

From: Debbie Rios debbie@santiamwine.com
Subject: Southern Rhone Wine Tasting and March Newsletter
Date: February 27, 2014 at 7:43 PM
To: tasting@santiamwine.com

Good Evening! Tomorrow you will receive our March Newsletter, undated menu and White Cheap & Cheerful information!

Join us Friday for:

Southern Rhone Wine Tasting!

These wines are always a favorite with wine lovers! Not only did I find outstanding wines, the prices are nice!

Call your friends and make plans to visit us.

We would recommend our Wild Mushroom Lasagna to pair with these wines

When: Friday, February 28th

Time: 4-8 P.M.

Cost: Full Pour \$20 Half pour: \$12

If you would like to read more about the wine of the Southern Rhone Valley. Please read at the end of this email.

THE WINES:

2012 Domaine Cristia Cotes du Rhone \$14.50

In addition to their Chateauneuf du Papes, Baptiste releases a bevy of superb Cotes du Rhones. A fleshy, fruit-loaded effort that delivers on all account, Cristia's 2012 Cotes du Rhone offers up plenty of underbrush, sweet raspberry, mint, currant and licorice aromas and flavors to go with a soft, supple mouth feel that's hard to resist. I don't think it will make old bones, but it's a superb Cotes du Rhone that will dish out plenty of pleasure over the coming 2-3 years. Drink now-2016. **89 Points Robert Parker**

2010 Domaine Courtois La Grange Vinsobres \$16

Lush but refined, with a gorgeous thread of roasted alder wood stitching up the mouthfilling fig, plum sauce, steeped blackberry and dark linzer torte notes. Smoldering tobacco and warm stone notes lurk underneath. This has range and character, with the well-integrated grip for cellaring. Drink now through 2020. **91 Points Wine Spectator**

2011 Domaine Pierre Usseglio Lirac \$35

Bright ruby. Lively aromas of black raspberry, lavender and cola. Supple, appealingly sweet and pliant, with tangy dark berry flavors complicated by white pepper and smoky minerality. Offers plenty of immediate appeal and finishes sweet, silky and long.

89 Points Stephen Tanzer

2012 Masion Arnoux & Fils Vacqueyras \$20

(70% grenache, 27% syrah and 5% mourvedre; aged in older *foudres*): Saturated ruby. A highly aromatic nose presents red and dark berry preserves, incense, lavender and anise, with a peppery nuance adding lift. Juicy black raspberry and boysenberry flavors deliver very good palate coverage, with zesty acidity giving the ripe fruit lift and verve. This rich, lively Vacqueyras finishes with powerful thrust and lingering sappiness. **91-93 points Stephen**

Tanzer

to moderate acidity with fine, polished tannins and overall approachable profiles. While a number of vignerons reported that the 2012s were hard to taste early on (and I found a number seemingly closed and aggressively tannic), they are increasingly liking how they're showing with additional time in tank and barrel. If the wines continue to gain mid-palate depth (and I think the best will), this could turn out to be a strong vintage. While Grenache fared well, it was a difficult vintage for Mourvèdre due to lack of water. While not a flat-out great vintage for reds, it is a great vintage for the whites. Showing beautiful purity, they're fresher than the 2011s, and while they lack the deep, concentrated richness of the top 2010s, they will deliver immense pleasure over the coming 2-3 years.

Looking at the weather, the season started with a dry winter (and a damaging frost early in February), followed by sporadic poor weather through the spring, yet with little true accumulation. This delayed, and negatively impacted, flowering and fruit set, setting the vintage up for uneven ripening, and a late harvest. Turning dry and sunny through the summer months, with little to no precipitation, the vintage saw 1,811 hours of sun, which is similar to 2010 (1,837 hours) and less than 2011 (1,905 hours). Water stress on the vines was a concern, but was helped by rain at the end of August. Between April and July, there was a scant 52 millimeters of precipitation recorded, which is similar to 2010 (which is one of the driest on record).

In September, growers commented on the difficulty in deciding when to harvest. Not only did all of the varieties ripen at different times, there was huge variance in maturity within individual varieties, and even on the same vine. This resulted in a labor-intensive harvest that required numerous passes through a vineyard and an extended picking duration. Estates that did multiple passes, followed by strict sorting once in the winery, made the best wine. All of this was complicated by a rain storm late in September. Some estates chose to harvest before the rain, and others chose to wait until early October to let the vines recover. It's difficult to assess the impact of this decision as superb wines were made in both cases. Yields are on the average of 30-32 hectoliters per hectare.

