

UN DEMI-SIÈCLE D'HERMITAGE "LA CHAPELLE"
1949 – 1999

September 9, 1999 – Tournon, France

All wines came from the Jaboulet cellars. Two bottles of each vintage were decanted – that is, combined – into one magnum to assure that all tasters had the same wine.

1998 *(+)**

Dense black purple. Ripe, very fresh, very young and clean aroma of blackberry and cassis. The palate is ripe with moderate concentration, and the wine is largely non-expressive. Definition from an incisive acid frame.

Falls between '95 and '96 in style. A very elegant La Chapelle. Production down versus recent norm.

1997 **(*)**

Moderately dense garnet with purple. The color suggests a little development or different fruit chemistry. Ripe red fruit to the nose. Deep, rich and warm but not the black-fruit pungency I expect of a very young Hermitage. Ripe, textured attack. Fat and powerful with solid acidity and ripe tannins. Rather closed.

A big, round La Chapelle which reminds me of '82 or '85, but perhaps superior. Not the character of '98, '96 or '95. Most thought this to be a very great La Chapelle.

1996 **(*)**

Dense black purple, opaque at center. Pungent, intense, cassis-dominated nose. Very concentrated and a sense of wild flora. Very concentrated palate with high acidity and tannin. Austere today but very promising.

A classic wine with great aging potential – likely to be a 50-year vintage. The severity may put off some tasters until the wine has aged for 20-plus years.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich, MW

1995 **(+)**

Opaque very black color with very slight evolution at rim. Very pure, particularly broad aroma exhibiting black plum, cassis and an animal note. Rich, dense and very powerful in the mouth with great structure. Closes up rather quickly, with a hint of black fruits and Northern Rhône inkiness at the end.

Excellent wine to keep, typical of young Hermitage: rather severe in its youth, and capable of a long evolution.

1994 *+**

Moderately dense dark garnet with red rim. The aroma reveals red cherry and red currant with a few early signs of development and a hint of saddle leather. In the mouth, there is far less power and depth than in the '97, '96, and '95. The palate has softness and approachability. Notes of red fruits, vanilla and cocoa in the finish.

A lighter La Chapelle, less ripe. Attractive in the near term.

1991 **+**

Dense blackish garnet, touch of brick at edge. The nose shows evolution in its leafy, leathery tones. Warm and rich with a note of musk. There is a hint of over ripeness. The palate is round, fat and beginning to enter its prime drinking period. The finish displays leaf, leather, licorice and musk and is a touch hot.

This wine offers the qualities one looks for in a maturing Hermitage, but at an earlier age. Pleasurable drinking now and will keep for the medium term.

1990 *** !**

Opaque, nearly black garnet. Incredible density to the eye. The nose is huge, showing amazing ripeness and density. Very rich, nearly exotic scent. Just beginning to reveal some evolution aromatically. The palate is very powerful, mouth-filling and meaty – simply enormous! There is gentle acidity and ripe high-class tannin backing the incredible fruit.

A giant, every bit as superb as its reputation. Because of its texture and fat, it can be drunk now, with lengthy airing, and will keep a very long time.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich, MW

1989 **+**

Opaque garnet with black center, just slightly less dense than '90. Very, very ripe and full nose leaning toward prune with hints of leather and musk. Ripe, fat and rich in the mouth. The wine appears softer and almost sweet from the fruit and alcohol.

A truly satisfying, sensual La Chapelle delivering terrific richness, even opulence. Can be drunk now, but will surely keep for many years.

1988 *(*)**

Moderately dense blackish garnet with brick rim. Much more advanced than the younger wines: lovely, high-toned nose with a fragrance of leather and musk. Rather delineated palate showing a good measure of acidity. Not the scale of '89 or '90 (and perhaps suffers coming immediately after). More tightly etched, but with notable concentration.

A more severe, less massive example. This does not have the wide appeal of the very ripe years, but I find it fresh and positive.

1985 ****

Moderately dense blackish brown garnet with brick edge. Fragrant, sweet nose revealing musk and coffee highlights. Shows a maturing Hermitage nose. Fat, round palate now opening and lengthening. Finishes with notes of leather and musk.

A very satisfying wine which offers a relatively mature profile. A vintage with wide appeal for current drinking.

1983 **(?)**

Moderately dense garnet with brick at edge. Leathery bouquet with musk and cocoa – slightly stewed and hot. Substantial, with plenty of extract, but severe in its acidity. The finish is dominated by leather and musk and is rather dry and angular.

Remains a difficult wine to enjoy despite its initial acclaim. Now beginning to evolve, but has not lost its lean, dry edge. But no lack of intensity.

1982 ****

Moderately dense tawny garnet with a distinctly brown rim: showing advancement. Maturing, open nose offering leather, cocoa and dried spices. Round and nearly resolved. Lovely, persistent, mature finish with a leathery tone. Warm and spicy.

For my taste, at peak. The finish is particularly impressive, sweet and sensual.

1979 ***

Paling dark garnet with brick rim. Low to moderate concentration and intensity in the soft, maturing nose revealing subtle musk and sousbois. The taste is rather light and evolving.

Good, but not more. Pleasant now, should be drunk up as it will not improve.

1978 *****

Dark garnet with brick. The color is falling out (this wine was totally opaque when young!). Concentrated nose in the early phase of maturation: has an animal aspect along with leather, musk and truffle. The taste is impressive, combining richness and balance. Leather, musk and coffee appear in the long finish with a final note of acidity.

