

# 2014–2015 WHITE CHATEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE LANGUID SOUTHERN CHARM

Châteauneuf-du-Pape may always be better known for its reds, but as **Andrew Jefford** finds in a tasting shared with **Simon Field MW** and **John Livingstone-Learmonth**, whether the accent is on the increasingly popular Roussanne or the traditional multi-variety blend, the great Southern Rhône region also speaks fluently in the language of white wine

**H**ow adaptable is terroir? Does every distinguished site have the potential to produce fine wine of both colors and perhaps also a great rosé? Or is there always an ideal choice, while the alternatives, where they exist, serve principally to nourish a little useful commercial diversity?

There are, it would seem, very few vineyard zones that can produce white wines as great as their red counterparts, or vice versa. Were Côte-Rôtie and Condrieu (with Château Grillet) a single appellation, it might qualify. Burgundy has Beaune and perhaps Chassagne; and the Rhône, Hermitage. There are parts of Pessac-Léognan that are genuinely bipolar, but not many. Once you move away from these zones (where one style significantly outweighs the other in any case), there is little parity, even where there is adaptability. Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where white wines account for just 7 percent of production, appears to confirm the trend.

In a way, indeed, it's surprising that white Châteauneuf exists at all. The red wines here are grandiose, often extravagant; their beauty elevates and celebrates solar force. Everyone remembers the great puddingstones that glow in the dead of night, returning the sun's ghostly heat to the vines. The broad-chested reds that result are naturally heady; their balance is a gift of tannins, of glycerol, of unctuous and perfumed fruit, and of meaty and mineral allusions rather than any bolt of freshening acidity. This does not, in other words, seem like propitious white-wine country. If you'd

never tasted white Châteauneuf, you might predict that it would be overblown, under-zesty, torpid.

As our notes confirm, that wasn't what we found, nor is it what those who seek out and buy this style enjoy. The charm of the white wines of the Southern Rhône is their subtly perfumed, languidly mouth-filling, amply graceful, smoothly structured, quietly satisfying mealtime beauty, and if you have a liking for that, then you will find those of Châteauneuf do indeed seem to bring extra concentration, nobility, and poise by comparison, say, with white Côtes du Rhône Villages Laudun, Lirac, or Costières de Nîmes. Most estates in Châteauneuf obtain a price of €20–25 for the white Tradition cuvée and €40 or more for any white special cuvée—which wouldn't be the case if this singular set of terroirs didn't have something special to say via the language of white grape varieties, as well as red.

**THE CHARM OF THESE SOUTHERN WHITE WINES IS THEIR SUBTLY PERFUMED, LANGUIDLY MOUTH-FILLING, SMOOTHLY STRUCTURED, QUIETLY SATISFYING MEALTIME BEAUTY**

## Variety showings

But which white varieties? As always with Châteauneuf, there's an unusually wide choice, since the regulations here permit varietal wine, as well as blends. It's worth bearing in mind that a number of the white varieties, notably Clairette and Bourboulenc, have long been planted in Châteauneuf and were customarily used with red varieties in the past to bring (in the words of the late-19th-century proprietor of La Nerthe, Joseph Ducos) "finesse, soul, and brilliance" to red blends. Seven white varieties are permitted today: Roussanne, Bourboulenc, Picardin, Grenache Blanc, Clairette Blanc, Picpoul Blanc, and Terret Blanc, with the latter four varieties also existing in pink-skinned Gris forms (so you may see allusion to 11 possible white varieties). The one celebrated Rhône grape variety you won't find within the appellation is Viognier, though it does perform interestingly in local IGP whites, to the extent that some (including Châteauneuf admirer Robert Parker) have called for it to be included in the appellation's permitted list. There are no signs, though, that such a decision is imminent.

In its absence, the head-turner is Roussanne—and with four out of the seven first-placed wines (Beaucastel's 2015 Roussanne Vieilles Vignes, Domaine Grand Veneur's 2015 and 2014 La Fontaine, and Domaine Patrice Magni's 2015 Cuvée Roussanne), it showed very well in our

**WHILE NO BLEND SEEMS ABLE TO MATCH A PURE ROUSSANNE FOR SHEER SHOWINESS AND FORCE OF CHARACTER, BLENDS MAY WELL HAVE THE UPPER HAND WHEN IT COMES TO SUBTLETY, RANGE OF ALLUSIONS, AND GASTRONOMIC APTITUDE**

## AVERAGE AND RANGE OF SCORES

	Average	Range
Tasting	89	81–94
SF	87	81–94
AJ	90	82–94
JLL	89	83–94

## ANDREW JEFFORD'S TOP WINES

Château de Beaucastel Vieilles Vignes 2015 94  
 Château La Gardine Cuvée des Générations 2015 94  
 Château de Vaudieu Clos du Belvédère 94  
 Domaine de la Solitude Barbérini 2015 94  
 Domaine de Beurenard Boisrenard 2015 93  
 Domaine de Nalys Eiceleenci 2015 93

tasting. There are puzzling aspects to its success here. It flourishes elsewhere in cooler locations (notably the Northern Rhône and Savoie, where it is known as Bergeron), and it is said (in Robinson, Harding, and Vouillamoz, *Wine Grapes*) to have "poor wind resistance," even though Châteauneuf may well be France's windiest appellation. Whatever the truth, its aromatic charms can be hugely beguiling in Châteauneuf and, though certainly rich on the palate, it retains factors of balance: the structure and layering brought by oak fermentation, in whole or in part; some juicy acidity (though analytically it is rarely much above 4g/l, measured as tartaric, even with a blocked malolactic); a perfumed density; glycerol itself.

We did, though, survey two other varietal wines, and both of these performed well, too, with a first-equal place for Château de Vaudieu's unusually articulate pure-Grenache 2015 Clos du Belvédère, and a second-equal highest score for La Bastide St Dominique's 2014 Chapelle, made from the rare rose-skinned version of Clairette grown on the sandy soils of Pignan and St Georges. Whereas Bourboulenc and Picpoul Blanc chiefly serve to bring some acidity and freshness to blends (and Picardin and Terret Blanc are barely planted at all), Clairette is an interesting, long-planted variety capable of making wines of antique complexity and probably better suited to the climate and soils of

Châteauneuf than any other. (It is the second most widely grown variety in Châteauneuf after Grenache Blanc.) The risk with Clairette is oxidation, but if this is avoided, it can bring poise and aromatic intricacy and intrigue, as well as secondary nuance to blends.

