

TOUR DE FRANCE - RHÔNE VALLEY



Wine #1: Chateau de Trinquedede Tavel Rosé 2023

Varieties: Grenache 50%, Cinsault 20%, Clairette 12%,
Syrah 10%, Mourvèdre 5%, Bourboulenc 3%

Appellation: Tavel

Wine Notes: Beautiful deep pink color, limpid. Elegant nose of red fruits, winning in intensity, notes of ripe strawberries, watermelon. In the mouth, a lot of freshness, a fleshy and expressive wine in a fruity and spicy register persistent. A gastronomic rosé. Beautiful complexity, fine, fresh, fruity and elegant Tavel.

My Thoughts: What a perfect way to begin an evening talking about Rhône. We are officially in the "hot" season and most wine shops have recently wrapped up their rosé fests. Which means, we are legally allowed to drink rosé in Charlotte. However, I firmly believe rosé is a year-round wine and am thankfully supported by this chateau. In their pairings and notes section, they say "This Tavel rosé wine goes with any season and any meal." I can't argue with that. Additionally, It is important to note that a lot of questions revolve around the role of rosé wine with food. It all depends on the grape(s) being used in and the methods of the winemaking team. But the beauty of rosé is its searing acidity coupled with bright light red fruits that are typically associated with light bodied red wines. This wine can straddle the line between high acid white and high acid red wines when it comes to pairing. And chef has a fantastic bite prepared for this glass.

My Notes:

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Wine #2: Domaine du Vieux Lazaret Châteauneuf-du-Pape
Blanc 2022

Varieties: Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Bourboulenc, Roussanne

Appellation: Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Wine Notes: Light yellow gold. Attractive, multifaceted aroma, youthful and moderately full, showing a mélange of quince and fennel complemented by a toasted note. The palate reveals more, notably ripe yellow fruits, spice and herbal highlights. At first open, the wine falls off slightly, then continues to reveal a persistent aromatic conclusion. Well-integrated acidity surfaces at the end together with a mouth-coating texture. Opulent and juicy, sun-charged fruit with full ripe peach and apple fruit character richly complemented by toasty notes. The palate reveals fleshy yellow fruit, spice and herbal highlights and a bright spine of acidity. (They had two different notes sections...?)

My Thoughts: No oak and no MLF. Just 4 months of lees ageing. This is a wonderful way to see how complex and full-bodied a white wine can be while going nowhere near oak. I picked this wine especially because it has almost familiar grapes and also definitely NOT familiar grapes. Because of this, you get to try a well-structured wine with familiar fruit aromas but not necessarily because you have smelled them in a wine.

My Notes:

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Wine #3: E. Guigal Condrieu 2022

Variety: Viognier

Appellation: Condrieu

Wine Notes: *Eye* : Brilliant clear golden yellow.

Nose : Intensely flowery (violets), and fruity (apricot, peaches and citrus).

Palate : Fresh and round. Rich, unctuous and full bodied.

Overall : Harmonious with light acidity and round fleshy fruits. Delicate and elegant.

My Thoughts: For those that have opinions on Viognier, this is a divisive grape. Too floral, too oily, Chardonnay wannabe. Beautifully floral, rich without being overbearing, the backbone to many red wines, beauty in a glass. Arguably the greatest region in the world for Viognier, Condrieu is our first appellation to focus on single varietal bottlings. This is a common trend for wines coming out of Northern Rhône while Southern Rhône is typically a huge blend. Viognier is a fun wine because it gives the body of Chardonnay, the mouthfeel nearly similar to a soft tannin red, the floral aromas similar to a Gewürztraminer, and the acidity that is simply there to hold things together. This is a wine to make an appearance next to soft textured, rounded flavor foods. The winemaking team even suggest scrambled eggs! Not to say you are supposed to like Viognier, but if you don't like this, I wouldn't suggest you keep traveling the world looking for one that you do...

My Notes:

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Wine #4: Kermit Lynch Côtes du Rhône Villages Rouge 2022

Variety: 56% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 10% Mourvèdre,
7% Carignan, 2% Cinsault

Appellation: Côtes du Rhône Villages

Wine Notes: We aimed for maximum drinkability in our blend, and accordingly, you'll find plenty of hedonistic, purple-tinged fruit in this wine, along with a hint of wild herbs and lovely floral notes akin to lavender and violets. A touch of supple tannin and a stony finish provide texture and just enough grit to this smooth-flowing rouge. It is a plump, yet delightfully juicy Rhône red that can be sipped casually with a slight chill as an apéritif or on movie night, but has enough weight to stand up to burgers, pizza, grilled meats, or anything else you might throw its way.

