

# Wine Spectator

## EDITORS' PICKS 2014

### Powerful Reds From Côtes du Roussillon

Southern France is home to many distinctive appellations, and one of the most fascinating, albeit underappreciated, is Roussillon. While typically appended to "Languedoc," Roussillon has an identity all its own and excels with powerful reds.

This corner of France is hot and windy in summer, dominated by rocky and mountainous terrain that stretches from the base of the lofty Pyrenees to the isolated valleys that stretch northwest of the city of Perpignan. The best reds are based mostly on Grenache—the region's most widely planted grape—as well as Mourvèdre, Carignan and Syrah, which grow in schist-, granite- and limestone-based soils. Vintners such as the Rhône's Michel Chapoutier and California's Dave Phinney have been drawn to the area by its old-vine Grenache and Carignan, now restored to health after decades of neglect.

These vines make deeply flavored reds, filled with dark fruit and spice notes. (The region also makes small amounts of full-bodied whites, from Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Marsanne.) Ripeness is not a problem, and a deft hand is required to prevent rustic flavors. Wines from this part of France show a decidedly Spanish influence, and Roussillon reds' potential is often compared to the Grenache-based reds of Priorat. And though they have yet

to match Priorat examples in terms of quality, Roussillon reds are clearly evocative of their rugged locale. Two rising appellations to look for are Côtes-du-

Roussillon Villages and Vin du Pays des Côtes Catalanes.

- 92 **Domaine Gardiès** Côtes du Roussillon-Villages Les Millères 2011 \$21
- 91 **Domaine Cazes** Côtes du Roussillon-Villages Le Credo 2010 \$35
- 91 **J.P. Henriques** Côtes du Roussillon-Villages Domaine Força Réal 2009 \$20
- 90 **M. Chapoutier** Côtes du Roussillon-Villages Latour de France Domaine de Bila-Haut Occultum Lapidem 2011 \$30
- 90 **Hecht & Bannier** Côtes du Roussillon-Villages 2010 \$26
- 90 **Bernard Magrez** Côtes du Roussillon Si Mon Père Savait 2011 \$25
- 89 **Gérard Bertrand** Grenache-Syrah-Carignan Côtes du Roussillon-Villages Tautavel Grand Terroir 2011 \$20

### Pinks From Provence

In 2013, *Wine Spectator* gave a dry still rosé—and a \$90 version at that—93 points, our highest score ever for the category. That's not an anomaly; it represents a sea change. Of all the outstanding scores our editors have given to rosés from around the world, only a handful predate the 2006 vintage, when former Bordeaux vintner Sacha Lichine upped the game for everyone with his Château d'Esclans rosés from Provence.

Helped along by other rosé evangelists, such as Charles Bieler, wines that had been viewed skeptically (as a way for vintners to make a quicker buck while their reds aged) or as simple summer sippers (wines for when the weather calls for nothing heavier than a salad) have now claimed their place as a serious category. With savory, saline and herbal notes that complement their fresh, juicy berry, cherry and citrus flavors, they are

worth considering year-round to pair with everything from sushi to pasta and poultry and even lighter preparations of lamb.

Provence—rosé's historic heartland—gets most of the attention and more of the outstanding scores, but other regions in southern France are worth your time as well. Languedoc generally makes rosés in a similarly pale, delicate style, while fuller-bodied, darker wines come from Tavel, France's first AOC for rosé. Some producers, such as the négociant team of Hecht & Bannier, make rosés from multiple regions. While the styles differ and colors range from pale salmon to pomegranate, most rosés from southern France are blends of Grenache, Syrah, Cinsault and Mourvèdre, in varying proportions, sometimes with Carignan or Cabernet Sauvignon.

- 90 **Château d'Esclans** Côtes de Provence Rosé 2012 \$35
- 90 **L'Opale de la Presqu'île de St.-Tropez** Côtes de Provence Rosé 2012 \$15
- 90 **Château Ste.-Roseline** Côtes de Provence Rosé Cuvée Lampe de Méduse 2011 \$35
- 90 **Domaines Bunan** Bandol Rosé Château La Rouvière 2012 \$23
- 89 **Gueissard** Bandol Rosé 2012 \$23
- 89 **Les Vignerons de Tavel** Tavel Domaine du Vieil Aven 2012 \$20
- 88 **Domaine de la Mordorée** Tavel La Dame Rousse 2012 \$24
- 88 **Hecht & Bannier** Languedoc Rosé 2012 \$16
- 87 **Bieler Père & Fils** Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence Rosé Sabine 2012 \$12
- 87 **Mas de la Dame** Les Baux de Provence Rosé du Mas 2012 \$16

Senior editor Dana Nigro has been with *Wine Spectator* since 1998.