## Blends past and future

Blends, in the end, are the historical glory of white Châteauneuf as they are of red, and it was intriguing to note that while the varietal wines performed very well when our scores were amalgamated, nine out of Simon Field's 13 top-scoring wines were blends; four out of my six top-scoring wines were blends; and six out of John Livingstone-Learmonth's top ten wines were blends, too. The actual nature of each blend is complex and variable, but Field spoke of their "mysterious magic," suggesting that with time they might outperform the varietal wines, while Livingstone-Learmonth stressed that "artful blending [...] has always been the way in vineyards near the Mediterranean."

While no blend seems to be able to match a pure Roussanne for sheer showiness and force of character, our notes reveal that blends may well have the upper hand when it comes to subtlety of nuance, depth and range of allusions, and gastronomic aptitude. It is with blends, too, that each estate can turn the patchwork of scattered parcels so typical of Châteauneuf landholdings to best account, as well as embroider a signature into its estate white wine.

**Château de Beaucastel**  
**Vieilles Vignes 2015** 91  
(100% Roussanne; 14% ABV)

**SF** | Burnished gold, with a slightly lactic nose beyond the fruit, which in itself is dominated by greengage, yellow plum, and late-harvest orchard fruit. The palate is nicely balanced with sufficient acidity to counter the natural exuberance of the year; ripeness therefore held in check, with a whisper of tension on the finish gilding the structure of the ensemble. | 88

**AJ** | Deep gold for a 2015. Ah! Gorgeous nose, *il faut l'admettre*. Such lifted honeyed charm, such lemony freshness, such almondy richness. What else can I say? Just spot on. And sometimes Roussanne can be heavy in the south, but this almost seems to remember the freshness and lightness and poise it achieves not far away in Savoie. A truly lovely white Châteauneuf-du-Pape nose. Then you taste, and it's lush, rich, solid, soft, and gratifying. I almost spoke too soon about that lifted aromatic freshness, since the palate is a much richer, chewier, heavier prospect... but it's good, nuanced, subtle, and sinewy. Altogether fine and impressive. In the finish, you find licorice root, normally only a red-wine note. Super-serious French white wine from a special place. | 94

**JLL** | Full yellow, gold tints, abundant legs visible. The bouquet is full, markedly southern in its display of toffee and creamy, ripe fruits, in glazed fashion, a note of tobacco attached. The *gras* is pretty stylish, and the texture keeps its smoothness throughout. The length is lovely, successful, nourishing. A polished and well-rounded white Châteauneuf here, one that can sit at the high table. It deserves fine cuisine. Decant it. 2018-30/32. | 92



**Domaine de Beurenard 2015** 91  
(30% Clairette, 25% Bourboulenc, 22% Roussanne, 20% Grenache Blanc, 3% Picpoul and Picardan; 13.5% ABV)

**SF** | Rich, near burnished gold color, nose still not far from the fermentation vat; raw and somewhat unformed. Time is on its side, however. On the palate, the complexity of the blend is rewarding and suitably intricate; orchard-fruit characteristics, with a distinct citric kick and a well-rounded slightly oily texture; a southern warmth beneath it all, and a herbal undertone, with laurel and even hints of thyme evidenced. | 89

**AJ** | Mid-depth of old gold. Sappy, vegetal aromas: zucchini and fennel. A little shy wild flower fragrance, too. A beguiling nose, in sum. Rich, tangy, and full, with a little oxidation adding to

the overall complexity of the wine. Some would note this as a fault, but for me it adds to the wine's charm and intrigue and, in a strange sort of way, seems to bolster the other aromas. Lots of complexity and concentration from the blend, and there is acidity, too, to stop it all getting too languid. Excellent white Châteauneuf-du-Pape. | 92

**JLL** | Yellow robe. Good oiliness, infused tea aromas lead a nicely full bouquet that is well expressive of the south. The palate gives savory, attractively textured content, spreads well and widely, the *gras* enjoyable, the length very assured. Good style and local truth here. You want to drink this, and you also want a good turbot beside it. The balance is good, and it captures the warmth of 2015 in a very artful way. To 2027/29. | 93

**Château Gigognan**  
**Clos du Roi 2015** 91  
(45% Grenache Blanc, 45% Clairette, 10% Roussanne; 13.5% ABV)

**SF** | An attractive nose of gorse, laurel, and dried fruit. The palate hints at exotic indulgence, yet has poised natural acidity then herbs, spice, and dried fruit, all entwined harmoniously, Mediterranean warmth and indigenous *savoir-faire* symbiotically elemental. | 94

**AJ** | Light old gold. Full, earthy, and long, though without the detail and freshness of floral fragrance that marks out the best in this flight. Nonetheless, there is lots of marrowy, lanolin richness that I am really enjoying—it's a different appeal. On the palate, too, this is rather a broad-shouldered, forceful style of white Châteauneuf-du-Pape, but it has lots of push, depth, vividness (the acidity is sustained), and length. There's a little loose sulfur dioxide. | 88

**JLL** | Yellow robe. The nose has a salted, lime, and greengage mix, a drift of peach near the stone. It has scale. The palate sequels well from the nose, with a becoming run of cooked white fruits that extend well, with a bonny show of freshness coming through toward the finish. This is intricate, has quiet complexity, serves detail in the glass. The balance is good. To 2025/28. | 91



**Domaine Grand Veneur**  
**La Fontaine 2015** 91  
(100% Roussanne; 15% ABV)

**SF** | Burnished gold color, promising riches. The nose recalls nougat, Seville orange, and summer reverie. The palate is concentrated, touched by a little *surmaturité* maybe; the winemaker's faith in the vintage definitely... Perhaps, ultimately,

a little overindulgent, its sinews deep-scored and lapidary, its potential compromised by the forward-looking aspirations of the variety. | 88

**AJ** | Buttercup gold. Phew! Super-sensual and sexy nose; this almost seems to be the white-wine equivalent of that pheromonal thrill you can get from Merlot in Pomerol. I will leave the rest to your imaginations, but it's like falling into... And more objectively, this is honeysuckle and nicotiana, with a few spoonfuls of real honey for luck. On the palate, it's rich, structured, ample, generous, and honeysuckle. Very solid, foursquare, chunky, and rich. Indubitably impressive, but on the palate it doesn't quite have the charm of the nose, concentrated though it may be. | 92

**JLL** | Very full yellow robe, inner depth. Wow! The nose gives an immediate hit of burnished fruits, a sultry depth, but also an elegant surround. It invokes interest with some mystery to consider. It's extremely broad. The palate is an absorbing mixture of texture, stealthy energy, and flair; it glides in exemplary fashion, with a stone-fruited flavor, peach and nectarine, and a vibrant grapeyness as well, thanks to the ripeness of the crop. There is a commendable thread of freshness lining it. Take your time: This will live for decades and have comings and goings. Its structure is akin to a fine red wine. 2021-35/39. | 94

