



Searching For Wines From The Languedoc-Roussillon Region



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We've been on this quest of late to find more wines from the Languedoc-Roussillon. It hasn't been easy. An ancient but neglected wine growing region of France, the Languedoc-Roussillon has been troubled by producing inferior wines for decades and thus discouraging merchants. But that's slowly changing and wine enthusiasts would be wise to check out these wines before prices rise.

Now the single biggest wine-producing region of France, Languedoc-Roussillon's more than 600,000 acres of vineyards yield mostly red grapes, such as grenache, syrah, cinsault, mourvedre and carignan. The region has avoided regulation, which makes wine-making a free-for-all. However, in the last decade there has been more attempts to steer winemakers in a unified direction. The *appellation d'origine controlee* (AOC) was changed from the Coteaux du Languedoc to just Languedoc AOC and expanded to include Roussillon. These changes allowed winemakers to use grapes across the appellation and thus make wines more complex. There are also seven designated crus, such as Chinian and Corbieres, that range in quality from the general Languedoc AOC to Grand Vins. Most importantly, there has been a distinct improvement in the region's

table wines, called Vin de France.

The lack of regulations, however influential a reduction in quality, has given wine producers a lot of freedom in selecting grape varieties. Similar to what happened in Tuscany, the winemakers are flaunting tradition to create blends that include non-indigenous grape varieties, such as merlot and cabernet sauvignon. Producers such as Mas de Daumas Gassac, Bertrand and Jean-Claude Mas are making some incredibly complex yet non-traditional blends. Even Michel Chapoutier of the Rhone Valley has launched new ventures in this emerging region.

We like these wines for their rich, garrigue character and intensity. And, they are still decently priced. Here are a few we recently tasted:



Domaine de Terrebrune Bandol Rouge 2014

Domaine de Terrebrune Bandol Rouge 2014 (\$40). In 1963 Georges DeLille left his job as a sommelier in Paris to save this domaine. He spent a decade restoring the property, recruited his son Reynald and began releasing some of the most extraordinary and age-worthy wines of the region. Grenache and cinsault join this mourvedre-dominated blend. More forward in style than many mourvedres from the region, it has the classic varietal flavors of wild blackberries and plum with a hint of licorice and mineral. The dusty tannins suggest 6-10 years of aging before the wine reaches its peak.

- **Chateau La Negly La Brise Marine 2017** (\$20). We bought several bottles of this tantalizing white blend of roussanne and bourboulenc. Enveloped by crisp acidity, it shows off exotic fruits — mango and white peaches – with a dash of almonds.



La Condamine Paulignan Minervois 2013

La Condamine Paulignan Minervois 2013 (\$18). This gem uses syrah, grenache, carignan and cinsault grapes to produce a lively, elegant blend. Nicely textured with bright dark berry fruit with hints of lavender and olives. There is no need to cellar this wine, but it will survive at least 5 years.

- **La Bastide Blanche Bandol 2014** (\$35). Bandol is known for its mourvedre, so this grape variety plays a dominant role in this wine. Grenache rounds off the bright berry flavors but it's the mourvedre that gives the wine its color and depth. This gem adds a garrigue touch to an otherwise juicy wine with gritty tannins.

- **Chateau Bouisset "Cuvee Eugenie" La Clape Languedoc 2015** (\$20). La Clape is the same AOC that includes Chateau Negly. It is a blend of syrah and grenache grapes grown in limestone and clay soils. Aged mostly in concrete tanks, it retains its fresh and pure fruit character.



Gerard Bertrand
Grand Terroir
Les Aspres 2014

Gerard Bertrand Grand Terroir Les Aspres 2014 (\$20). Bertrand is making some extraordinary, textured blends in southern France. This beautiful blend of syrah, mourvedre and grenache from the Languedoc-Roussillon region has layers of red berries, a floral nose and long finish.

- **Chapoutier Les Vignes de Bila-Haut Cotes du Roussillon Rouge 2017** (\$15). Half of this blend is grenache with the remainder made up of syrah and carignan from the slopes of the Agly Valley. Aged in concrete tanks and stainless steel, it is void of oak flavors. Lots of rich black raspberry and black berry flavors.
- **Chapoutier Bila-Haut Occultum Lapidem 2016** (\$30). Leave it to Chapoutier to use Latin to describe his “hidden gem” from the Languedoc. A well-integrated blend of grenache, syrah and carignan from 60-year-old vines, this wine carries the “Cotes du Roussillon Villages” label which means it’s a step above the generic label. It is a delicious wine with broad aromas of dried herbs, blackberries and violets. The palate is dense with plum and dark berry flavors with hints of licorice.

TALAWIND



2014 Talawind Pinot Noir

Patrick Melley, co-founder and winemaker for Russian Hill Estate Winery, is applying his knowledge of making great pinot noir to a new project called Talawind Ranch, also in the Russian River Valley. A former horse ranch, the 9 acres of vineyards enjoy a combination of micro climates and soil variation.

At \$30 each, these wines represent a great value in the pinot noir category.

We were impressed with three vintages of the Talawind Ranch pinot noir. The 2014 pinot noir was ripe in style with notes of plums and black cherries. We like the 2015 pinot noir for its generous spice aromas and red berry flavors. And the 2016 pinot noir was our favorite with a little complexity, more body and fresh strawberry and red cherry fruit.

WINE PICKS



*MacRostie
Sonoma Coast
Pinot Noir 2016*

MacRostie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir 2016 (\$34). This medium-body pinot noir has generous red berry aromas and strawberry, cranberry flavors.

- **Jackson Estate Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2014** (\$40). The warmer temperatures in Alexander Valley produce riper and often more alcoholic cabernets. This version is blended with petit verdot, merlot, cabernet franc and malbec. Dark berry and currant flavors with a hint of mocha and vanilla.
- **Pfendler Sonoma Coast Pinot NoiR 2015** (\$45). This juicy and delicious pinot noir from Sonoma County has a floral nose and red cherry flavors.

Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr, [MoreAboutWine](#), posted on [SouthFloridaReporter.com](#), April 22, 2019

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All photos are randomly selected and do not indicate any preferred wine

You can send questions to Tom Marquardt <mailto:marq1948@gmail.com>