



Wine Club Tasting Notes

May 2007

2005 Côtes-du-Rhône Blanc 2004 Côtes-du-Rhône Rouge Rhône Valley, France

I know that since the Wine Club has been on my watch, we haven't given you any wines from the Rhone region of France. And, I must say THIS IS A TRAVESTY!!! HOW COULD I HAVE NEGLECTED YOU, FAITHFUL WINE CLUB MEMBERS, FOR SO LONG?! No joke, the Rhone Valley produces some of the best every-day wine values for red and white wines *in the world*. Period. Now, that's not to say that there aren't some pricey wines that come from this region, but we will be focusing on the southern Rhone, not the northern, which in general, has the corner on the expensive wines.

In the past, I've given you the low-down on how certain wine regions in France can only grow certain grape varieties, and in the Rhone Valley, it's no different. In the northern part of the region, if you have a red wine, it is made with Syrah and the whites are made from Viognier. In the southern part of the Rhone, there are thirteen (13), yep count 'em folks, thirteen that are allowed. Needless to say, the reds and the whites are usually blends. For sh#@ts and giggles, I'll list them for you – the red grapes are Grenache (#1), Syrah, Mourvedre, Carignan, Counoise and Terret Noir, while the white grapes are Marsanne, Roussanne, Clairette, Bourbelenc, Muscardine, Picardin and Picpoul. (I'm sure you've heard of them all, so you will be tested on this next time.)

Two points of trivia I want to point out to you are the following. First, in the Rhone Valley, wine has been consumed since the first century AD, and vines were planted there by 71 AD. Secondly, the southern Rhone's most famous appellation is Chateauneuf-du-Pape. The historical importance of this region dates back to the 14th century when Pope Clement V moved the papal court from Rome to Avignon in 1305. Châteauneuf du Pape, or the 'Pope's New Castle,' is now a ruined 14th century castle located north of Avignon. It was originally built for Pope Jean XXII (the successor to Clement V) as a summer getaway, and the vineyards surrounding the castle were put to good use supplying his wine cellar. Certain regions of the Rhone are not only famous for the great reds they produce, but also for the *galets* (glacier scoured stones) that cover the soil. The stones act as a collector and container for the sun's warmth, which they then reflect back onto the vines during the night. Here's a visual – think of a stone about the size of your head. Got it? Now think of ENTIRE vineyards being covered with these stones and the grapevines pushing their way up through this 'land(moon?)scape.' How the vineyard workers harvest these grapes without breaking their ankles is a mystery to me...

Now is the time for me to tell you about the Rhone wines in your bag this month. They're both from Georges DuBoeuf, who is more famous for his wines from Beaujolais. (We have one of those, too, in this month's bag.) While Georges DuBoeuf is located in Beaujolais, the people in the Rhone have an affinity for the wines grown here – Rhone wines are much more similar to the wines of Beaujolais than the wines of Burgundy, and Beaujolais is actually a part of the appellation of Burgundy. Georges has been sourcing great vineyards and producing wines in the Rhone for a long time, but it's only been in recent years that these wines have made the journey across the Big Pond to the US. So, without further ado...

The White – Here we have a blend of Marsanne and Roussanne. These two grapes are traditionally blended in the southern Rhone and, in this writer's humble opinion, produce some fascinating white wines. This example is round and spicy, with a lot of apple/pear notes. (Did I say spicy?) White wines from Cotes-du-Rhone can't really be compared to any other white wine – when you try it, you'll see what I mean. This is a wine that is very versatile, meaning it is not only very food friendly, but is extremely easy to drink on its own.

The Red – If you love vibrant red wines brimming with juicy fruit and spice, then this will be right up your alley. As I said earlier, both white and red wines from the Rhone are some of the best

every-day value wines there are. If I'm ever out wine shopping (which is rare because I work here), I ALWAYS buy a red from Cotes-du-Rhone to enjoy while cooking, or watching my boyfriend cook for me, or sitting on the porch with my friends and (4) cats, or better yet, throwing the ball for the dog (the greatest Boxer ever). Besides Champagne or any other Bubbly, I can't think of a more perfect wine...