**Domaine Grand Veneur**  
**La Fontaine 2014** 91  
(100% Roussanne; 14% ABV)

**SF** | Attractive poached pear aromas, unadulterated Roussanne in its pomp, with a little spice behind and a clean finely matted weave to the fabric. Impressive length, heady without being overworked, firm without losing the accessibility of the variety. | 89

**AJ** | Mid-glowing yellow. Lush, full, and rich, as is typical for the pure-Roussanne wines in this tasting; the trick is to avoid suggesting too much oak or banana, and settle on those honeysuckle, honey, and nougat allusions. This is halfway there. On the palate, it is firm, foursquare, structured, vibrant (plenty of acidity), and chunky but lacks a little charm, softness, and finesse. Concentrated wine, too. Perhaps good with time, but just a little monumental at present. (Oak?) | 91

**JLL** | Full yellow robe, good glisten. White raisin, toast, and elderflower cordial assemble on the bouquet, with a musky raisin in behind. The palate starts on trim but sustained content, emerges into a fine tune of saltiness on the close. This is just starting to edge together as a whole, but its calling card is the exceptional freshness and vivacity of the 2014 vintage, so be in no hurry. It combines a northern tune with the polished *gras* of the south. Decant it. 2019-30/33. | 92

**Domaine Patrice Magni**  
**Cuvée Roussanne 2015** 91  
(100% Roussanne; 15% ABV)

**SF** | Big and bold, uncompromising and rich, a finely judged Roussanne, its fruit persuasive and eloquent, greengage, ripe orchard-fruit, and potent purity. Eschewing the temptations of too much oak, this comes very close to penetrating the

**SIMON FIELD MW'S VERDICT**

Two key conclusions can be drawn from this illuminating tasting, the first of which is far from unexpected, the second possibly more problematic but maybe less so when framed within the contextual limitations of the first. First and foremost, all these wines were very young and were therefore precocious, sometimes raw and a little unformed, and sometimes rejoicing in the untainted exuberance of primary experience. Châteauneuf blanc can be seen to follow an almost Shakespearean trajectory through its several, if not seven, ages. Here we do not get beyond first base, which is fortunate in that the next step is usually a sulky shutdown but disappointing in that we were not able to discern the later routes, which often involve detours into Riesling kerosene and then a panoply of nutty indulgence. Impressive soft Mediterranean fruit was to the fore here, with plenty of generosity and harmonious equilibrium.

The second, more contentious point focuses on the fact that five of the top seven wines were from a single variety—notably the increasingly popular Roussanne. In an appellation so justly celebrated for its blends, in wines of both color, one was left wondering if winemakers are increasing playing safe, attempting to hang on the coattails of such (rightly) celebrated wines as Beaucastel's Vieilles Vignes Roussanne, albeit correctly lauded here. The mysterious magic of such blends as the Clos des Papes Blanc, with its six equal shareholders, probably needs more time to seduce. What would be fascinating would be to revisit all of these wines in five years, maybe more, to see if the blends have regained the ascendancy that the history of the appellation has bequeathed to them.

**TOP WINES**

- Château Gigognan Clos du Roi 2015 94
- Clos des Papes 2015 92
- Château de Vaudieu 2015 92
- Domaine Patrice Magni Cuvée Roussanne 2015 92
- La Bastide Saint Dominique Chapelle 2014 89
- Domaine de Beurenard 2015 89
- Clos du Caillou Les Sables 2015 89
- Clos du Mont Olivet 2015 89
- Domaine Grand Veneur La Fontaine 2014 89
- Domaine Grand Veneur Le Miocène 2015 89
- Domaine de la Janasse Cuvée Prestige 2015 89
- Domaine de Marcoux 2015 89
- Château de Vaudieu Clos du Belvédère 2015 89

dark secretive heart of this, the most open and accessible of varieties. | 92

**AJ** | Brilliant pale to mid-gold. Lots of generosity and charm here: flowers and summer fruits, and then just a hint of the candied banana that Roussanne can sometimes evoke. Vivid, fresh, lively, and deep on the palate, with (as on the nose) plenty of that pure, pristine Roussanne style. Driving, long, almost statuesque. A grand, serious, and almost monumental wine, but not a lot of finesse, elegance, or charm. | 92

**JLL** | Attractive yellow robe. The bouquet has a quietly assured depth, a stylish suggestion of peach and saltiness, a little mystery, a slight tang of bitterness. The palate rolls with a discreet but well-sustained fine content, white stone fruits such as white plum present. The finish is clear and trim. This captures the elegance of Roussanne in notably nimble fashion. The vintage strength comes through via the tanginess. 2018-27/29. | 89



**Château de Vaudieu**  
**Clos du Belvédère 2015** 91  
(100% Grenache Blanc; 14% ABV)

**SF** | A reticent nose, a varietal profile, hard to penetrate... The palate is foursquare, with a youthful, austere texture, yet beyond that there are hints of the potential of the variety, unfashionable at the moment, with plenty of zesty yellow fruit evidenced, along with impressive old-vine acidity and a richly authoritative finish. | 89

**AJ** | Mid- to full gold. This pure Grenache must come from fine vineyards, as it is unusually aromatic, singing out with crushed aniseed sweetness and with an almost jasmine-like soapy perfumed note behind, too. A magnificent nose, which everyone growing Grenache Blanc should seek out and note. On the palate, the wine is soft, rich, full, and gently unfolding, with a lovely extravagant richness, depth, and perfume to it. Who said Grenache Blanc was inarticulate? Not here! Perhaps it doesn't quite have the finesse that some of the blends can achieve, but it is indubitably fine, heroic, meal-worthy, and full of fascination, as well as being generous and articulate. Grand wine. | 94

**JLL** | Sturdy yellow robe. The nose carries a graceful, well-rounded aroma of cooked stone fruits such as ripe nectarine, with a note of pear. It glides with sensuous appeal. The palate rolls with lissom content, its *gras* restrained in its expression. This is authentic white Châteauneuf, for *la bonne table*, has no frills such as Roussanne and flowery

inputs. The length is well assured, and it works well on its southern texture and the finesse of the place. To 2033/36. | 91



**La Bastide Saint-Dominique 2015** 90  
(34% Roussanne, 33% Grenache, 33% Clairette) (14% ABV)

**SF** | Modest of hue, but quite aromatically assertive, the wine is fat, indulgent in its oxidative purview, rather stifling, oily, and assuming. | 85

