

SÉMAPHOR

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

EDITORIAL



Mégaphone

Only rarely do we create a new wine and a new label. It is always an intense moment, and a source of the utmost anxiety. The previous additions to the family arrived together – *Terrasse du Diable* and *Les Racines*, for the 2007 vintage – but they arose merely from a plot division that affected neither our overall output nor our range of appellations.

Mégaphone (AOC Ventoux), which makes its debut with the 2011 vintage, will truly be the “new kid on the block”. It comes from the addition of a plot to our vineyards in the area of Caromb, and more precisely in the municipality of Saint Hippolyte-Graveyron, on the westernmost

edge of the AOC Ventoux appellation, between *Beaumes de Venise* and *Caromb*, nestling on the southern slopes of the *Dentelles de Montmirail*. It is a little paradise.

Just two hectares of vines, planted with *Grenache* and *Syrah*. But their situation and aspect, and the results of the first harvest, have prompted us to not include these grapes in the classic *Pigeolet* blend and instead to make a wine in its own right, and place it at the entry level of our range: a Ventoux vinified at *Domaine La Roquette*.

It will be called *Mégaphone*, after the old-fashioned device used for verbally conveying messages with the timbre and feeling of the messenger’s voice. Up to now, we had remained in the realm of writing; with *Mégaphone* we embrace orality, and thought it we wish to promote this magnificent region that stretches out from *Mont Ventoux*, “le géant de Provence” – a region which, though it often takes some taming, assuredly possesses great charm and depth.

Daniel Brunier

REWORKING THE RANGE

A product range, even one with the most traditional of contents, is not immortal and is regularly called into question by the market, by a sense of staleness, or by a need to evolve, grow simpler, and adapt to a changing world. We have decided to make our range more logical and gradated, by reducing our red *Châteauneuf-du-Pape* offering to three wines from the present four; and by introducing a Ventoux in the existing space between the *Vin de Pays* and the *Gigondas* wines.

As the Ventoux will only add about 7,000 bottles, the key point is clearly the “thinning out” of the *Châteauneufs*.

It is time to face facts: with more and more of our foreign distributors and retailers working across all of our products, we have for some time noted a serious rivalry between the *Domaine La Roquette* and *Télégramme* reds, because these two wines are priced in fairly tight proximity.

We are also realising that the *Télégramme* label and name, given their direct association with the image of *Vieux Télégraphe*, are overpowering the identity of *Domaine La Roquette* – even though the two wines’ intrinsic qualities are not comparable; indeed, the latter’s are actually superior. What we are witnessing is a strong brand naturally coming out on top.

So we have the difficulty of promoting two rival labels in our own sales network, with all the conflicts of interest that this involves; the frustrations felt by some, the dissatisfaction felt by others; and a substantial loss of energy for practically everyone, because our efforts are not in sync.

This prompts several observations: *Télégramme* is punching above its weight; the attractive personality of the Piedlong lieu-dit is only reflected in the few bottles of *L'Accent de la Roquette*, despite its much higher potential; and lastly, the *Domaine La Roquette* label lacks personality in every respect.

To harmonise our *Châteauneuf-du-Pape* family in terms of quality and presentation, the solution is to follow our philosophy of "terroirs de caractère", as we already have done at *Les Pallières* (*Les Racines* and *Terrasse du Diable*) and at *Vieux Télégraphe* (*La Crau*): *L'Accent de la Roquette* will therefore become the estate's only face, made from grapes all grown on the stony *Plateau du Piedlong*, the lieu-dit that is home to all of our oldest *Grenache* vines. All the other plots at *Domaine La Roquette* will go into *Télégramme*, as is already the case at *Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe*.

Our range of *Châteauneuf-du-Pape* reds will thus be reduced to three labels – *Télégramme*, *L'Accent* and *Vieux Télégraphe* – and will, of course, have price-points that fit this new arrangement; this will especially apply to *L'Accent*, which will become far more accessible and be perfectly pitched halfway between the other two points.

This change will be made in all our markets, including France, where *Télégramme* is not currently distributed; it will thus make its French debut as our entry-level red *Châteauneuf-du-Pape*. As for our *Châteauneuf* whites, no changes are planned. *Clos La Roquette* and *Vieux Télégraphe* each play their role, and perfectly occupy their own place.

Le Vieux Télégraphe
Domaine
LA ROQUÈTE
au petit bonheur **Rouge**
Les Pallières Blanc
Le Pigeoulet des Brunier
Massaya Rosé
SÉMAPHORE
Télégramme VIEUX·MARC

This new organisation will take effect in September of 2013, the year when the 2011 reds will go to market. *Télégramme* will be available from 1 April; and *L'Accent* and *Vieux Télégraphe*, as usual, from September.

It will then be time to measure the remaining gap between our vision of the future and the markets' daily activity.

2011 VINTAGE: VERY HANDSOME IN CHÂTEAUNEUF, GREAT AT LES PALLIÈRES

Even more than some of its predecessors, the 2011 vintage was a hard one to explore and take possession of so that we could provide a serious initial presentation of it, free of bombast or understatement, which would not be obsolete a few months down the line. On the contrary, we want this presentation to serve as a template during the long marketing period. We had to wait until May 2012 to really feel its volume, its grain, its exact amplitude; the true personality of its tannins, its fruits and even its colours.

The weather data for the period influencing the 2011 vintage (October 2010 to September 2011) can be described in summary as hotter and drier than normal: temperatures were half a degree higher than average, and rainfall was 150 mm (20%) lower. But, as is well known, average values stifle personality.

With a cold dry autumn in 2010 followed by a mild dry winter, we were sure to reach the end of February with a serious water deficit, which in our southern Rhône Valley climate is a real handicap; the reserves that build up in winter – and are so precious when summer comes – were 20% down. Fortunately March was very rainy, so, come spring, the vineyards were in a near-normal state (-4%). Note that the structure of our soils – lots of surface stones, and substantial clay and stone content in the subsoil – means that during heavy rainfall there is almost no run-off; rather, like the fine winter rains, it seeps between the pebbles and stays there, available to the roots during the vegetation period.

Spring was hot and dry, with record temperatures and sunshine; by the end of June, the water deficit had again stretched to 20%. Flowering conditions were very good, and, given the spring weather, vegetation was more than a fortnight ahead of schedule when summer began.

July's vagaries broke the cycle: the month was rainy and cool, with a hailstorm that hit a third of the total area of *Domaine La Roquette*'s plots. Thankfully, August and September were very hot and dry, and the healing process took place in good conditions; but the advance observed at the end of June was largely erased.

With this half-baked summer and normal crop potential, maturity levels were varied, especially in *Châteauneuf-du-Pape*; sampling was complicated; and harvesting had to be totally rescheduled several times.

Only on 6 September did we kick off, starting of course with *La Crau*. The weather was superb throughout harvesting, so we could risk waiting for full maturity in all plots – no easy task.

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3, Route de Châteauneuf-du-Pape - 84370 BEDARRIDES - FRANCE
Tél. (33) 490 33 00 31 - Fax. (33) 490 33 18 47
vignobles@brunier.fr

EDITOR: Daniel@Brunier.fr - ARTWORK: *Terre Neuve*
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The fermentations that followed were tricky: the high sugar levels gave us a headache during the late phases of alcoholic fermentation; and, once again, the winemaking guys had to adapt to these “new” conditions and adopt an even more delicate approach.

The result? A superb vintage for the white Châteauneufs. Vieux Télégraphe is so far fairly discreet on the nose, but is deep and fresh, with white flowers dominant. On the palate, fresh flavours are reflected in a very elegant acidulous edge, with a handsome grain; it is at once creamy, rich, mineral and ethereal.

Clos La Roquette also has a bouquet dominated by white flowers and honey. On the palate, faint citrus and anise notes; it is both fresh and generous, with a pronounced silkiness on the finish that confers elegance and personality.

Le Petit Bonheur les Pallières rosé is fairly discreet on the nose, with a subtle floral tinge. From the off, its finesse is evident on the palate, which is gradually enveloped by terrific amplitude and a silky, rich and upright volume; you might get the same sensations with a white from a fine terroir – but, after all, it is vinified by the exact same methods as those used for classic whites. More than ever, this is a rosé for the meal table.

Over by Mont Ventoux, maturity levels were more consistent and therefore ahead of our internal schedule. Le Pigeoulet is very gourmand and fresh on the nose, with raspberries to the fore; on the palate it is unusually elegant and refined for a Pigeoulet, but also vinous, generous and balanced, with well-blended tannins.

