



THE WINE ADVOCATE Issue 183, 6-30-09

featured wines from **HAND PICKED SELECTIONS:**

- CALIFORNIA
- PROVENÇE
- LANGUEDOC
- ROUSSILLON
- SOUTHERN RHÔNE

HAND PICKED SELECTIONS, INC.

36 N Fifth Street, Warrenton, VA 20186 • Tel (540) 347-9400

www.handpickedselections.com

CALIFORNIA

2008 TRAVIS MONTEREY CHARDONNAY

88 PTS

This non-malolactic, non-oaked, stainless steel-aged Chardonnay represented by importer Dan Kravitz is a consistent value pick. The medium-bodied 2008 exhibits loads of pear, orange blossom, and lemon custard-like notes along with a hint of minerality, good acids, plenty of flavor, and surprising body as well as length. Enjoy it over the next 1-2 years.

ROUSSILLON

DOMAINE CABIRAU

Domaine Cabirau designates the small, new property in Maury purchased by importer Dan Kravitz.

2007 DOMAINE CABIRAU SERGE & TONY

88 PTS

Named for the gentlemen who oversee his vines and vinification, the 2007 Grenache Serge & Tony is raised in tank at the Cases-de-Pene (a.k.a. "Pena") cooperative from the fruit of 20 year old vines. It is still as exuberant and stuffed with ripe black raspberry as when reviewed in issue 178.

2007 DOMAINE CABIRAU LA BONTÉ DES AMIS

92 PTS

Vinified under the watchful eye of the proprietors of Domaine de L'Edre (the "friends" referred to in its name), Kravitz's old vines Grenache 2007 La Bonte des Amis is far more serious wine. Here, ripe, pure sweet black raspberry and strawberry fruit is tinged with orange zest, mint, and resin, and underlain by rich roasted meat, chestnut, and dark chocolate. Hints of white pepper and crushed stone add interest to the finish, where in addition a lovely sense of lift and refreshment emerges for all of the liqueur- and jam-like sweetness of fruit that underlies this wine. Jacques Castany of L'Edre points out that the picking date is critical for Grenache in Maury as it begins to lose its freshness almost as soon as it's reached expressive ripeness. The date seems to have been judged perfectly this time around. How it might age is a fascinating topic to discuss with the project's partners. I suspect it might well reward six or more years of cellaring.

ROUSSILLON (continued)

DOMAINE DE L'EDRE

Jacques Castany and Pascal Dieunidou moved into a cellar just down the street from Domaine du Clos des Fees in 2002, and have accumulated their estate through small inherited parcels, but they still have full-time jobs outside. Inspired by wines of the Northern Rhone, they have chosen to emphasize Syrah to an extent one seldom encounters in Roussillon – although, I hasten to add that I can find no similarity between the wines here and those of the Northern Rhone.

2007 DOMAINE DE L'EDRE CARRÉMENT ROUGE

92+ PTS

The 2007 Cotes du Roussillon Villages Carrement – half Syrah, with the rest Grenache and Carignan, given a long cold soak and raised entirely in tank – offers crushed stone, alkalinity, and smoke already in the nose, along with black raspberry, cherry and rhubarb, setting the themes for a palate that is sweetly ripe yet invigoratingly tart and saturated with manifestations of minerals. Pungent suggestions of scrub and herbs, then licorice and chocolate add further interest. This really blossoms with air, and impressive as it is now, I strongly suspect it needs a little time in bottle to completely break free of reductive coils. In what has become the hallmark for L'Edre's impressive wines, this marries impressive sheer density and formidable grip with exuberant fresh fruit and vivacity making for a wine of compelling energy and generosity, irresistible in its youth, even though one could surely continue to enjoy it for at least 3-4 years.

2006 DOMAINE DE L'EDRE CARRÉMENT ROUGE

91 PTS

The L'Edre 2006 Cotes du Roussillon Villages Carrement is even brighter and more exuberant than its 2007 counterpart, with terrific sweetness of black currant and cherry allied to tart fruit skin and luscious, fresh juiciness. Licorice and chocolate lend rich support to the fruit on the palate, and suggestions of wet stone underlie what is otherwise an entirely "above ground," fruit-dominated wine. While this, too, is almost impossible to put down (or spit out), the 2007 is a bit more interesting. I would plan to enjoy this over the next two years.

2007 DOMAINE DE L'EDRE "L'EDRE"

94 PTS

Just put into bottle when I tasted it, l'Edre's eponymous 2007 Cotes du Roussillon Villages L'Edre is 65% Syrah, 25% Grenache and 10% Carignan, and both fermented and aged in once-used barriques. (The team delighted in showing me how pigeage here really is by foot immersion.) Liqueur-like black fruits with nut oils, smoky black tea, roasted meat, brown spices, toasted nuts, and resinous herbs in the nose usher in an enormously richly fruited, broad, bitter-sweet palate of creme de cassis, black raspberry preserves, chocolate, and caramel, with carnal, herbal, and mineral (licorice, road tar) dimensions of correspondingly serious and palate-paving proportions. Rather than the sense of energy and grip with which the Carrement bottlings finish, this lingers with soothing, creamy richness. The tannins and alcohol are completely hidden. I can imagine following this for at least a half dozen years, although a track record for precisely this cuvee as currently rendered does not yet exist.

