

Clos du Caillou

Sensuality & style in the Southern Rhône

Tasting & visit to the property – March 2015

Clos du Caillou's cellars are situated along the eastern edge of Châteauneuf-du-Pape not far from the village of Courthézon, tucked away along one of the so-called *chemins* crisscrossing the appellation. It helps to have a GPS to find the property!

At its origins, the estate was a walled enclosure of 17 hectares (42 acres). Gradually, woodland was cleared and planted, and additional land acquired so that the domaine now extends over 54 ha (133 acres): 9 ha (22 acres) in Châteauneuf and 45 (111 acres) in Côtes du Rhône. There are parcels on *galets roulés* and on sand, loam and sandstone inspiring cuvées such as “Quartz” and “Safres.” There are Côtes du Rhône vineyards just outside the Châteauneuf boundary, a major portion on the other side of the A7 Autoroute which yield “Le Bouquet des Garrigues,” along with a smaller plot where “Nature” is sourced. The Châteauneuf cuvées come from Les Bédines, Guigasse, Pignan, and Les Cassanets. Indeed, it takes some time to get around the entire estate in a suitable vehicle. Ownership of the estate is in the hands of Sylvie Vacheron of the celebrated Sancerre family, who has provided leadership since the death of her husband in 2002. She has been assisted by estate manager Bruno Gaspard, who gave me an informative tour of the property. He had prior experience in several wine districts of Southern France and has – judging by the results – found his calling at Clos du Caillou. Philippe Cambie acts as consultant.

The vineyards have been certified organic since 2010, and there are ongoing trials with bio-dynamic farming. The Caillou range covers only two appellations, yet there are numerous iterations of both Côtes du Rhône (3 whites, 1 rosé, 5 reds) and Châteauneuf (1 white, 4 reds). Yields for all wines are extremely low – even the whites do not exceed 30 hl/ha. I tasted the full range of current releases at the Découvertes prior to my visit to the domaine.

The Caillou wines have individual personalities yet share a distinct sensuality and stylish poise. The contemporary labeling conveys an elegant simplicity, with each cuvée clearly featuring the “Clos du Caillou” logo script.



Côtes du Rhône blanc 2014 *(*)**

Pale dark gold. The very youthful, expressive aroma displays notable intensity with a mélange of white and stone fruits. The palate is similarly exceptionally perfumed and still in an early flowery phase, finishing with clean, embedded acidity. 80% Grenache blanc, 20% Clairette rose produced at a very low 30 hl/ha for a regional.

Côtes du Rhône «Bouquet des Garrigues » blanc 2014 *(*+)**

Very pale gold. Ultraclean nose, lovely and scented with primary ripe citrus, stone and tropical fruit highlights. On the palate, this white blend delivers a long line and a perfumed, inflected impression that remains for some time. This is really delicious and boasts impressive fruit complexity. 35% Clairette rose, 30% Grenache blanc, 20% Viognier, 15% Bourboulenc.

Côtes du Rhône «La Réserve» blanc 2013 **(*)**

Light yellow gold. The perfectly clean aroma is marked by notable richness and nuanced white fruits with carefully married creamy oak which adds dimension and appeal. The taste conveys fruit ripeness and richness of flavor. The finish is long, quite intense and rich. A beautiful, sophisticated rendition of a white Côtes du Rhône which skillfully joins three varieties and differing wood treatments. 65% Clairette rose fermented in demi-muids, 25% Grenache blanc, and 10% Viognier in barrique.

Châteauneuf-du-Pape «Les Safres» blanc 2014 **(*)**

Light yellow gold. This fine young white Rhône offers an ultraclean, high-toned and multidimensional expression of ripe white fruits and complementary oak. The wine's taste is complex and highly aromatic with a multifaceted aftertaste displaying fruit and oak. Roussanne, Grenache blanc and Clairette fermented and aged in barrique for 4 months.

Côtes du Rhône rosé 2014 **(*)

Barely tinted, transparent purple. The nose is particularly delicate with primary aromas of white and extremely subtle red fruits. This lightly flavored rosé is closer to a white wine and lacks a well-defined personality.

Côtes du Rhône rouge 2014 *(+)**

Very pale red purple. Overtly fruity nose of red cherry and strawberry. Clean, delicate, nuanced. Light- to medium-bodied, this very young red lingers on the palate, delivering more intensity toward the end.

