

CLOS DES PAPES

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Rhône

One look at the accumulation of press accolades for Clos des Papes demonstrates that this estate of Paul Avril and his son Vincent is, in Robert Parker's words, "one of the reference points of Châteauneuf-du-Pape."

This family was working overtime to re-establish the image of their celebrated appellation long before the bandwagon began to roll. Nor is there any "secret" to their success: just low yields, fidelity to the old genetic heritage of Grenache, Mourvedre and Syrah (no whoring after clones for the Avrils!), hard work in the vineyards, and minimal handling of the fruit and young wine.

There is also no "super cuvée" at Clos des Papes. Why vinify something that could only rob quality from the flagship?, the Avrils ask. That single, rich, graceful, and long-lived Châteauneuf bottling comes from many parcels with diverse micro-climates.

And talk about diversity: there are also around a thousand cases of white Châteauneuf crafted from no fewer than five varieties: Grenache Blanc, Clairette, Picardin, Picpoul, and Bourbelenc. This unfashionable quintet teams up for one of the two or three most exciting whites in the appellation.

From parcels outside of the Châteauneuf appellation, the Avrils produce their "Petit d'Avril". The red version improbably yet deliciously incorporates (along with good old "G.-S.-M.") some Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Don't knock this non-vintage wine with the funny label until you've tried it, especially considering its price.



It is always a bonus when great winemakers are also eloquent and generous in offering insights into their success, and that has always been the case with the articulate and hospitable Avrils.

"[A] wine thrifty tasters should seek out is the *vin de table* produced by the Avrils called Le Petit d'Avril. This is a non-vintage blend ... a light-bodied, richly fruity, smooth, bistro-style red that merits **85**."

Clos des Papes Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Variety: Grenache, Mourvedre (ca. 20%), Syrah (ca. 5%), mixed

whites

Total acreage: 79 acres

Average production: 11,000 cs.

Vinificatory details: Syrah and Mourvedre are destemmed, Grenache depends on vintage. 2-3 weeks fermentation. Aging largely in old oak fûdre and demi muids. The Avrils have not filtered their red since 1988.

Petite V in d'Avril

Châteauneuf-du-Pape blanc

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

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