

# CLOS DU MONT-OLIVET

Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Journalists' accounts of Jean-Claude and Pierre Sabon inevitably mention their charm and modesty, traits to which I'll also testify, and which might explain an absence of glamorous image for the Clos du Mont-Olivet, not to mention its owners' amazing price restraint. But demand for these wines has recently soared as they have received tremendously good press, partly prompted by the extraordinary cuvées "Papet" ("grandfather"), bottled from the heady 1989 and 1990 vintages.

The "grandfather" vines are said to be well over a hundred years old. But in fact, nearly one half of the entire acreage of Clos du Mont-Olivet consists of Grenache vines with an *average* age of eighty years!

These, together with a modest contingent of Syrah and Mourvedre, a few much younger Grenache vines and an assortment of varieties for their tiny production of white Châteauneuf make up the estate. The soil types are nearly as varied as the encephalogram, a state of affairs unusual in Châteauneuf and no doubt conducive to the wines' underlying complexity.

Viticulture and vinification are ultra-traditional. The Sabons only gave up horses in favor of gasoline-fed machinery in 1972, and they press their grapes, with stems, in an ancient hydraulic press and mature them in large old ovals and a few old pieces. Formerly, the wines would be bottled somewhat haphazardly and over an extended period of time ...sometimes years! Recent vintages have tended to be bottled after "only" two years, as are those lots selected by Vintner Select.

Mont-Olivet's Châteauneuf is above all characterized by amazing subtlety of texture and aroma - one might even say "finesse," an adjective seldom used to describe Châteauneuf - and by remarkable regularity of quality. Even



1991 yielded perfectly lovely, if relatively lightweight, wine that truly deserved its appellation of origin.

## Côtes du Rhône Châteauneuf-du-Pape

Varieties: (for the red:) approx. 85% Grenache, balance Syrah and Mourvedre

Total acreage: 70 acres, 53 of them appellated as Châteauneuf-du-Pape. (The rest is Cotes du Rhone.)

Average production: 80,000 cs.,  
Vinificatory details: Extended maceration with stems, long aging in older barrels.

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#### Cuvé du Papet

*Produced only in the best vintages that in addition are sufficiently productive. Last bottled from 2000.*

## Côtes du Rhône Vieilles Vignes

### "Mon tueil la Levade"

*Old vines Grenache (in 2001 for the first time with the addition of Syrah. Unhurried élevage in fuder and unfiltered bottling, just like the Châteauneufs.*

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