Bernard has 180 acres of vines, half in Pic Saint Loup, now almost universally recognized as the best district of Languedoc.

This particular wine is mostly Syrah and Grenache with a touch of Carignan, and it is what I drink at my house. It has tons of ripe berry fruit, a spicy little kick to it and has this elegantly rustic quality while remaining lush. Throw a juicy steak on the grill and you’re good to go!