**AJ** | Deep, bright gold. Very aromatic: lots of honey, balsam, apricot, melon sweetness, some faint ginger. Vivid and mouth-filling on the palate, once again with very good aromatic profiling; a little fresher and less rich in style than some of its peers but still glycerol-supported, and the aromatic precision takes it right to the top of the class. A truly delicious and impressively fragrant white Châteauneuf-du-Pape where the Roussanne is high in quality and working overtime. | 92

**JLL** | Yellow robe. The nose goes WHAM! with a mandarin burst, mandarin chunks, and an exotic litchi backup. It has inner depth and is based on well-ripened crop. The palate is weighty—this is a real texture and glycerol wine, with a southern lands pedigree. There is enjoyable breadth on both nose and palate, and it goes long. This is a virtuous Châteauneuf-du-Pape: neighboring appellations cannot deliver this depth of *gras* and the lissom texture all in the one glass. Decanting useful. To 2028/31. | 92

**La Bastide Saint-Dominique**  
**Chapelle 2014** 90  
(100% Clairette Rose; 14% ABV)

**SF** | An unusual nose, fennel and aniseed, its promise carried on to the palate, which is crisp, linear, and very much in the mold of this vintage, elegant, supple, and intriguingly different, the grip on the back palate ensuring confidence in staying power and a refreshing herbal mid-palate effortlessly boasting all that is good about this underappreciated vintage (for white wines). | 89

**AJ** | Full gold. Blossomy but rather earthy on the nose to begin with; after a while, it acquires some floral lift, grapey fullness, and autumnal complexity (quince). On the palate, it is full, broad, and structured, with plenty of ripe acidity to balance: a very good wine that avoids the rather rigid edges and dry firmness of [Domaine Roger Sabon Renaissance 2015], the most obvious comparison. Nonetheless, Clairette, for all its historical credentials, is always going to offer a very different (and more secondary and "old-fashioned") experience than the other key

varieties, and in the end, my feeling is that it is probably best as a blending component. | 91  
**JLL** | Firm yellow robe. Exotic fruit aromas line the bouquet, litchi and mango, and a hum of florality underneath. It's on the move toward amplifying and changing from its full youth. The palate has a crab apple, smoky flavor, with fine detail in its late stages: a real, good clarity there. This has a little of the red-fruits appeal that chimes with its grape variety well. It would be great with some soft cheeses, Brie de Meaux and friends, also Szechuan cuisine. Marks for character. To 2026/28. | 89

**Domaine de Beurenard Boisrenard 2015** (30% Clairette, 25% Bourboulenc, 22% Roussanne, 20% Grenache Blanc, 3% Picpoul and Picardan; 14% ABV) | 90

**SF** | An authoritative color with alcoholic tears berating the glass; the palate is creamy, indulgent, and rather jejune. Ripeness of fruit and a balanced, albeit youthful, personality evidenced, tight and unyielding. There is, however, potential. | 86

**AJ** | Full yellow. Ah! What a lovely aroma. Imagine getting up late on an early summer's day (before the wild flowers have faded and died) in the depth of the southern French countryside, then flinging open the windows—that's what this wine evokes. Super complexity and charm here. On the palate, too, it is a very fine wine: rich, generous, mouth-filling, with huge weight and depth, succulence and richness. All that aromatic finesse is there, and there is also an undertow of supremely ripe, gentle acidity keeping it all bubbling along, as if a stream was running through the landscape... Top white Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and a delicious wine for drinking tonight. | 93

**JLL** | Bright, pretty full, yellow. The nose engages well, offers a handsome mixed bag of peach, cooked orange, and tilleul (or linden). The palate sets off well, links closely, and gives a fresh bout of well-streamlined content. There is oaking on the aftertaste, hence a note of toffee. This captures some freshness, and its center revolves around squeezy gras. It will be more integrated, and the finish more interesting, in two or three years. 2019-25/27. | 87



**Domaine Chante-Cigale 2015** (25% Grenache Blanc, 25% Clairette, 25% Roussanne, 25% Bourboulenc; 14% ABV) | 90

**SF** | Unassuming of hue and aromatic, a pleasant,

**JOHN LIVINGSTONE-LEARMONTH'S VERDICT**

If 2014 was an exemplary vintage for white Châteauneuf-du-Pape thanks to its gliding balance, 2015 hit the target from a different route—that of strength and near power, but it is saved by a freshness that also aided the reds and prevented them from being too big and overblown.

The wines are therefore based on richness and the all-important glycerol of the south, which came through in several of those wines that held plenty of Grenache Blanc. Often regarded as humdrum—a provider of texture but not much definition—the Grenache Blanc gave the wines body, length, and even flair in 2015. The 100% Grenache Blanc from Château de Vaudieu, its Clos du Belvédère, was a good example, bearing commendable finesse.

From a varietal standpoint, the other top performer, of course, was Roussanne. Château de Beaucastel, with its World War I Roussanne, sets the mark on these wines of great suavity and profound elegance, but here there were several great successes, led by the 2015 Domaine Grand Veneur La Fontaine.

Alongside these stately, nearly varietal wines, I would always applaud artful blending, as has always been the way in vineyards near the Mediterranean. That is why the Domaine de Beurenard and the Bastide Saint-Dominique wines—also less expensive than the Roussanne brigade—were praiseworthy, especially given the high heat during the ripening season of 2015. Both of these were notably long.

Across the Rhône, growers tell me that their white wines are selling fast these days, so there is now a virtuous circle of more time, effort, and money being invested in them. They certainly deserve a *bonne table*.