My Thoughts: A true red blend, this is a great "house red" due to its broad appeal and ability to pair with loads of foods. Seeking out a CdR in my opinion is sort of like finding a favorite Super Tuscan. All take advantage of their climate and terroir but rarely are any two truly alike. In this blend, we get the popular lead grape so often found in CdRs and critical to the wines of CdP and Gigondas. But this wine also gives us a little excitement with Carignan and Cinsault - the latter of which is more often found in rosé bottlings and rounding out the backend of a CdP (hint, hint). Each brings fun aromatics with the red fruit and spice characteristics in Carignan and the bright and simple cherry, smoke, and strawberry notes of Cinsault along with hints of violet. This is perfect for any red blend fan.

My Notes:

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Wine #5: Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe Châteauneuf-du-Pape
"Télégramme" 2021

Varieties: 80% Grenache, 10% Syrah, 6% Mourvèdre, 4% Cinsault

Appellation: Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Wine Notes: If Télégramme is more about fruit than stones, it is still undeniably Châteauneuf, expressing the nobility of carefully farmed Grenache from the Rhône's finest terroirs. This unfiltered bottling from the 2021 vintage is one of the best editions to date, with sensual red fruit that is both mouth-filling and weightless, as luxurious as it is accessible. Perfect for enjoying now and over the next few years, it is an ideal match for whatever other fresh, seasonal flavors are on your plate.

My Thoughts: The hottest wine of the southern Rhône - literally and figuratively. This is the wine most people associate with this region. Typically clocking in at 15%+ ABV, this is a prime example of embracing your climate while managing the alcohol on the palate. Lesser blends of the region style themselves off of this wine, often falling under a category of "GSM" CdP wines are elegant, intense, and the best of the best when it comes to this style of blend. And of course, must come from Châteauneuf-du-Pape to begin with. Although it is pretty hot outside, this wine is easily a year round bottling but will typically find itself on the table of most fall spreads into early spring.

My Notes:

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Wine #6: Jean-Claude Marsanne Saint-Joseph Rouge 2020

Variety: Syrah

Appellation: Saint-Joseph

Wine Notes: The violets, tapenade, and juicy black fruit in your glass is much unchanged from how it's always been (and should be). The vines are still worked by hand, the wines still fermented with indigenous yeasts, the aging still done two years in old oak barrels before release.

My Thoughts: As we head north again, we get another Northern Rhône single varietal bottling, this time focusing on Syrah. The Northern Rhône is said to be the northern most region that can still successfully grow Syrah as it does tend toward warmer climates - like those in the Barossa Valley of Australia. This is also my opportunity to let you know that Syrah and Shiraz are the exact same grape.

Cooler climate Syrah carries a lighter bodied, medium tannin, peppery take on what can also be a meaty, rich, smoky, jammy wine in warmer regions. Versions of those aromas come up but it's almost as if they are subdued by a hidden chill. This is a wine that can pair with everything from steak and braised short rib to grilled veggies and pork. But in my opinion this is one of the best wines on earth for duck and lamb.

My Notes:

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Wine #7: Domaine Les Pallières "Terrasse du Diable" 2020

Variety: 90% Grenache, 5% Mourvèdre, 5% Clairette

Appellation: Gigondas

Wine Notes: On the surface is an abundance of violets and velvet, amid a cooling sensation of a cold spring on a hot day. Below the surface lurks a bitter austerity, and hints of layers of surprises to be revealed over time.

My Thoughts: A blend like most of the Southern Rhône but heavy on a single variety, this Grenache led wine shows us what pepper tastes like. Floral and silky smooth, I always have this sense of white pepper on the back of the palate. Light enough that if you added some chill it wouldn't ruin it, but bringing this to room temp can show the complexity of a grape too often used solely in blends around the world. Gigondas is a region oft overlooked as it is amongst the CdR and CdP producers while just south of the Northern Rhône single variety beauties, this wine fully encapsulates all that you can get in the Rhône for under \$75.

My Notes:
