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Rhône 2015 - rest of southern Rhône reds

I tasted most of these 294 southern Rhône wines blind, in the interprofessional headquarters of Gigondas (a particularly pretty building looking out on to the village square while the plane trees were noisily pollarded as usual), Vacqueyras (a slightly more workmanlike building in that village) or in Avignon at the medieval headquarters of Inter Rhône.

The producers of Gigondas seem to be following their counterparts downhill in Châteauneuf not only with their pricing but also with the increasing number of special cuvées. To protect my liver, I had to edit my selection of Gigondas to a certain extent.

Producers in the southern Rhône generally have been ramping up prices recently but have not necessarily found recent vintages an easy sell, so for 2015 prices have remained fairly steady - in euros. So, as for most other wines apart from English and South African, we Brits will encounter nasty sterling price increases.

As for the other southern Rhône reds, I found the winemaking rather less evolved than in Châteauneuf, with over-extraction still in evidence in some cases. See my more specific comments below.

With the noble exception of Rasteau, they were distinctly unevolved. There was a huge variation in styles - hardly surprising in view of the vast area involved - but there was not much of the lovely really opulent Grenache fruit in evidence.

Other observations can be found under one of the many individual headings below.

The 294 wines described below are listed with Gigondas then Vacqueyras first, then the other named southern Rhône appellations listed alphabetically (Beaumes-de-Venise, Cairanne, Lirac, Rasteau, Ventoux, Vinsobres), then the various villages that may append their name to Côtes du Rhône-Villages, listed alphabetically (Chusclan, Gadagne, Laudun, Massif d'Uchaux, Plan de Dieu, Roaix, Sablet, St-Maurice, Séguret, Signargues, Valréas and Visan), then generic Côtes du Rhône-Villages, then generic Côtes du Rhône, then the odd Vin de France and IGP/Vin de Pays, and finally Tardieu-Laurent's Bandol, which strictly speaking belongs in Provence rather than in the Rhône but is shown with Michel Tardieu's Rhône collection.

In Avignon, Inter Rhône chose the order in which the appellations were presented: Lirac, Beaumes-de-Venise, Vinsobres, Rasteau and then Cairanne.

GIGONDAS

These 89 wines seemed definitely less ripe than the Châteauneuf 2015s, and more astringent on the finish, as though the phenolics didn't always ripen fully. The floral and black-cherry aromas I found in many a Châteauneuf were largely absent here. Overall I felt the appellation was rather less successful. To reduce the number of wines tasted to a manageable level, I limited the number of cuvées tasted per producer in some cases.

Les Teyssonnières, Cuvée Alexandre 2015 Gigondas 16

80% Grenache, 20% blend of 12 other varieties. Matured in concrete tank. Cask sample. Tasted blind. Bright crimson. Pale rim. Rather simple boiled-sweet, hard-candy nose. Very sweet candid (and candied) fruit on the palate with good freshness. Good straightforward stuff for fairly early drinking. 15%

Drink 20 19-2025