Côtes du Rhône «Nature» rouge 2014 *(*)**

Pale dark red purple. Very clean, youthful and attractive scent with a mix of red fruit notes. The medium-weight palate is clean and fresh, still rather hidden, finishing with a clean, dry final impression. No sulfur is added for Nature. 50% Grenache, 30% Carignan, 20% Syrah with carbonic fermentation. 27 hl/ha.

Côtes du Rhône «Bouquet des Garrigues» rouge 2013 *(*)**

Nearly moderately dense very dark red. This young red exhibits understated red fruits of moderate concentration. In the mouth, there is an inviting freshness, clarity and lift as well as youthful reserve. The aftertaste is still developing yet has promising persistence together with a dry, firm backbone. 65% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 10% each Carignan and Mourvèdre. Vinified in cement, maturation in foudres for 15 months.

Côtes du Rhône «Les Quartz» rouge 2013 *(*)**

Pale dark red with purple rim. Aromatically, this Grenache-dominated blend grown on galets and sand is very young and held back, suggesting dark berries and spice. The palate possesses a transparent, elegant feel and is highly aromatic and youthfully nuanced. The wine builds in intensity and reveals its quality in a

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich MW

long, undeveloped finish, concluding with a balanced structure. 85% Grenache, 15% Syrah fermented in cement with maturation in wood vat, foudres and demi-muids for 16 months. An abnormally low, coulure-impacted yield of 19 hl/ha.



Côtes du Rhône «La Réserve» rouge 2013 **(+)**

Pale plus very dark red with purple. The youthful nose suggests moderate concentration and spicy dark fruits. The taste is at first characterized by transparency and aromatic lift, then reveals nuanced, spicy dark fruit and a sense of warmth. There is a clean frame with heightened acidity. Needs time to show. 70% Grenache, 30% Mourvèdre vinified in cement and raised in demi-muids. Produced at a mere 19 hl/ha.

Châteauneuf-du-Pape «Cuvée Tradition» rouge 2013 *(*)**

Pale dark red purple. Muted, youthful nose indicating dark cherry fruit of moderate concentration. Medium weight, the palate is warm on attack, slowly revealing sweet dark berries with restrained inflections. The finish is already lasting, sensual and nuanced in its fruit expression. May deserve a higher score as it develops in bottle. 85% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre, 5% Syrah from sand and safres (compacted sandstone). Cement and foudres. 20 hl/ha. [There was no red “Safres” cuvée in the low-yielding 2013 vintage.]

Châteauneuf-du-Pape «Les Quartz» rouge 2013 **(+)**

Pale plus very dark red purple. Restrained scent of dark fruit and a note of licorice with well-judged wood influences. In the mouth, this excellent Châteauneuf is ample and warm, offering youthful, rich dark fruit flavors. Mouth-coating and persistent, hinting at complexity to come in the finale. Very classy and individual. 85% Grenache matured in foudres and 15% Syrah in barrique from galets over sandy subsoil. The tiny yields of 19 hl/ha reflect the reduced Grenache crop due to coulure.

Châteauneuf-du-Pape «La Réserve» 2013 **(*)**

Pale dark red with purple rim, slightly cloudy. The primary aroma delivers freshness and crushed dark cherry and black raspberry, with the added complexity of tertiary accents and a volatile high note. This young, undeveloped and full-bodied red fills the mouth with its volume. The wine boasts richness, warmth and a mouth-coating texture. The aftertaste marries complex fruit and wood-aging notes and leaves a sensual, generous final taste. 55% Grenache, 45% Mourvèdre grown on sand and safres, co-fermented and raised in demi-muids for 18 months. Coulure-reduced yields of 19 hl/ha.

Châteauneuf-du-Pape «La Réserve» 2011 **(+)**

Pale dark brick red. Warm, ample nose showing early development in its mix of very ripe red cherry and prune and roasted, spicy overtones. The palate is notably rich, generous and mouth-filling. There are dried dark and macerated red fruits, and the wine offers a long, exciting, warm conclusion with an impression of fruit liqueur. 60% Grenache, 40% Mourvèdre grown on sand and safres and matured in demi-muids for 18 months. 25 hl/ha.