Powerful wine now starting to mature; indeed, entering its prime. An outstanding La Chapelle with textbook vigor!

1976 ***

Garnet to brick color with slightly tawny rim. The nose is losing its intensity and offers warmth with notes of leather, leaf and musk. The palate has far less intensity and seems to have reached its optimum. Round and warm with subtle leather and leaf aftertaste.

A good wine to consume now as it is unlikely to improve.

1975 **+

Weakening brownish garnet. Quite scented bouquet of leather and musk, but certainly not intense. Moderate substance. At its peak and offering an attractive if less impactful finish of sousbois and leather.

A surprise in a poor year.

1972 ****

Paling, browning garnet with tawny rim. Sweet, leathery bouquet offering accents of animal fur, coffee and spice. The palate has definition and cut as well as intensity. Lovely, firm, long finish delivering leather and spices.

The freshness of this wine is surprising: acidity is the key. Very fine drinking today. 1972 was hardly a successful year generally in the Rhône apart from Hermitage.

1971 **+**

Moderately dense dark garnet with tawny rim (more density than '72). The very appealing nose is rich, warm and particularly spicy – and not at all advanced. The taste follows and is also rich, warm and subtly sweet, with comparatively little evolution. The finish suggests leather and provides an excellent balance of acidity.

A marvelous Hermitage, still very youthful, offers a great balance of richness and acidity. Will keep for another five years (2004 or longer).

1970 **(*)**

Dense blackish garnet with a touch of brick at rim – a remarkably youthful appearance. The bouquet is extraordinarily rich and intense. Scarcely evolved, the aromatics suggest vanilla and musk. The palate is full of richness, even opulence, with great weight and presence. There is sweetness and a hint of sousbois in the aftertaste.

Impressive, large-scaled wine which will continue to develop for 5 to 10 years (2009 or later).

1969 ****

Dense garnet with brick. Pronounced coffee bouquet with deep underlying richness. Round, powerful and very full-bodied. Accents of coffee and spice in the sweet, generous finish.

A big wine which offers great pleasure. No hurry to drink although the wine is in its prime.

1967 ****

Weakening dark garnet-brick. The nose has surprising intensity with spice, leather and a touch of musk. The palate is focused and fresh, with noteworthy definition for its age. The flavors are mature ones of leather and spice, yet the wine remains firm, long and fresh.

Youthful wine which has been preserved by its marvelous acidity.

1966 *****

Dark garnet brick, starting to fade. Stunning bouquet! Incredibly rich, very expressive and complex, revealing leather, musk, chocolate and coffee. In the mouth, the wine is fat, powerful and mouth-filling. Great intensity and a long, leathery, spicy and warm finish. This has everything!

Very impressive and potent wine which would excite anyone who appreciates great Hermitage. Delicious now, but should hold for many years (2005 to 2010).

1964 ****

Blackish garnet with a brick rim – particularly dense for its age. Broad nose offering notes of animal, musk, leather and sousbois. Very full and powerful in the mouth, although there is less substance than the '66.

Another excellent vintage, although I slightly prefer the incredible massiveness and mouth-coating texture of the '66. No hurry to drink.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich, MW

1962 ***+

Paling tawny garnet. The nose is showing its age and is just beyond its best expression. The taste is better but still weakening. Moderate weight and modestly intense finish offering notes of ink and leather.

Good but past its prime. Not in the league of the other vintages in this tasting from the 1960s.

1961 *****!

Dense coffee-toned garnet with a thin brick rim – hardly the color of a 38-year old wine! Extraordinary nose with a wealth of richness, density and complexity. Accents of leather, truffle and musk. In the mouth, there is unbelievable concentration and power, together with a sense of balance. Enormous and majestic. Has a freshness of acidity revealed at the end that is the counterpoint to its fabulous richness.

Truly one of the greatest wines I have ever tasted. Seems to be on a plateau – how long will it hold?

1959 ***+

Paling tawny brick with a lightening tawny rim. Well-advanced nose with a subdued leathery undertone. As with the '62, more attractive and vital on the palate and suggesting its original substance. Subtle leather and musk notes at the end.

Certainly attractive but losing its intensity. Drink up.

1953 ****

Dark brownish garnet with a tawny rim. Offers a beautiful bouquet with signs of its initial ripeness, and marked by dried spices (cinnamon, coriander), leather, coffee and truffle notes. The taste is still very rich, but now weakening. Very mature flavors. Yet this is full and powerful for its 46 years. Just a bit hot in the finale.

A fully mature Hermitage, complex and full-bodied. Very satisfying.

1949 *****

Very dense dark mahogany with a tawny rim and a coffee-like black center. Massive, profound nose offering leather and dried fruits. The palate delivers enormous extract! This has unbelievable richness and power for a 50-year old wine. Sweet and hot in the finish, which is accented by spiced fruit cake.

A giant of a wine, incredible for its age. Unfortunately, the Jaboulets do not have any details on the growing season, but the fruit must have been remarkably mature. Michael Broadbent cites 1949 as one of the greatest Hermitage vintages of the 20th century. It is hard to imagine how overwhelming it must have been early in its life.

Will the 1961 be something like this when it reaches the same age in 2011, or will it remain more restrained?