

SÉMAPHOR

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THE NEWSLETTER OF LE VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPH AND DOMAINE LA ROQUETTE



WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO?
Since French hypermarkets have taken to holding fairs featuring all manner of wines, we're back on the subject: when selling wine, you're best taking care who you sell to if you're keen not to see it end up on the shelves of some retail-sector rhinoceros.

A traditional and venerable cellar-owner from Beaune in the Côte d'Or, for instance, recently specialised in resale to the mass distributors. Now he's no longer content with betraying his partners, but is threatening them with legal action for "refusal of sale" if they oppose his good intentions.

That's how the Vieux Télégraphe was threatened with legal proceedings for choosing to stay faithful to the traditional circuit and refusing to fulfil a 600-bottle order from a purchasing group.

What is the world coming to?

Will restrictions ever be applied to the power, influence and ambition of the modern distribution chains?

Will we vigneron one day be powerless to choose the people to whom we sell the wine we have brought into the world and pampered for years?

No, truly I can't believe it!

1995 VINTAGE PROMPTS SMILES RIGHT DOWN THE RHÔNE VALLEY

The first 10 months of 1995 provided the entire Rhône Valley - North and South - with very consistent climatic conditions. A cold, relatively dry winter; a fairly damp spring (with rainfall 30% higher than normal in April/May); and a very hot, dry summer - June, July and August were half as rainy as the 20-year average.

This climatic scheme strongly favoured the vegetative development of the vine, which went smoothly and without a hitch right through to complete maturity.

Summer all by itself stood for "concentration, structure and richness"; in the areas conducive to early flowering, full blossom was recorded on 5th June, so we were expecting to begin the harvest between 7th and 15th September, depending on the exposure of the vines. The wait until September was therefore a calm one, though we know it to be an unpredictable month.

In the first part of the month it bucketed down - twice, on the 11th and 19th - to be followed by a stretch when the Mistral blew long and cold, making September 95 the chilliest of the past decade.

And it was actually this cold spell that gave the 1995 vintage its full dimension, perfectly neutralising the negative effects of the previous falls of rain and offering the vigneron a healthy crop. All in all, the red wines are well-coloured, structured and concentrated, calling pleasantly to mind the vintages of 89 and 90.

From the North to South of the valley, the whites have the signature of the soil all over them, not excessively fruity or fresh. Châteauneuf-du-Pape mirrors the vintage's characteristics: good consistency throughout the appellation; greater average richness for the reds than in 94; and for the whites a style that should benefit from laying down.

At the Vieux Télégraphe, harvesting began on



12th September, ending on the 29th. The resulting reds are generous in terms of fruit but also in volume and structure; the Syrahs are wonderfully perfumed, concentrated, full; the Mourvèdres are surprisingly fruity and fresh, well-matched with their legendary tannic structure; and the Grenaches - about 30 ha of which are over 60 years old - which were verging on overmaturity when picked, are the ideal accomplice to seal and bring out the aromatic blend - 1995 may be compared to 94 and 78.

In the Vieux Télégraphe white, the generosity of some vintages can become a defect, and this may be the case with the 95. We were a little surprised by how fast maturity was achieved; the result is a warm, fleshy wine whose aromas do not boast all the freshness of a new wine; definitely more of mealtime wine than one for tasting - but isn't that the weakness (or strength) of the

**"1995
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Southern white wines?

The reds at La Roquette have given something quite as remarkable: the blendings are rich, fat and abundantly fruity and fresh. Our cellar is host to clearly the finest vintage vinified at La Roquette since 1986, the year we took over the estate.

The whites from the cold, sandy ground in the centre of the appellation were not influenced by these strong maturities: the nose is fresh - white flowers and citrus -, and the slightly acid mouth is generous but well-balanced. The 95 vintage has really brought home to us the potential of the La Roquette vineyard, in a year when the Grenaches and Mourvèdres reached perfect maturity. On top of that is the increasing experience of a competent team; I would like to take this opportunity to offer them my sincerest congratulations.

To summarise, 1995 can be proud of coming along at just the right time to restore the confidence of all the Rhône's vigneron - in a nutshell, to put the smiles back on their faces.

**Sémaphore*: n. (from sema- and -phore). In days gone by, an arm-waving transmitter of Claude Chappe's aerial telegraphy.

A NEW FACE FOR LA ROQUETTE

Getting to know people well takes time, and the same is true of a soil: how it reacts to various climatic conditions, the best it can offer, its weaknesses...

Since 1986, when we began vinifying the wines of Domaine La Roquette - whose soils are very different from those of the Vieux Télégraphe -, we have learnt a lot, but one thing especially: nothing in the vigneron's trade can really be transposed from one geographical location to another, even in the same appellation.

Only when you begin to know your environment can you start thinking about taking certain directions, certain decisions, which must essentially be faithful to the natural features, so that the most can be coaxed from them while respecting the strictest of customs, local traditions and the

personality of the soils.

This experience of 10 vintages, and the changes it has brought about, are now encouraging us to alter the graphic presentation of the Domaine, which must adapt to reality and be its reflection.

