

# SÉMAPHOR

N°19 - MAY 2007

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



## WINE WITH AN ACCENT

That's it, we've cracked. We've dared to do the deed. And all thanks to a simple accent. Not ours, of course. Not the one that betrays our Provençal origins whenever we speak, but a backward-tilting accent found in an old document and which has even caused a change to the spelling of "Roquète". We have dared to create a special cuvée. Some feel it detracts from the overall blend, while others think it enhances the local wine-and-vine fabric and the range of wines we take pleasure in creating. It bears the name "L'Accent de La Roquète" and its main mission is to raise high the banner of Grenache Noir, the royal grape variety of the southern Rhône Valley.

But did you know that one of the first special cuvées – and definitely the first in our appellation – was created in 1915 by Hippolyte Brunier and his sons? In early February, we were fortunate enough to taste the 1933 vintage, and it was fantastically well preserved. Sheer joy.

This ambassador from another age was generously handed back to us by Patrick Rosso, of Cave de la Tour in the Ardèche, and his friend Jacques Cairel, with whom we uncorked the bottle amid high emotion. It was a great tasting moment. And you know what? It was pure Grenache, from vines on a high stony plateau – Henri swears it's true!

Daniel Brunier

## 2006 VINTAGE IS PURE HAPPINESS!

*As I put pen to paper and describe the climatological background to the 2006 vintage and its characteristics, I really feel like I'm repeating myself: strong winds, sunny, dry... it bears a fairly marked resemblance to its predecessors. Of course, the standard remains very high, like the three previous years since 2003.*

*For a full review we must go back to autumn 2005, a dry, cold period during which only November provided a little water. The winter that followed was just as dry, despite a few falls of snow which slightly offset the lack of water but not the chilly temperatures: it was our coldest winter in 15 years.*

*Naturally we were hoping for a rainy spring, but we didn't get it. And consequently, by the time summer began, the water deficit had reached 40%, after a run of three dry years. But Lady Luck was smiling on us (if not on the holiday-makers): despite overpowering heat we had plentiful rainfall, well spread over the season, which coaxed the grapes to mature steadily and completely.*

*In very favourable conditions, harvesting approached fast. And at the very start of September, the secateurs began snipping, only finally going quiet on 9 October, five weeks later. That said, in September, rain twice forced us to suspend picking for a few days.*

*Indeed, these were serious rains – which, given the grapes' perfect health at full maturity, certainly gives the vintage a spe-*

*cial character without affecting the intrinsic quality of the grapes, namely their freshness and clean fruit. And freshness is definitely not in short supply with the 2006 vintage: the Vieux Télégraphe, Roquète and Télégramme whites have a rare liveliness; their fruit is fresh, powerful and elegant; their mouthfeel is creamy; and their balance is comparable to that of the 2005, though they are perhaps a little shorter.*

*The reds have a quite singular presence: fresh, powerful, long and well balanced. They have a thoroughbred richness with precise structure and clean aromas.*

*At Les Pallières, a similar tune is playing: balance, freshness, elegance and thoroughbred style. This vintage follows on from two really super years but is in no way inferior; on the contrary, it has a very well-defined personality in which, once again, the minerality conferred by old vines plays a major role. The red and white Pigeolet are particularly interesting, lively and full of positive energy. The white, still fully vinified and matured in foudres, is certainly the best vintage yet – probably a combination of vine age, savoir-faire and the year's specificities.*

*In short, a 2006 vintage of very fine calibre. Comparisons are hard for the time being, but we might end up rating it a blend of the 2005 and 2001...*

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

## PALLIÈRES 2004 : A NEW LEVEL REACHED?

The name of the lieu-dit Les Pallières definitely has its origins in the word palier\* which refers to the differences in level between the rows of vines planted there. You walk up through the vines as if climbing a giant stairway, which rises continuously though increasingly steeply.

But the level alluded to in the title is, you'll have understood, very different. It is the fruit of this particular terroir, of the results achieved since 1999. We have renovated the vineyards, built a new winery, repeatedly revisited the fundamentals of vinification and maturation, pondered time and again the right degree of grape ripening, and assessed the reactions of the various micro-terroirs that form the



estate. Now, given how the 2004 vintage has bloomed in bottle, we dare suggest it has attained a new level of personality – marking the point at which all the elements we have implemented since arriving at the foot of the Dentelles de Montmirail have begun to mature.

Resting on our achievements is not the house style, quite the contrary. We certainly don't feel that the Pallières 2004 sets the ultimate standard of what we can do here, but it is our best effort to date. It perfectly fits the style of wine we had in mind when we came here, and it is the platform on which we will continue our efforts.

\* level, platform, stage

## THE ACCENT OF LA ROQUÈTE

Here is a wine that does not possess all the ingredients of a special cuvée.

There are no oak barriques, because the wine is aged in foudres for two years. No super-charged extraction, no blackness of colour, and no record-breaking alcohol scores. No, there's none of that.



Our idea was not to violate the naturalness of Grenache, quite the contrary. We wish to let it blossom gently, in keeping with tradition. To respect its requirements while it unveils all the minerality of the soil in which it is rooted. All the balance and elegance it yields in the great years. And, of course, all the richness we associate with it. For Grenache has the great quality of not cannibalising the terroir for its own benefit; rather, it develops the terroir's personality for the greater pleasure of enthusiasts who love profound, genuine and serious wines.

You get my gist. L'Accent is, and will be in the great vintages of the future, a hymn to old Grenache – which, though it has its qualities and flaws, remains the king of varieties in the southern Rhône Valley and a great ambassador for the vin de terroir philosophy.

