

SÉMAPHOR

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THE NEWSLETTER OF LE VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE, DOMAINE LA ROQUETTE AND DOMAINE LES PALLIÈRES



SEE YOU AT VINEXPO ON 19-23 JUNE 2005

It's a recent decision: we *will* be taking part in Vinexpo 2005, in association with Californian estate Bonny Doon Vineyard, whose main labels are Le Cigare Volant and Old Telegram. Randall Grahm is a long-time friend, and when the idea of teaming up for Vinexpo began to germinate, the hard detail and the vibes felt positive – that was the clincher.

We felt it would be very interesting to juxtapose our two philosophies for a few days, and the fair will also provide the opportunity to present our Lebanese wine.

Everyone's well aware that the vine and wine industry is in the midst of a real revolution; our points of reference are vanishing one after another, there are more and more market players, the rules are changing very fast, and the *vins de terroir* that we make must raise their profile to keep their place on the chessboard, while also retaining their genuine personality. Because that's the challenge: staying true to ourselves in a marketplace that's undergoing far-reaching change.

Let's talk about it at Vinexpo: hall 1, stand A185.

Daniel Brunier

2004 VINTAGE: SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED

It's always a slightly tricky business. To understand a vintage from a production area such as ours, where the climate is so temperamental, you need to travel back to its origins – in this case, autumn 2003.

A great deal of rain fell in the final two months of 2003 (about three times the average), slowly and steadily, allowing decent reserves to build up. Once again, that's when the vintage's foundations were laid – without our really registering – because the winter and much of the following spring, April excepted, turned out to be dry. The winter cold was never too intense but lasted until the end of March, which meant the buds burst later than in the five previous years: 2004 was already unveiling its features. Despite a wet April, the rain deficit widened further as summer approached and we had to wait until 17 or 18 August for a downpour that really saved the day.

From then on, the grapes were able to mature in favourable conditions, consistently behind schedule and with a quantity shortfall of around 10%, due to flowering being disrupted by the wind-buffed dryness of June.

We therefore approached sampling in a calm frame of mind, cheered by stable fine weather and determined to wait for total maturity in order to extract absolutely everything from a vintage which, on the vine, already looked poised to be outstanding. And outstanding it was, courtesy of a dream Indian summer. Harvesting began on 15 September and ended on 7 October in ideal meteorological conditions.

With the red Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the Plateaux de la Crau and du Piélong gave the sort of results only achieved in great-vintage years: the Grenache gives an impression of generosity, freshness, appealing maturity, richness and harmony; the Syrah is taut, concentrated, dark, fresh and elegant; the Mourvèdre, though a shade more austere, tastes very rich, very "stony", long and fresh.

The synergy between the varieties seems obvious, and each displays a noble, elegant structure. The whites are remarkably fresh and balanced. They have the minerality and relief that typify the great ageing vintages, and a feel-good velvet creaminess.

Clos La Roquette was bottled on 15 April, and after a month's rest will regain its full personality; the Vieux Télégraphe will go to market in late 2005, after a markedly longer maturation.

As for the red Gigondas, the 2004 vintage will also make its mark. It's already shaping up as our best product since 1998, when we took over Les Pallières. We have the impression we've discovered a new realm of harmony between the Grenache's fruit, terroir and richness.

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An over-ripeness is tangible but masks neither the minerality nor the freshness of its fruit and structure. The only downside, as with our Châteauneuf-du-Pape wines, is the

yield: average output across our crus is 28hl/ha.

The 2004 red Le Pigeoulet is no exception; it's appealing, fresh, fruity, upright and elegant, with no edge of harshness. This too is certainly a high point since 1998, when the current blend was introduced.

It's not in our nature to use superlatives, but with the 2004 we have little choice.

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