**TOP WINES**

- Domaine Grand Veneur La Fontaine 2015 94
- Domaine de Beurenard 2015 93
- La Bastide Saint-Dominique 2015 92
- Château de Beaucastel Vieilles Vignes 2015 92
- Château de Beaucastel 2015 92
- Domaine Grand Veneur La Fontaine 2014 92
- Château Gigognan Clos du Roi 2015 91
- Domaine Chante-Cigale 2015 91
- Château de Vaudieu Clos du Belvédère 91
- Château de Vaudieu 2015 91

almost sweet example, ripe and modestly exotic, lowish acidity yet quite complete; monolithic and stentorian, yet faithful to the vintage, and with a gentle twist of bitterness on the finish to complement the mid-palate generosity. | 88

**AJ** | Mid-gold in color. Sweet and warm, with some melon and cooked-sugar sweetness. On the palate, the wine is firm, sinewy, close-knit, with bright though well-rounded acidity, and plenty of depth and resource. This is a little monolithic and close-hewn at this stage, but I suspect it will acquire more intricacy in a year or two. | 90

**JLL** | Yellow robe, with a sheen. Nuts, peach, and a hint of white raisin show in a nose that is closely bound together. The palate attacks well on bright white fruits and prolongs its tasty content with a sure hand. The flavor assembles around peach above all. This would be very good with halibut or monkfish, and it deserves a *bonne table*. It's exuberant and showing very well now. To 2021/22. | 91



**Clos des Papes 2015** (16.66% Grenache, 16.66% Clairette, 16.66% Roussanne, 16.66% Picpoul, 16.66% Bourboulenc, 16.66% Picardan; 15% ABV) | 90

**SF** | Bright light gold color, fresh youthful aromas of the orchard; the palate has energy and nutty complexity. Honeysuckle and verbena, opening up all the time in the glass... A hint of bitterness on the finish is a virtue in this instance, underwriting potential. | 92

**AJ** | Pale gold. Gently sweet and warm; grainy dough and soft pressed seeds. Warm and spicy, but no particular floral grace. Spicy and concentrated, but some tasters may find this a little alcoholically overassertive. Once your mucous membranes have come to terms with that, this is a lush, generous white Châteauneuf with real complexity and charm. The aromas begin to lift with time in the glass. | 91

**JLL** | Shiny yellow. The nose expresses warm, viscous airs with a stewed fruits, compote style. There is a latent oiliness, and the vintage heat is present. The palate is savory, wrapped together in rich bundle of dried fruits, white plums, showing some tannic assertion as it closes. It finishes on the quiet side. Very much a table wine, given its stream of richness, strength. Decanting useful. 2017-27/28. | 87

**Domaine de la Janasse Cuvée Prestige 2015** (80% Roussanne, 10% Clairette, 10% Grenache; 14.5% ABV) | 90

**SF** | A big, far from enigmatic nose of fruit salad and vanillin. The color is a little cloudy. Youthful and incomplete, the wine does not lack for potential. I would love to see a finished sample of this wine, as the qualitative indicators are all there, albeit blurred by time's youthful haze. | 89

**AJ** | Mid-gold. Rich and just very slightly strange aromas: seeds and vanilla-honey yoghurt. Finished? Attractive nonetheless. Rich, vivid, concentrated, and artless: a frank and straightforward effort to grab attention, which it does. Concentrated, commanding, and long. Will time engrave in the subtleties? Perhaps it will. It will certainly last... Fine raw materials here. | 91

**JLL** | Slightly cloudy yellow robe. The nose has a baked, toasted lead, with a buttress of solid cooked fruit lying beyond. There are hints of aniseed, the outdoors of Provence. The palate starts on cooked fruits, a stone-fruit tang about them; this is unfinished business in the glass, but the portents are good. There is attractive and stylish freshness to bring it to a close. 2019-28/31. | 90

**Domaine de Marcoux 2015** (65% Roussanne, 25% Grenache Blanc and Clairette, 10% Bourboulenc; 14% ABV) | 90

**SF** | A complicated, slightly precocious nose, dried fruit dragged through the hedgerow. The palate is rounded, edgy, with almonds and beeswax adding interest to the edifice. | 89

**AJ** | Full gold in color. Warm, sweet, and creamy aromas; a touch of bubbled sugar, too. Come on in. On the palate, the wine is rich, soft, open, generous, and uncomplicated, with some sinew and sap, with vinosity, with sound acidity... Generous, artless, hugely enjoyable. | 90

**JLL** | Full yellow color. The nose is warm, ripe, with a cooked peach, lemon inner strength; there is a note of aniseed, too. The palate coasts with smooth content, its expression reserved for now. This is a traditional white Châteauneuf with a tannic depth within, just a little coarse as it stands. Allow it at least another year or two, and be ready to decant it. Its thoroughness is appealing, and there is glimpse of freshness on the finish. 2018-27/29. | 89

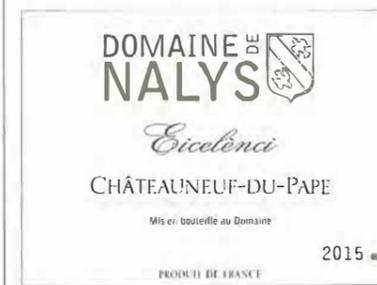


**Domaine de Nalys Eicelenci 2015** (45% Grenache Blanc, 26% Roussanne, 28% Clairette; 14% ABV) | 90

**SF** | Hawthorn and white peach on the nose; attractive, far from imposing. The palate is richer, more ambitious, further from where it should be, the potential compromised by a very gifted technician. Intriguing—one to watch with real interest. | 87

**AJ** | A slightly paler wine within the run of this ambitious cuvée flight: clean gold. Bottle 2: Very attractive aromas of cream, honey, Toblerone, and cut white mushroom. On the palate, too, this is an excitingly allusive, energetic wine, with lots of marrowy fullness, almondy depth, and almost truffley richness to it. An outstanding effort here, both full and structured, as well as hitting every aromatic button that white Châteauneuf-du-Pape can manage and finishing in a glorious effusion of honey and almond. Grand stuff. | 93

**JLL** | Opaque yellow robe. The nose is buttery, has vanilla, roasted nuts in its center. The palate gives a white-raisin, sponge-cake flavor, sits back in the glass. It needs time to emerge from its raising and get back to local virtues. There is a touch of aniseed from the Clairette on the finish. It is a manly white Châteauneuf. Drink with Asian cuisine or butter- or cream-sauce dishes. 2019-29/32. | 89



**Domaine des Sénéchaux 2015** (32% Roussanne, 31% Grenache Blanc, 28% Clairette, 9% Bourboulenc; 14% ABV) | 90

**SF** | Roussanne is clearly in control at the moment; tropical notes with hints of nectarine and gorse; the *élevage* is modern and interventionist, and there is a lack of inherent balance that may betray acidification; commercially sound and a hurrah for gratification, but a question mark over both authenticity and long-term potential. Far from disagreeable, for all that. | 87

**AJ** | Clear mid-gold in color. A very good white Châteauneuf-du-Pape aroma: full, buxom, and rewarding, with plenty of hints and nuances (apricot and peach, pounded almond, dry herbs, a whisper of lavender) to detain the drinker. On the palate, it is zesty, fresh, alive with zests and peels, and with nourishing, sustaining acidity, too. Aromatic right into the finish. Classic excellence. | 92

