

# DOMAINE LAFOND

Rhone

The exceedingly sunny west side of the southern Rhone is home to some of the best bargains in red Côtes du Rhone wine. Unlike the villages clustered around Chateauneuf du Pape on the other side of the river, the rather remote western villages are off the tourist track and, with two exceptions, lack any famous names.

The exceptions are Tavel and Lirac, towns which by the way practiced rigorous quality control and registration of casks under the auspices of the Bishop of Avignon more than two centuries before Chateauneuf growers invented today's system of appellation contrôlée. (And they didn't allow any juice from Chateauneuf to stray into genuine Tavel or Lirac, either!)

It is from Tavel and Lirac, Domaine Lafond takes their fruit. The property, owned by the Lafond brothers, is overseen jointly with a group of other Rhone estates that collectively market as "Roc-Epine".

The Lafond Tavel has the color for which that town is noted: pink. This is one of the sturdiest rosé wines in the world, and one ought not to be afraid of applying it liberally to a wide range of cuisine. Not that its fragrance and refreshment do not invite sipping on its own. But that can quickly become a heady experience if done on an empty stomach under the sun of southern France (or the American Midwest!).

Lafond's red is from Lirac, which I just referred to as "famous". But they only recently began labeling the wine as such. Perhaps I overstated the case: Lirac is at least *well-known* ... inside France, that is. In the States, who has heard of it? Time to educate your customers into one more of the delicious mysteries of the South of France.

Paradoxically, at Lafond the red wine of simple appellation Côtes du Rhone is lighter than the rosé. Not in color, of course, but in alcohol and at times in body, too. Lafond's red Côte du Rhone is all about lip-smacking, juicy, delicious red fruits. Under-tones of game, of Provençal



herbs and of stone are there, certainly, to help place things geographically and add flavor nuance. But the main game here is: to cram as many berries as you can into a bottle (metaphorically, anyway). At that game few succeed so well as Lafond or at such an attractive price.

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## Tavel Rosé Cotes du Rhone (Listrac)

Varieties: *Grenache, Syrah, Carignane and Mourvedre, plus a little Cinsault and Carignan for the Tavel rosé.*

Vineyards: *more than 100 acres, with an average age of vine in excess of 25 years.*

Vinification: *Fermentation in stainless steel with a high percentage of whole berries: 20 days for Lirac, 10 days for Côtes du Rhone. The red afterward gets a short stay in large wooden ovals. The rosé is pressed quickly and afterward handled like a white wine.*

**Tavel Rosé**  
**Côtes du Rhone**  
**Lirac**  
**Châteauneuf-du-Pape**