2011: As I wrote last year, 2011 produced a bevy of charming, easygoing and moderately concentrated releases. At their best, the wines are perfumed and aromatic, with mostly red-fruit driven profiles, light tannin and loads of charm. Most will need to be consumed in their first 7-8 years of life and it is a rare 2011 that will improve beyond a decade or so. It's worth noting that while this was a difficult vintage for Grenache, with uneven ripening, it is a solid vintage for Mourvèdre. On the down side to the vintage, the alcohol levels are elevated and the wines can show dry, astringent tannin. I think this is partly due to uneven ripening, as well as to additional extraction during fermentation due to increased alcohol. In fact, some of the less expensive Côtes du Rhône surpass a number of more expensive releases due to less extraction, sweeter tannin and more drinkable profiles.

Looking at where this vintage falls with regards to past vintages, it's a good to very good vintage that certainly surpasses 2008, yet is a fair step back from 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010. Nevertheless, given the structured and age-worthy 2010s, this vintage is ideally suited for purchasing as cellar-savers to drink over the coming 4-5 years while you wait on the 2010s. However, quality is slightly erratic, and this is not a vintage to buy across the board.

Looking at the weather details, here's what I wrote last September in Issue 13 of the Rhône Report:

"The vintage started with a mild, dry fall and dry early winter, yet ground water levels quickly

improved with substantial moisture in late winter and March. Good weather through the spring months of April and May resulted in a large crop set (which would have been called normal prior the recent string of drought vintages) and healthy vineyards going into June. Flowering was close to two weeks ahead of schedule, and record setting temperatures in June saw producers cancelling August vacations and planning for an early harvest. However, cooler temperatures and rain in July slowed the trend and pushed harvest back to a more normal timeframe. Both August and September were hot and dry, and a beautiful Indian summer allowed a very long harvest, with a number of domaines not finishing up until early October. Looking at the total number of days above 30C, 2011 recorded a massive 72 days (compared to 55 days in 2010). Precipitation-wise, large rainfalls early in the year, and then in July, helped keep the vines healthy, yet also, along with the higher yields, resulted in only moderate to good levels of concentration. Châteauneuf-du-Pape recorded 125 mm of moisture between June 10 and September 10 (compared to 30 mm in 2010). Yields on average are in the range of 33 hectoliters per hectare."

2011 & 2012 Southern Rhône: Part II - Gigondas, Vacqueyras and Rasteau

This is Part II of a series of articles (which I will now call a multi-part series) focusing on the 2011s and 2012s from the south of France. While Part I focused on Châteauneuf du Pape, this report focuses on the appellations of Gigondas, Vacqueyras and Rasteau (as well as including a number of wines from other southern Rhône regions). I will follow up with reviews on Cairanne, Costières de Nîmes, Côtes du Ventoux, Luberon and other smaller AOCs in subsequent reports. For a detailed review of the weather conditions in both 2011 and 2012, readers should look at my vintage overview in Issue 209.

With regard to the appellations focused on here, Gigondas is by far the standout, with a bevy of superb 2011s and extremely high-quality 2012s. In fact, I was shocked at the overall quality of the 2012s from this appellation, and in addition to the normal spice-driven aromatics and big structure that accompanies most wines from the region, the 2012s have beautiful purity of fruit and voluptuous, rounded textures that were hard to spit. Vacqueyras was also successful, more so in 2012 than 2011, with the majority of the releases being more mid-weight, charming and upfront. As a whole, this appellation rarely gets the concentration or structure that's found in the top Gigondas or Rasteaus. Nevertheless, there is a bevy of soft and delicious wines reviewed in this report. Rasteau struggled in 2011 and a large number of the wines were excessively tannic and harsh. The 2012s as a whole are much more successful, with sweeter tannin and more complete, balanced profiles.

Cheers!

Debbie Rios
Owner
Santiam Wine Company
1555, 12th SE Suite 130
Salem, Oregon 97302
503-589-0775
www.santiamwine.com
debbie@santiamwine.com