**JLL** | Fine yellow robe. Elderberry, greengage airs lead the bouquet, a hint of petrol on the frame as well. It has a well-assured and serene depth, is

nice broad. The palate is tucked together tightly and isn't expressing itself today. The content is savory, the texture smooth, so the elements are in place. I like the tasty gras here. Up for sauced dishes, mushrooms, since there is a little earthiness before the finish. Decanting is a good idea over the next few years. 2017-25/27. | 90



**Domaine de la Solitude Barbérini 2015** (80% Roussanne, 15% Clairette, 5% Grenache Blanc; 15% ABV) | 90

**SF** | An entirely unsubtle fruit-salad concoction, rich and heady, flabby and indulgent, its appeal assured, its aging and gastronomic potential both fatally compromised by overindulgence. | 85

**AJ** | Pale gold. Goodness: another electrifyingly good aromatic profile, immediately commanding your attention and lifting you to another place on earth and another psychic state from the one in which you opened the bottle. Sweet, soft, almondy, graceful, and enchanting—the wine equivalent of dappled September sunlight. A lovely nose I could spend 20 minutes with. On the palate, this is a little less rich and a little more vegetal and marrowy than the nose suggested it would be. You could even call it fresh, sappy, poised. But we are in Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and it is a Roussanne/Clairette/Grenache Blanc blend, so we have something that sits on the tongue like a leopard and just slowly purrs with all those soft and seedy things. Outstanding; a great example of a top cuvée. | 94

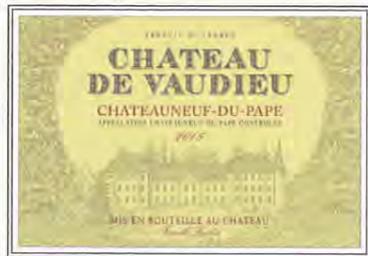
**JLL** | Fine yellow robe. Caramel and apricot lead the bouquet, which has a ripe and sultry-sweet heart: toffee on roller blades here. There is an inkling of saltiness. The palate holds very fine content, with only a glimmer of what it can become over time. There is a greengage dab of freshness on the finish. Patience required, but this is a pedigree white Châteauneuf that will reward. Decanting is urged. 2019-31/33. | 90

**Château de Vaudieu 2015** (60% Roussanne, 40% Grenache Blanc; 14% ABV) | 90

**SF** | A bold color and creamy nose, vanillin and ripe green fruit nicely juxtaposed. The palate is generous, seamlessly textured, perfect balancing acidity, too fine to be engineered, and Roussanne given an indulgent rein. A modern, moreish style, yet supremely crafted and perfectly poised. | 92

**AJ** | Full yellow-gold. The nose is warm, and slightly clumsy; generous but not particularly allusive. Vivid, lush, fresh, and full on the palate,

with some aromatic finesse here, but paradoxically, too, a kind of grassy streak to it, which the rich color didn't suggest was coming. | 87  
**JLL** | Full yellow robe. The nose is ripe, concentrated around glazed fruits, white raisin, nuts. It's a sturdy affair. The palate holds full richness and has a grounded length, a real worker bee of prolonged content. This is genuine, local. There is an appealing savory style, and it captures Châteauneuf well. Very grounded and authentic. Decant it. *Pieds* and *paquets*, kidneys in a juniper sauce would be ace with this, to match its infused tea, near-juniper, presence. To 2028/31. | 91



**Château de Beaucastel 2015**  
 (80% Roussanne, along with Grenache Blanc, Picardan, Bourboulenc, Clairette; 14% ABV) | 89

**SF** | Burnished gold color, looking quite mature, its nose dominated by gently roasted almonds, hawthorn, and hints of grapefruit. The palate is broad, indulgent, and ultimately a little disappointing: Roussanne is more persuasive in the delivery than in the message. | 85  
**AJ** | Full old gold in color. Very rich and honeyed—indeed, frankly malty, too. The oxygen has crept in along the way and it wouldn't last long on an Aussie tasting bench, but I rather enjoy the broad-chested, bedecked splendor, though it is "old-style." On the palate, it's just as the aromas suggested it would be: a big, chewy, dripping honeycomb of a wine, which derives a considerable proportion of its complexity from some oxidation. But it's lovely! And grand and structured, and the fruit is terrific. Set prejudice aside, and enjoy. | 91  
**JLL** | Sturdy yellow robe. The nose is filled with ripe, coated white fruits, and has an overlay that is almost like butterscotch. It's dumb, not varied, for now. The palate bears stylish content, which prolongs safely and quietly. This is extremely elegant, well-shaped white Châteauneuf, for patient cellaring and serving with noble cuisine, sauces involved. It's got a handsome intricacy and will reward close attention when drinking it. 2019-28/31. | 92



**Domaine de Barville Roussanne 2015**  
 (100% Roussanne; 14.5% ABV) | 89

**SF** | A tropical nose, with hints of lanolin and honeysuckle garlanding the edifice; a generous and approachable Roussanne, audacious in its lack of ambition, faithful to the varietal manifesto. For all that, a little dull. | 87  
**AJ** | Mid-gold. This pure Roussanne is actually aromatically quite shy but takes a lot of scrutiny: the fruit blossoms, the brushed leaves, the first peaches waiting in their wooden box for the market to open—it's all there if you look. On the palate, it is rich, wealthy, ample, almost spicy. Here the fruit slips into the backseat a bit, and what we are left with is a firm, well-constructed, vinous food white whose genes just hint from time to time at the yellow summer fruits. A fascinating choice and the variety seems very happy here. | 92  
**JLL** | Bright yellow. White pepper, cooked pear aromas come forward on the nose; it is backed by chamomile-infused tea and aniseed airs. The palate holds graceful citrus flavors, with greengage and a delicate white-plum presence. It tapers a touch toward the finish but is fresh there. It will extend with a little more bottle age. It already has a certain serenity, flashes of detail. To 2023/25. | 87



**Domaine Chante-Cigale Extrait 2014**  
 (80% Roussanne, 20% Grenache; 14% ABV) | 89

**SF** | Attractive Roussanne aromatics pervade; peach, spice, and ripe apples. The palate is rounded, elegant, and long; balanced acidity, faithful to the vintage, and approachable. Relatively simple but nicely constructed and not without purity. | 88  
**AJ** | Mid-gold. Some grace and charm, and then some banana-sundae basic instinct, too. Thrusting and lively on the palate: sappy freshness meets the intrinsic ripeness of variety and place. Very sound white Châteauneuf-du-Pape, with intrigue and interest and concentration, plus aromatic finesse. | 89  
**JLL** | Shiny yellow robe. Wet stones, a light air of grapefruit and cooked lime along with aniseed feature on the nose. It's a mixed bag and is in the throes of varying as it evolves now. The palate is cautious, as in a wine on the change; there is a little offer of dried fruits, with some good grip as it closes. A wine of 2014 freshness and detail. It has

style and a good pedigree. The salted aftertaste is a bonus. Decant it. 2018-28/30. | 90

