

July 2007

The Rhône Region

The Rhône Valley is the oldest wine producing area of France, the Romans already knew that the region was particularly suitable for viticulture, and they planted vines.

The most famous being the Côte-Rôtie and Hermitage areas.

The Rhône wine area stretch from Vienne in the North to Avignon in the South and constitute one of the most varied wine growing region in the country, around (50,000 hectares) are planted, covering six departments.

The Rhône is one of the biggest red wine producing appellation with (the Côte du Rhône Rouge), and has the biggest diversity of grapes. The Pride and Joy of the Rhône is the Syrah grape, which in recent years has developed into a sort of designer grape. Pure Syrah are planted in the Côte-Rôtie, Hermitage, Crozes- Hermitage and Saint-Joseph but they are also being planted in the vineyard of the South as well. The second important red-wine variety is Grenache producing the finest Château-Neuf-du-Pape. Mourvèdre also has become more and more popular in the Rhône area. Other grapes are Cinsault, Carignan.

In the white wine, the most interesting grape is Viognier, other grapes are Marsanne, Roussane, Clairette, Grenache Blanc and Bourboulenc.

The Northern Rhône;

The climate is continental, however the mistral whistle up the valley at over 100 kph, which can be damaging for the roots and leaves, the great wines of this region are mainly Syrah and Viognier. From North to South, the Northern Rhône areas are Côte Rôtie(made famous by Marcel Guigal) from single vineyard, “La Mouline”, “La Turque” and “La Landonne” can usually live happily for up to twenty years.

Condrieu

Condrieu is an exotic concoction made from the beguiling Viognier grape variety and is best when drunk young to enjoy its character of peach, apricot blossom.

Château Grillet

The only single estate in the Rhône is the pinnacle expression of Viognier and very expensive.

Saint-Joseph

Both the red and white offer good value, alternative to Côte Rôtie and Cornas wines. Wines from Saint-Joseph can be drunk within six years.

Hermitage

This tiny appellation is the most famous of the Northern Rhône both white and red can survive up until fifteen years.

Crozes-Hermitage

This larger appellation (ten times that of Hermitage) produces some fine white and red wines and are best drunk young.

Cornas

There are only red here all made 100% Syrah, these wine require a few years to soften and keep up to fifteen years in a good vintage.

Saint-Péray

This is a white wine only village producing sparkling (Clairette de Die) and still wines.

The Southern Rhône

Where the Northern Rhône relied on Syrah and (Marsanne and Roussanne), The Southern Rhône is a heavily red blended region with Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah, Cinsault, Picpoul, Terret Noir, Counoise, Clairette, Bourboulenc.

This is the land of Château-Neuf-du-Pape, Gigondas, Vacqueyras, Lirac and Gallons of Côte du Rhône.

Château-Neuf-du-Pape white is the only really serious white produced from those white grapes, and for the Rosé, the popular Tavel.

Dessert wines made from the Muscat Blanc à petits grains with reminiscence of peaches, coconuts and apricots produce the Muscat de Beaume-de-Venise.

There is a host of miscellaneous regions attached to the Southern Rhône such as Côtes du Ventoux, Côtes du Tricastin, Côtes du Luberon, Côtes du Vivarais.

On this note enjoy a bit of sunshine with a sip of wine

Happy Summer holidays...

Xavier Le-Bellégo

Forbury's Restaurant

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