A personality coming into its own, authenticity, warmth, elegance, restraint, femininity... in this new visual identity, we have tried to record the entire maturing process that has slowly evolved from vintage to vintage.

Just as, by dint of its robust virility, the Vieux Télégraphe is more associated with stone, the image of La Roquette is more naturally matched with forged iron's soft and warm, though solid, lines.

To begin with, this new presentation will be used in all the commercial documentation; then, for the labels and boxes as from April 96, when the 94 vintage goes to market.



VITI-ENOLOGY

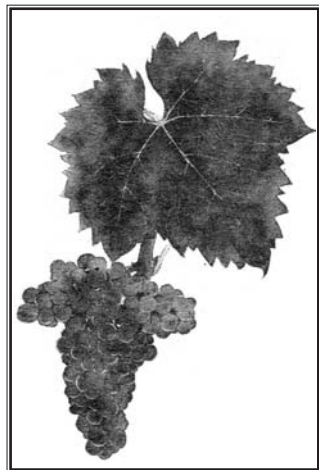
THE MOURVÈDRE, A PROVENÇAL BY ADOPTION

It adapted so easily and naturally to the climate and soils of Grande Provence that even the vigneron thought it indigenous. The Mourvèdre grape, it has to be said, has been grown there for over four centuries - and abundantly so, since prior to the phylloxera invasion it was the dominant variety - especially in the Department of Var.

It appears to have Spanish origins, hailing more particularly from two small towns whose names it probably borrowed: Murviedro (in the Province of Valencia) and Mataro (near Barcelona, the name it goes by today in California).

After it was almost completely destroyed by phylloxera, the vigneron in charge of rebuilding the vineyards replaced it by more productive varieties better suited to the

rootstocks of the period. Only later, when the AOCs were created, did it regain its proper place, with the backing of forceful local personalities -



such as Lucien Peyraud of Domaine Tempier - well aware they relied on the Mourvèdre to ensure the quality and typical character of their production.

Since then it has been taking on ever-greater importance in areas producing quality wines, which can offer it the sun and heat needed for its tight little berries, with their typically thick skin, to mature.

This most rustic of varieties is happy on sun-drenched terraces and stony, windswept plateaux, where, after acquiring complete maturity, it provides the tannic structure and wild fruit sometimes missing from its blending partners such as the Grenache, Syrah and Cinsault. Its geographical expansion has, of course, been limited by its deeply Provençal-Mediterranean character: of the 120,000 ha planted throughout the world, 115,000 ha are on the northern edge of the Mediterranean, and 160 of these are at Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

For 6 people.

Ingredients: 6 slightly thick pieces of ham cooked on the bone - 2 soup spoons of chopped shallots - 60 g of butter - 250 g of crème fraîche - 20 cl of white Châteauneuf-du-Pape - 2 soup spoons of vinegar - 1 soup spoon of tomato purée - salt - pepper - nutmeg.

• Arrange the ham on a serving plate that will fit in the oven.

Vigneron's Ham by MAGUY BRUNIER

- Fry the shallots in the butter in a saucepan until golden.
- Add the white wine and vinegar.
- Reduce to about 3 soup spoons.
- Add the cream and the purée.
- Heat without bringing to the boil; add the salt, pepper and nutmeg.
- Pass the sauce through a strainer onto the ham.
- Heat gently in the oven to blend the flavours.
- Serve hot.

• P R E S S •

The magazine **SAVEURS** (issue n°53, September 95) selected La Roquette 93 red for its "Cave de l'automne" together with several "Châteauneuf-du-Pape de chasse", 'hunting' wines that marry especially well with game (p. 91).

The **GUIDE HACHETTE DES VINS** 1996, published in Sept./Oct. 95, awards the Pigeolet red 93 a "coup de cœur" ('soft spot') recommendation on page 928.

In his **WINE ADVOCATE** N°101 of 28/10/95, Robert Parker reminds us that he's an ardent defender of the wines of the Rhône Valley, and most especially those from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. His comments on the 1993 and 1994 Vieux Télégraphe, La Roquette and Vieux Mas des Papes vintages were highly complimentary.

The **WINE SPECTATOR** has selected the Vieux Mas des Papes 93 for its buying guide on two occasions, in the 15/10 and 15/11 issues: its comments are very positive.

In its Nov. 95 issue, **GAULT & MILLAU** spoke in well-deserved praise of Le Vert Galant restaurant in Carpentras (one star in the Michelin Guide). Thank you to Mr & Mrs Megean for putting the Vieux Télégraphe in the picture.

In **CUISINE ET VINS DE FRANCE** N°23, out in December 95, Mr Antoine Westermann, chef at Le Buerechiesel in Strasbourg, chooses the Vieux Télégraphe 90 to accompany his "ballotine of hare à la Royale" (p. 67).

We thank him warmly for his confidence.

SÉMAPHORÉ

PUBLISHED BY:
Vignobles Brunier
Route de Châteauneuf-du-Pape
84370 BEDARRIDES - FRANCE
Tél. 90 33 00 31 - Fax. 90 33 18 47

EDITORS:
Maguy et Daniel Brunier

ARTWORK:
Terre Neuve

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