**Château La Nerthe Clos de Beauvenir 2015** (60% Roussanne, 30% Clairette, 8% Grenache Blanc, 2% Bourboulenc; 13.5% ABV) | 89

**SF** | Accessible and pleasant on the nose, with peaches and cream, ginger stem, and vanillin; pleasurable, principled, international in scope, concentrated but not too rich—a thoroughly modern style that flatters but does not, necessarily, deceive. | 88  
**AJ** | Mid-gold. Plenty of aromatic richness here, but delivered with a slightly forceful, foursquare style. On the palate, the wine is deep, marrowy, long, structured, powerful, and compelling—better than the aromas suggested. This is a serious contender and built for the long haul; perhaps one might hope for a little more charm in youth, but no one will be disappointed by this concentrated, powerful, and masterful white Châteauneuf-du-Pape. | 92  
**JLL** | Firm yellow robe. Toffee, musky white raisin, elderberry, and peanuts mix on the nose. The palate is centered on a trim ball of richness, with the brakes still on, as if the wine has just been bottled—hence the toning down on the finish. Allow it at least another year; it's only half a wine for now. There is a little lime on the aftertaste, a note of minted freshness there. 2018-25/27. | 87

**Domaine Les Cailloux 2015**  
 (80% Roussanne, 20% Grenache; 13.5% ABV) | 88

**SF** | Golden color and nose of pineapple, poached pear, and acacia; the palate is potent, a little unformed, its grip austere and slightly overwhelming. Gastronomically promising—a worthy imprimatur of Roussanne. | 87  
**AJ** | Pale buttercup yellow: such a lovely color. Creamy, soft, supple, and enticing, without the aromatic threads being particularly allusive. On the palate, though, this is suddenly something rather different from its peers: richly lush and honeyed, with almost a late-harvest sweetness and unctuousness. Is there some residual sugar here? It seems so. Anyway, it works wonderfully well with the overall wealth and generosity of this wine, though I'd serve it as a decadent apéritif rather than pairing it with bouillabaisse. Yum! | 91  
**JLL** | Full yellow color. Vanilla, cooked peach, and a sultry grapeyness combine on the nose, which reflects the warm rays of 2015. The palate delivers tangy content, with implications of orange marmalade and a note of Riesling petrol. It ends pretty neatly, with a smooth and savory shape. I would leave this for two or three years to get the best from it; it's a closed-in wine that will be more interesting in the second phase of its life. 2019-26/28. | 87

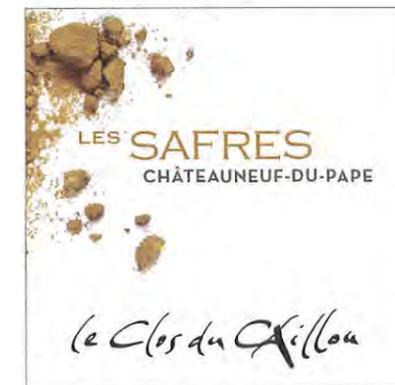
**Domaine Chante-Cigale Extrait 2015** (80% Roussanne, 20% Grenache; 14% ABV) | 88

**SF** | An unusual example from such a ripe year,

its limelight acidity piercing with questions of authenticity and overwhelming expectation; far from typical and far from agreeable. | 83  
**AJ** | Full yellow-gold. A slightly muddled aroma, without the pristine finesse of the best. Wonderfully commanding and concentrated wine on the palate, though: truly arresting, and surely one of the titans of the tasting in pure-power-play, old-vine (?)—or at least low-yield—terms. The marking challenge is that there is not a lot of aromatic grace, charm, or finesse here; it just throbs and quivers out over the palate and is not lifted by much in the way of scented nuance. A beast of a wine, then, but sensational and very, very good. | 92  
**JLL** | Shiny yellow. The nose is a little musty, declares greengage plum, with a gravel-beach backdrop and some dried fruits such as apricot. The palate gives a tangy flavor that combines nectarine and apricot, brings in some saltiness toward the finish. It's a streamlined, confident production that is perhaps a little arm's length in its delivery. 2018-26/28. | 88

**Clos du Caillou Les Safres 2015**  
 (40% Grenache Blanc, 30% Roussanne, 30% Clairette; 15% ABV) | 88

**SF** | A forthcoming fruity nose, peach stone and apricot, behind that white pepper and a whisper from the boudoir... The indulgent expectation is bathroom mirrored on the palate, which is rounded, alcoholic, and far from subtle. There is, however, a place for wines like this. | 89  
**AJ** | Full yellow. Very attractive aromas: lifted, sweet, graceful, and warm, with lots of summer fruit napped with honey. Seamless and rounded aromas. On the palate, the wine is fresh yet warm, vivid yet rich, and again very seamless and rounded, with lots of honey and toasted almond on the finish. It's very ripe and low in acidity, yet the nobility of the soils keeps it vital and vigorous. An excellent glass of white Châteauneuf-du-Pape. | 91  
**JLL** | Fine yellow robe. Caramel and vanilla lead the nose, so this is a wine still on its raising. There is an air of white raisin and tobacco behind. It's a little low on elegance. The palate gives a brief richness and is dumb, short on flair but also potential, I fear. It seems turned in on itself. Modest fare. To 2021/22. | 84



**Clos Saint-Michel 2015**  
 (30% Clairette, 30% Grenache, 20% Bourboulenc, 20% Roussanne; 13.5% ABV) | 88

**SF** | Playful nose with hints of litchi and orange grove, the edge of the tropics. The palate betrays a relatively recent fermentation, beyond which there are grilled almonds and hints of pineapple. Exoticism is tempered by the acidity of the Clairette and the ensemble is heady without being out of balance, rich without losing structure, oak evidenced at this stage but destined not to assert too much, one feels. | 88  
**AJ** | Full gold. There's a slight aromatic heaviness here; it doesn't quite have the fragrant lift of the best of its peers. After some time in the glass, though, an attractive balsam-like sweetness emerges, and it begins to find some apricot-blossom intricacy. In the mouth, this is soft, rich, warm, firm, with plenty of generosity and some apricot lift. A good white Châteauneuf-du-Pape, overall. | 89  
**JLL** | Yellow robe. Salted, citrus first airs on the nose; white plum and peach are also here. The palate shows dried fruits, has grip and a late focus on tangy content. It's not an ensemble just yet, is in a low-key phase, perhaps post bottling. The finish bears some southern depth, has a ground force, so this can run on with further time. To 2023/24. | 88