The features that form this terroir are: Grenache vines planted for 60 years in the entrails of a high stony plateau (the lieu-dit Pielong) to the North of the village of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, on a slightly South-leaning slope; an increasingly Mediterranean climate (with no irrigation, of course); and a team of people who respect this natural combination and strive to fulfil its potential.

That is the philosophy on which L'Accent is founded. Four thousand bottles that accentuate the true values of the grower's métier: working hard in the vineyards and simply "escorting" the wine as it matures in the cellars.

## WELCOME TO LEO

In November 2006, Leonardo Borsi took over the position of Cellar Master when Alain Narjoux departed. This means he is in charge of our wines from the moment vinification ends through to bottling – in close collaboration with his cellar team on one hand and the estate managers on the other.

He is, of course, also heavily involved in vinification and the essential decisions regarding the cellars, in a college of three alongside Frédéric and Daniel Brunier.

Leonardo, 28, is an Argentinian whose passion for wine naturally prompted him to emigrate to France 10 years ago to pursue the studies enabling him to make it his profession. During this period his path crossed that of Vignobles Brunier: in 2004, he did a vinification training placement at Vieux Télégraphe.

So it's a young man who we have invited to join our team, well aware of the weight we are placing on his shoulders.

What we are counting on, more than his experience, is his open-mindedness, his desire to learn, his fresh perspective, his sensibility and his ambition.

We sincerely hope that his passion, dedication and energy will be reflected in the wines he is given to make and mature.

# P R E S S R E V I E W

**DECANTER - FEB 07**  
**CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE 2004**

L'ACCENT DE LA ROQUÈTE 2004 (highly recommended) 16.5/20  
Open, generous, dried raspberry, pure. Fantastic, lots of attitude. Spicy, open, clear, generous, pure, refined. Up to 3 years.

## TAST PRO

**Bettane et Dessauve**  
**9 April 2007 - N°34/35**  
**GIGONDAS**

**DOMAINE LES PALLIÈRES**

This estate, reputed for its terroir, is run by the Brunier family, who own the Vieux Télégraphe and La Roquette estates in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. They teamed up with American wine merchant Kermit Lynch to purchase this Gigondas estate. At Les Pallières, vinification is gravity-assisted with 80% Grenache grapes (with stems) of 60 years average age. The wines are neither fined nor filtered.

Only one cuvée is produced. In their early years the wines are not easily accessible, but time reveals their uncommon aromatic charm and a structure that keeps on maturing. A wine for patient yet demanding wine lovers.

## TASTING :

**GIGONDAS, 2005 red**  
Vat sample.

Oak not yet integrated. A sample with promising juice. Great finesse, with purity and pedigree. 16/20.

**GIGONDAS, 2004 red (16)**  
Bottled in June 2006.

A powerful nose, dominated by peony and pepper. Dense mouthfeel with tight tannins, and gorgeously chewy. A solid wine, appealingly smooth and rounded on the finish. A fine future beckons. A notch below the 2005. 15.5/20.

**GIGONDAS, 2003 red (15)**

A nose marked by its vintage. Notes of very ripe red fruit and red-fruit jam. Mild spices, pot-cooked jam, and a few tertiary notes. Delicate on the palate, with great finesse. The tannins are a little firmer (drier on the finish), i.e. the hallmark of the vintage. A less open finish than the 2004 or 2005 – again, typical of the vintage. 15/20.

## TASTED

**WINTER 2006/2007**

**LA ROQUÈTE, 2003 red**

Color : Attractive, ruby purple, garnet heart, brilliant flame reflections.

Nose : beautifully aromatic! Freshness, minerality, length, intensity and balance. Palate: intense, fine fruit flavours. Relatively powerful, yet perfectly silky tannins, which preserve its freshness. Balanced acidity. Well executed wine, well managed grape maturity. All freshness and ripeness of fruit flavours captured delicately in this exceptional wine.

**VINUM - DEC 2006**

**LA ROQUÈTE, 2003 red**

Quite simply superb. It has character, roundness, density, pedigree, structure and warmth, but doesn't feel at all heavy or coarse. A wine for long winter evenings.

## WINE ADVOCATE

**L'ACCENT 2004 - 93**

The blockbuster special cuvée of 4000 bt from a 70-year-old Grenache vineyard in the lieu-dit called les Palons, has produced two remarkable wines in 2004 and 2005. The 2004 is super-rich, elegant, with beautiful raspberry and kirsh liqueur notes dominating the aromatics, a voluptuous, full-bodied mouthfeel with an almost Pinot Noir-like freshness and flavor profile.

This is a beauty that can be drunk now or cellared for 12-15 years.



**VIEUX TELEGRAPHE, 2005 red - 92-94**

A beautiful wine is this 2005. A more saturated dark ruby, it offers up notes of seaweed wrappers

intermixed with truffle, black raspberry, cherry, and some blackcurrant, pepper, and iodine. Fleshy, full-bodied, with good acidity, moderately high tannins, and a long, rich finish, this wine will require 2-4 years of bottle age then drink well for close to 20 years.

## WINE SPECTATOR ONLINE

**DOMAINE DU VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE, 2004 red.**

Pure and silky, with raspberry, cocoa, truffle and mineral notes that glide along the fresh acidity. The long finish lets the fruit and minerality hang nicely, with garrigue in the background. Should blossom in the cellar. Best from 2008 through 2025.

**LA ROQUÈTE, 2004 - 91**

High-toned at first, with cherry and floral aromas, this quickly shows more density though, with layers of blackcurrant and graphite along with taut, sinewy tannins that drive the finish. Drink now through 2017.

7500cs made.

**SÉMAPHORE**

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