



HARPERS WINE & SPIRIT

2019

FRANCE

A UNIQUE LOCATION

MONT VENTOUX IS CHARACTERISED BY ITS MICRO-CLIMATE, WHICH IMPARTS A NATURAL FRESHNESS TO ITS WINES

The wine region of Ventoux is located in the south-east of the southern Rhône. Evidence of vine growth dates back to 30BC and they have survived ever since, through the pontifical period until now. Listed as a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1990, Mont Ventoux is one of the most privileged areas in which to grow vines, thanks to the region's special blend of wildlife and historic and cultural heritage. This unique location continues to provide great wine and is passionately protected by its growers.

Mont Ventoux, commonly referred to as the Giant of Provence, stands at 1,912m. Even though vines do not grow at its peak, Mont Ventoux gives these wines a natural freshness and balance unique to the region. The region's micro-climate is characterised by a dominant wind – the Provençal Mistral – that helps keep humidity low in the vineyard. The appellation also stretches to the south where it borders the Luberon, another national park. The Mediterranean climate is hot and dry but is tempered with cool currents. This vast area allows for 5,701ha to produce the Ventoux wines. Wine production is dominated by red (56%) while rosé accounts for 38% and white 6%.

The soil is a mix of limestone, sand, clay with pebbles and screen. It gives wines of great diversity and subtle flavours.

Ventoux has nothing to be ashamed of being a recent AOC, as Pierre Cornelle says: "True, I'm young, but in souls nobly born valour does not depend upon age."



We find classic Rhône grape varieties such as Grenache, which provides a roundness to the wine; Syrah, which gives silky tannins; and also the Mourvèdre and Carignan that bring spicy aromas. There is great opportunity for Ventoux wines to become structured by ageing a few years when they can be drunk at their best. The grape variety that is also used for rosé is Cinsault, which brings fruitiness. White wines come from a blend of white Grenache, Clairette, Roussanne, Bourboulenc, Marsanne or Viognier. These last two varieties bring complexity and add hints of minerality and freshness. Ventoux can rely on great variety and blends and it's common to find fresh blackberries and garrigues notes in red wines; citrus, exotic fruits and flowery notes for the whites; raspberries, soft spices and a surprising freshness in the rosés.

Even if the wine region of Ventoux has been recognised as an AOC since 1973, it's a relatively young appellation, at least institutionally. Winemakers have always put great emphasis on environmental preservation. With growing concern about the impact of global warming on the wine industry, a study in collaboration with the French National Research Institute for Agronomy was commissioned to analyse the past and future of the climate and its effect on vineyards in Ventoux.



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The tasting

As a backdrop to our roundtable discussion on southern French wines we invited our panel to explore a selection from across the region's myriad vineyards.

Flights were arranged by style, looking to reflect ways for consumers to discover the diversity offered by the region, with composite tasting notes conveying overall impressions below.

➤ PUNCHY REDS

Boisset Fortant-Nature Bio-Merlot 2016

Juicy, fruity, a crowd-pleasing Merlot that would work by the glass.

Boisset Bonpas, Réserve de Bonpas 2017

Dry, textural, with some grip, this had earthy notes and generosity on the palate that would work with food.

Boisset Bonpas, Dames de Bonpas, Plan de Dieu, Cuvée 700 ans 2017

Good fruit, with some complexity and structure, this wine had depth and length.

Bouchard Aîné & Fils Grand Conseiller Pinot Noir 2018

Decent fruit notes, some herby hints on a bold Pinot profile. A big, rounded, mouth-filling style.

Les Neufs Pierres Roulées 2017, AOP Terrasses du Larzac

Some good intensity, with ripe, rich depths of fruit and a persistent and satisfying finish.

Louis Latour Domaine de Valmoissine Pinot Noir 2016

A punchy, warmer-climate style of Pinot Noir, expressing cherries and darker fruits, delivering a satisfying glassful.

Gabriel Meffre Domaine de Longue Toque, Gigondas 2016

Dusty, plummy depths with some grippy tannins, this was described as a serious wine, showing some nice complexity.

Gabriel Meffre Château Grand Escalion, Safranée, Costières Nîmes, 2017

With red fruits at its core, this showed some good southern characteristics, balanced by fine tannins and a persistent finish.

Rémy Ferbras, AOP Ventoux Rouge, 2017

Dark, plummy and brooding, this was a big wine and one for winter and rich stews.



"It's all about finding the smaller producers, the ones that are doing very exciting things, and telling your customers"

Chris Piper

Domaines des Anages, Archange, AOP Ventoux 2015

Big on fruit, oak and tannins, this drove home the power and ageability of spicy southern styles of red.

Domaines Barons de Rothchild (Lafite) Château d'Aussières 2016

With ripe and spicy notes, this was well balanced with a supple core and a likely good all-rounder with flavoursome dishes.

Boisset Mommessin Grand Granite Sirane 2015

A plush, dark, intense wine with hints of liquorice and herbs. The finish lingered on.

➤ CHARACTERFUL WHITES

Boisset Fortant Gaïa IGP Pays d'Occitanie (Viognier, Chardonnay)

Spicy and textured on the palate, an accessible style without being overly fruity and one to pair with food.

Domaine Paul Mas Estate 'La Forge' Marsanne 2017

Described as balanced and very creamy, this showed a wealth of soft fruits coupled with lifting acidity through to the finish.

Louis Latour Grand Ardèche Chardonnay 2017

Creamily textured and smooth, this was a good example of the rounded, generous style of southern Chardonnay.

Harpers would like to thank the following supporters for provided wines for our round table and tasting:

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Vidal-Fleury Côtes du Rhône Blanc 2018

Expressive, floral nose with stone fruits and some good texture on the palate. This was approachable and appealing.

Gabriel Meffre Laurus Cotes du Rhone 2017

A good all-rounder, with hints of white pepper and spice adding vibrancy to a soft fruit palate.

➤ SOUTHERN ROSÉ

Vidal-Fleury Côtes du Rhône Rosé 2018

A fresh, attractive, accessible style, with soft reds fruits and some nice texture through to the finish.

Jardin de Roses Rosé 2018, AOP Languedoc

An easy-going light style, with hints of red fruits, rosehip and some gentle spice, making an attractive summer quaffer.

AIX Rosé 2018, Coteaux d'Aix en Provence

A classic Provence rosé, dry and delivering soft summer fruits, finishing fresh and vibrant.

Fleur de Mer Côte de Provence Rosé, 2018

Juicy, fresh raspberry fruits to the fore, underscored with refreshing citrusy acidity.

Domaine des Diables, Côte de Provence Rosé, 2018

A simple, fresh style hinting at soft red fruits and ideal as a chilled summer wine by the glass.

