

The Lusch List

UNIQUE WINE RECOMMENDATIONS & EXPERIENCES



“There’s no place like Rhone. There’s no place like Rhone.” I wish I could click my heels and transport there right now. Many who have worked for or with me know that Rhone wines are a personal favorite of mine. Give me that signature GSM (Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre) any day or a gorgeous Viognier/Marsanne/Roussanne blend. Of course, a Cote-Rotie or Hermitage would be spectacular but usually enjoyed when someone else is buying (some of the most sought-after and expensive wines from the Northern Rhone). The point is...I adore wines from The Rhone Valley. And because I love them so much, I am going to feature two Southern Rhone wines this week (a white and a red, both from highly regarded Chateauneuf-du-Pape producers). You’re welcome!

The Wine: [Domaine Chante Cigale ‘The Cicada’ Blanc, 2019, Rhone Valley, France](#)

Where I Purchased: [Le Caveau](#)

Cost: \$16

The Wine: [Famille Perrin Vinsobres Les Cornuds, 2017, Rhone Valley,](#)

France

Where I Purchased: [Veritas Wine Room](#)

Cost: \$20

How about a few Rhone Valley fun facts:

- The Rhone Valley has been a hub of wine culture since ancient times. Viticulture as we know it arrived in Southern France with the Greeks in the 4th Century BC, but the Romans were the ones who really established the vineyards and reputation of the area.
- When the papacy (under Pope John XXII) moved to Avignon in the fourteenth century, the residence became known as the “Chateauneuf-du-Pape” (literally, the “new home of the Pope”). Because he loved wine, he had papal vineyards built and was active in the promotion of Rhone wines.
- Every 13 seconds, a bottle of Rhône Valley AOC wine is enjoyed somewhere in the world. (AOC means appellation d’origine controlee; a concept that is based on terrior meaning the wine should be reflective of the land where it is grown)
- Tables Creek Winery spurred popularity in the U.S. when they imported Rhone grapes to Paso Robles, California in 1990. Those first cuttings came from the Chateauneuf-du-Pape estate, Château de Beaucastel (to be discussed later).

The Rhone Valley is one of the most historic and bountiful wine regions in France with over 100 million gallons of wine produced in the region annually. It is divided into two sub-regions, the Northern Rhone and Southern Rhone. The Southern Rhone has a Mediterranean climate and produces a variety of red, white, and rose wines. Most often they are blends of several grapes such as the Grenache-based blend Chateauneuf-du-Pape which is the area’s most famous red wine. The Northern Rhone has a continental climate and produces red wines from the Syrah grape (aka Shiraz), sometimes blended with white wine grapes and white wines from Marsanne, Roussanne, and Viognier.

Our white wine this week hails from the same winemaker who blends the famous red and white Chateauneuf-du-Pape wines at Domaine Chante Cigale wine estate. The property has been in the family since the 19th century and is currently run by Alexandre Favier who assumed the reins at the ripe old age of 20! The Cicada line of wines takes its name from the emblem of the Domaine Chante Cigale - the famed 'singing cicadas' of Provence. Chante Cigale means singing cicada.

Tasting Notes:

40% Viognier, 30% Picpoul, 30% Sauvignon Blanc

Style: fresh, aromatic, daily drinker

Nose: ripe melon, white flowers

Palate: citrus, lime

Finish: bright, balanced

Pairing:

This wine has some weight on the palate but is not heavy and is balanced with its aromatic, fresh fruit finish. Richer poultry or fish dishes are a nice match. Try a chicken with apricot, pork with roasted peach, or a coconut-based or spiced Thai or Vietnamese dish.

Where to Buy:

You know when the Frenchman at [Le Caveau](#) gets excited about a French wine it's going to be good! "Love the complexity, brightness, and freshness," says Thierry.

** FULL DISCLOSER: This wine is currently out of stock but more will arrive in a few weeks. In the meantime, try the 2018 Cochon Volant, a beautiful Viognier blend from the Languedoc region at the same price. I did and it's terrific!*

Our red wine this week is made by the Famille Perrin family who purchased Chateau de Beaucastel in the early 1900s. Chateau de Beaucastel has long been regarded as one of the greatest wines in France because of its elegance, balance and aging potential. The first evidence of Chateau de Beaucastel as it exists today is in the sixteenth century.

Famille Perrin, a 5th generation wine producer, is all about family who is involved in every aspect of the business. It is also the leading organic wine grower in the Chateauneuf-du-Pape region with a reputation for valuing nature and tradition. They apply this standard to all of their wines, including ones from other regions within the Southern Rhone.

This particular wine comes from the Vinsobres region, the northernmost appellation in the Southern Rhone about 20 miles north of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. The wines are complex and full-bodied with soft tannins based on Grenache and Syrah grapes.

Tasting Notes:

50% Grenache and 50% Syrah

Style: bright, fresh, elegant, medium-bodied

Nose: raspberry, blackberries, floral notes, typical garrigue aromas

Garrigue is a French term for the wild hillside vegetation of the Mediterranean Coast. There are a bunch of bushy, fragrant plants that grow wild there, such as juniper, thyme, rosemary, and lavender. Think Herbes de Provence

Palate: ripe cherry, red currant, pepper

Finish: good acidity, hint of bitterness, supple tannins

Pairing:

It can handle a simple roasted chicken with fresh herbs, to a roasted leg of lamb with olives, to a slow braise of beef with mushrooms.

Where to buy:

[Veritas Wine Room](#) and it is a steal at \$20! This wine drinks like it is twice the price and is exactly the type of wine I loved recommending at The Grape. Finding something that delivers both in style and price is always a treat. Thank you, Rhone Valley, as you always manage to blow me away.

Until next time!

Courtney

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