2006 DOMAINE DE L'EDRE "L'EDRE"

92 PTS

The 2006 Cotes du Roussillon Villages L'Edre was oddly reduced on first opening, with cassis leaf and pungent smokiness along with the sweet side of black currant, black raspberry and blueberry jam. But then the heavens – well, at least, the reductive curtain – were parted, and the glory of this wine revealed. With more brightness but less caressing texture and richness than the 2007, it invigorates the palate even as it is coated with sappy fruit concentrate. Pencil lead and a savory saline note add dynamic contrast in the finish to the wine's sheer sweetness of fruit and there is a lot of lift and a semblance of elegance here. I imagine this will be worth following for at least 5-7 years. Give this time in a decanter if serving soon.

PROVENCE

COMMANDERIE DE LA BARGEMONE

This is a reliable estate in beautiful Provence, and their just released 2008 whites and roses are delicious efforts in a vintage that is destined to live in the gigantic shadow cast by the 2007s from the southern Rhone and Provence.

2008 COMMANDERIE DE LA BARGEMONE CUVÉE MARINA WHITE 87 PTS

The 2008 Cuvee Marina white is dominated by its Sauvignon Blanc character. It reveals a subtle grassy, melony, and grapefruit-like nose, fresh, light to medium-bodied flavors, and plenty of crisp acidity. Enjoy it over the next year or so.

Bargemone consistently makes fine rosés, and in 2008 there are two offerings.

2008 COMMANDERIE DE LA BARGEMONE ROSÉ 87 PTS

The light pink-colored, light-bodied 2008 Rose exhibits delicate framboise and strawberry notes as well as fresh, primary flavors. It should be consumed over the next 6-9 months.

2008 COMMANDERIE DE LA BARGEMONE CUVÉE MARINA ROSÉ 88 PTS

More seriously endowed with more body is the copper/salmon-colored 2008 Cuvee Marina rose. A bigger, deeper, more complex effort, it should be drunk with more flavorful dishes.

2007 COMMANDERIE DE LA BARGEMONE RED 87 PTS

As for the red wines, the 2007 red reveals beautifully sweet tannins as well as a sexy, sensual style. Its pure, kirsch and black fruit notes are offered in a medium-bodied, supple format.

2007 COMMANDERIE DE LA BARGEMONE CUVÉE MARINA RED 87+ PTS

The 2007 Cuvee Marina red is a bigger, denser, more tannic and oaky effort, but it does not appear to be any better than the less expensive offering. It is built for a longer life of 3-4 years.

2007 COMMANDERIE DE LA BARGEMONE CUVÉE ELISABETH RED 90 PTS

The star of this line-up is Bargemone's blend of 40% Syrah, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 20% Grenache, the 2007 Cuvee Elisabeth. This outstanding, dark ruby/purple-tinged 2007 offers plenty of black cherry and cassis fruit, beautiful purity, medium body, attractive depth and suppleness, and no hard edges. Drink it over the next 3-4 years.

SOUTHERN RHÔNE

SÉLECTION LAURENCE FÉRAUD, PLUME BLEUE, PLAN PEGAU

These cuvees, which I previously profiled before they were bottled, are now in the marketplace, and they represent three bargains made by Laurence Feraud at the famed Chateauneuf du Pape estate, Domaine Pegau.

2007 PLUME BLEUE

87 PTS

The 2007 Plume Bleue is performing even better than when I reviewed it last summer. This cuvee, also called Pegovino in markets outside the United States, offers plenty of sweet kirsch, earthy, peppery, spicy notes as well as an attractive round, expansive mouthfeel. A blend of equal parts Syrah and Grenache, it should drink well for two years.

NV PLAN PEGAU LOT #2007

88 PTS

The non-vintage Plan Pegau Lot #2007 reveals abundant meaty/kirsch notes intermixed with aromas of licorice, lavender, and earth. It is a full-flavored red that could easily be mistaken for a good Chateauneuf du Pape. It, too, should be drunk over the next two years.

2007 SÉLECTION LAURENCE FÉRAUD SÉGURET

90 PTS

The outstanding 2007 Cotes du Rhone-Villages Seguret is a brilliant wine as well as a fabulous bargain. Aromas of licorice, lavender, cassis, and kirsch emerge from this dense ruby/purple-hued offering. Full-bodied and pure with the sweet tannins that make this vintage so impressive, it can be enjoyed over the next 5-6 years.