The newcomer, Mégaphone, which will defend the AOC Ventoux’s colours, is a Grenache-Syrah blend; and, like the Pigeoulet, it is vinified and aged at Domaine La Roquette. A serious, deep nose laced with liquorice; then, on the palate, it unveils the spices of this new terroir, mingling with garrigue scents. Its frame is winningly taut, elegant and upright; you sense the coolness of the location. It has true character.

At Les Pallières, this year marks the fifth anniversary of Les Racines and Terrasse du Diable, and it will be quite a celebration: the 2011 is a great vintage in the north of the Dentelles de Montmirail.

The estate’s crop reached maturity in a shorter timeframe than in Châteauneuf; but here too, the grapes ripened earlier than usual.

On the nose, Les Racines has pepper, black liquorice and bags of spice; on the palate it is ample-bodied and silky, with very full flavours of violet liquorice candy and black fruits; it has pleasing texture, with decent depth and length. The tannins are certainly present, but not at all dry; they impart a lightness that the wine readily accommodates.

Terrasse du Diable tends more towards fresh fruits, and even flowers. On the palate, it is slightly more aggressive; one senses an austerity that should soften after a few months in bottle – the sign of a strong character. It is rich, intense and tight, with a well-defined tannic structure.

The Châteauneuf-du-Pape reds are a very handsome vintage, but not a great one. Télégramme – which, starting with the 2011, will play a bigger role in our range – has a very subtle, fresh and floral bouquet. On the palate, it has an elegant, silky grain of tannin; it is creamy, with the Grenache’s sweetish smoothness imparting a tender touch, although it delivers an agreeably straight finish with plenty of grip. Balance and pleasure in abundance.

L’Accent will also be more prominent in the range, starting with the 2011 vintage, and we have decided to switch it to a classic bottle with the papal coat of arms. The blend of the Piedlong and Pignan lieux-dits is fairly convincing on nose and palate. Its attractive mineral frame is dense and dark, with hints of anise and liquorice – no surprise given the large proportion of very old Grenache. Long and upright, it has impressive stature and volume; and its tannic structure is respectful of the whole.

And finally, over to La Crau. The Vieux Télégraphe happily weds richness with elegance; rounded body with southern suavity. The nose is fresh, floral and mineral despite a feeling of great ripeness. It really opens up in the second palate phase: it is ample, ripe, lingering and silky, with amazingly mellow tannins. It calls to mind the 1985 – which, by the way, is drinking beautifully at present.

It calls to mind the 1985

REVUE DE PRESSE (EXTRAITS) / (EXTRACTS)

Vieux Télégraphe Rouge - 2010

INTERNATIONAL WINE CELLAR – JAN/FEB 12 – JOSH REYNOLDS

93-95. Bright ruby. High-pitched aromas of raspberry, cherry and lavender, with notes of white pepper and anise adding complexity. Very fresh and focused on entry, then deeper and more brawny in the middle, offering sappy cherry and red fruit preserve flavors. This spicy finish displays superb persistence, very good clarity and intense florality.

Domaine La Roquette Rouge - 2010

WINE ADVOCATE - 31 OCT 2011 - #197 - (90-92) pts -

Domaine La Roquette is an up-and-coming producer that appears to be doing everything right, now that the Brunier family has had full control for over a decade. To date, the 2007s have been their finest offerings, but the 2009s and 2010s are not far behind. Revealing a slightly deeper color than the 2009, it possesses more concentration, power and focus along with the vintage’s good acidity, freshness and vibrancy. It should drink well for 15 years.

Les Pallières - Les Racines Rouge - 2011

RVF - JUIN 2012 - SPECIAL MILLESIME 2011

Cité dans ‘les grandes réussites’ de Gigondas
Mélange de poivre frais et de fruit compoté au nez ; bouche serrée, concentrée. L’alcool est présent, mais la construction semble pouvoir le supporter.

Les Pallières - Terrasse du Diable Rouge - 2010

THE RHONE REPORT - JEB DUNNUCK - ISSUE # 9 - 25 SEPT 2011 - (91-93) pts

The same blend and élevage as the ’09, the 2010 Domaine les Pallières Gigondas Terrasse du Diable is a deeper, darker rendition of the prior vintage, showing serious minerality that’s buffered by crunchy black fruits, spice, and licorice aromas. Medium to full-bodied with beautiful concentration, perfectly ripe fruit, good acidity, and plenty of length, this will be an outstanding bottle of wine that should have 10-12 years of prime drinking.