DOMAINE LE PLAN-VERMEERSCH

2007 LE PLAN-VERMEERSCH GT-A

90 PTS

The dense blue/purple-colored 2007 GT-A Vin de Pays du Drome, is made from Aramon, a grape varietal that is rarely encountered anymore. It offers up abundant aromas of flowers, incense, graphite, pen ink, and black fruits followed by a full-bodied, powerful mouthfeel. This unique wine should drink nicely for 3-4 years.

2007 LE PLAN-VERMEERSCH GT-C

88 PTS

The dark ruby/purple-tinged, medium-bodied 2007 GT-C Vin de Pays du Drome (100% Carignan) exhibits dusty, earthy notes intertwined with hints of tree bark, berries, kirsch, and spice. Although not as impressive as the Aramon, it is a heck-of-a-good wine as well as a decent value.

2007 LE PLAN-VERMEERSCH GT-G

91 PTS

The star of this trio is the 2007 GT-G Cotes du Rhone, a 100% Grenache cuvee produced from very old vines. An explosive perfume of black cherry liqueur, licorice, pepper, and roasted Provencal herbs is followed by a full-bodied, expansive, fleshy, pure, beautifully textured wine that can be enjoyed over the next 3-4 years.

LANGUEDOC

DOMAINE/CHÂTEAU DE LANCYRE

Bernard Durand and Regis Valentin continue to render distinctively delicious wines that offer outstanding value of a sort not always to be found in the increasingly renowned Pic Saint-Loup sub-appellation.

2007 LANCYRE ROUSSANNE

90 PTS

Aromas of white peach, pear, lime, kumquat, white pepper, honey, and lavender in their 2007 Roussanne (reviewed already in issue 178, along with the estate's outstanding 2007 rose) lead to a dense, subtly creamy and oily, yet juicy, refreshing palate featuring salt and pepper-dusted melon, pear skin, and citrus. This really fans out in the finish, with herbal and floral notes re-emerging. Having had a chance to taste a few older bottlings last December, I am now confident in saying that if you can keep your hands off of a few bottles of this for 2-3 years you will be rewarded with a different sort of pleasure. In Europe, this bottling – which, incidentally, includes a dollop of Viognier – is labeled “Rouviere.”

2007 LANCYRE LA COSTE D'ALEYRAC

(90-91) PTS

A cuvee of Syrah and Grenache with a bit of Carignan first essayed in 2000, the Lancyre 2007 Coteaux du Languedoc Pic Saint-Loup La Coste d'Aleyrac – due to have been bottled in February – is full of ripe black fruits to be sure, but offers more herbal, carnal, and mineral dimensions than the corresponding 2006. An impression of saline, marjoram-laced beef bouillon with cherry and purple plum extend to a long, satisfyingly juicy, clear, faintly and stimulatingly bitter finish. Look for this exceptional value to offer pleasure for another 3-4 years.

2006 LANCYRE LA COSTE D'ALEYRAC

90 PTS

Lancyre's 2006 Coteaux du Languedoc Pic Saint-Loup La Coste d'Aleyrac offers sweet cherry and plum fruit with contrasting bitterness of their pits and a dusting of cardamom and nutmeg; a fetching combination of creamy texture and refreshment; and a lip-smacking finish. This exuberant and polished blend – while not riveting in its complexity – will offer outstanding value and pleasure over the next 2-3 years.

2007 LANCYRE VIEILLES VIGNES

(91-92) PTS

Domaine Lancyre's 2007 Coteaux du Languedoc Pic Saint-Loup Vieilles Vignes – from Syrah with 35% Grenache, tasted assembled from tank – offers a marrow-like sweet, meaty savor as well as stone and graphite minerality to complement its abundance of rich, fresh black raspberry, plum, and cherry. This superb value offers abundant herbal inner-mouth aromatics as well, and clings with invigorating vivacity and intriguing complexity. I would feel comfortable holding it for 4-6 years. For a note on the impressive 2006 Vieilles Vignes bottling, consult issue 178.

2007 LANCYRE GRANDE CUVÉE RED

(87-88+) PTS

I cannot pretend that my palate agrees with those of Durand and Valentin as to the virtues of the barrel regimen employed for the estate's ostensibly top, Syrah-dominated – “Grande” – cuvee, which includes a bit of Mourvedre as well as Grenache. From (50% new) barrel, the 2007 Coteaux du Languedoc Pic Saint-Loup Grande Cuvee is attractively scented with cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla, and resin, along with sweetly ripe black fruits. But there is a slightly gummy sensation on a creamily-textured palate, and a sacrifice of clarity, minerality, and refreshment, virtues prominent in virtually all of the other wines at this address. The finish is broad and sweet, but with a slightly drying spot seemingly contributed by the wood. Based on past renditions I tasted, the aforementioned virtues and drawbacks are typical for this cuvee, but further carnal and mineral dimensions may well emerge. At the very least, this will hold satisfactorily for at least 4-6 years, indeed, the estate does not even release this wine until it has had 2-3 years in bottle.