**Château La Gardine Cuvée des Générations 2015**  
 (95% Roussanne, 5% Clairette; 13.5% ABV) | 88

**SF** | Lower in alcohol than some, this example does not lack for ripe, accessible fruit character, tutti frutti, pear and peach. There is, however, an ultimate lack of charm and a rather aggressive, pinched finish, which flies in the face of the generosity of the attack. | 85  
**AJ** | Full, burnished old gold. Bottle 1: TCA. Bottle 2: This is, in fact, very elegant and chiseled in the Châteauneuf-du-Pape context: poised, fresh, lively, and elegant. I don't know how (soils?), but this wine almost seems to have a kind of truffley richness, elegance, and understatement to it, a new-bread richness, and a lemon verbena freshness. A super nose here. On the palate, this is fine white Châteauneuf-du-Pape—structured, firm, fine-drawn, long, and elegant, with lovely triggered secondary complexities, and despite the fact that it is 95 percent Roussanne, without any great sense that the variety might be dominating the soil. I expect this to get a lot better with bottle age, and it is already very good indeed. Amazing concentration, too. Wow! | 94  
**JLL** | Full yellow robe. The bouquet expresses ripe fruit, elder, and Muscat grapeyness, has a little tangerine outer. It's not entirely ensemble. The palate is concentrated, and also has a musky, grapey center, as if the crop was picked a tad late, perhaps by design. The result is a wine with a tannic leaning and a sense of lack of refinement. Try from mid-2018 to 2025/27. | 84

**Domaine Grand Veneur Le Miocène 2015** (60% Clairette, 40% Roussanne; 14% ABV) | 88

**SF** | Forward, rather indulgent, aromas, peaches then apricots, all in all a poorly tended cornucopia. The palate has more grip than anticipated, plenty of concentrated dried-fruit personality and a surprisingly taut, finely tapered finish. The chasm between nose and palate is marked and slightly difficult to fathom but does not necessarily undermine qualitative potential or capacity to evolve. | 89  
**AJ** | Full mid-gold. Rather an earthy, frumpy nose, without the articulacy, finesse, subtlety, or charm of the best. The palate is better than the nose suggested, but this is still not a wine with much finesse or charm. Forceful and foursquare. | 85  
**JLL** | Shiny yellow robe. The nose is well varied already—there is a salted, aniseed, nutty trio, with white peach, greengage, and a touch of tobacco. The palate is expressive and interesting, and flows attractively with little pockets of citrus fruit (cooked lime). This has a fine pedigree and is a stylish wine. Its elegance and depth capture the progress made in white Châteauneuf over recent years. To 2025/28. | 90

**Mas de Boislauzon 2015**  
 (50% Grenache Blanc, 50% Roussanne; 14% ABV) | 88

**SF** | A head to head between equal shareholders, Grenache and Roussanne, the latter certainly winning the aromatic part of the contest, as one would expect, tropical, indulgent, and rich. This is also persuasive *en bouche*, the Grenache grounding the wine and, hitherto, allowing its more flamboyant partner free rein. I suspect it will come into its own with time and permit a more-than-satisfactory development. | 87  
**AJ** | Mid-gold. Fresh, sweet, and warm: lemon and honey, with a hint of nut. Lively and fresh on the palate, with fair mid-palate wealth. This doesn't quite have the density or aromatic allusiveness of the very best, but it's a very sound classic and a generous, friendly white. | 90  
**JLL** | Yellow color. Greengage and bright white fruits show on the nose, a sense of butter and musky flowers. The palate holds tight matter with a sturdiness that will take a little time to ease and expand. It links well between nose and palate and is suited to sauced dishes, firm flavors. It is solid on the finish, with Grenache Blanc allowing it its good heart. Decanting on the agenda, in order to help prise it open. To 2026/28. | 87

**Domaine Saint-Préfert 2015**  
 (85% Clairettes Roses et Blanches, 15% Roussanne; 13.5% ABV) | 88

**SF** | A flowery nose complemented by litchi and ginger stem, with hints of bacon rind and marzipan far from obtrusive as they frame the ensemble. Feminine and rather playful, an interesting and almost lifted example, its rather distinctive, almost grapey personality a worthy

if unusual addition to the canon. | 88

**AJ** | Mid-gold. Sweet, warm, and beguiling: a hum of aroma rather than 16-voice polyphony, but enjoyable. In the mouth, this is very concentrated, long, vivid, sinewy, very firm, and well rounded, rather ancient in style (thanks to the fascinating Clairettes), without a huge amount of aromatic finesse. In its place, though, you get that thrust, that flavory stomp, that irreducibility, that power and force of character and that less familiar charm. There is some bright balancing acidity; it has real length, and I don't rule out more aromatic articulation lifting from the wine in due course. The drawback is that there is a dry sharpness to the wine. | 88

**JLL** | Shiny yellow robe. Crab apple and soft floral scents make for an appealing bouquet; there is a white-pepper smokiness with it, and an inner depth, not yet fulfilled. The palate is also smoky, and direct, fuelled by peach flavors, nectarine. It grips safely and well on the finish. A wine with cards still to play—be patient, and decant it if in a hurry. The second half of the palate is wholesome. To 2026/28. | 88



**Domaine Raymond Usseglio 2015**

(30% Grenache, 30% Roussanne, 20% Clairette, 10% Picpoul, 10% Bourboulenc; 14% ABV) | 88

**SF** | Nose initially a touch reduced; behind that, fruits from the more exotic end of the spectrum. The palate has real grip, is almost tannic, with a persuasive power. Roussanne's oaky character and beguiling poached pear personality is in the ascendant at the moment; quite a tight, lugubrious style, modernity masquerading as authenticity, an ascetic gastronomic powerhouse. | 87

**AJ** | Pale steel gold. Sappy, fresh-bread scents with a little aniseed sweetness. With air, though, these aromas do not improve much, and it is one of the less aromatically attractive wines on the table. A pretty, cleanly defined palate, with relatively bright acidity but no shortage of fragrance, either. Chirpy, fresh, lively Châteauneuf-du-Pape. My stylistic preference is for something a little more languid, but many will like this a lot. | 88

**JLL** | Fine yellow robe. Elderberry and apricot mix on the front nose, coming with a sense of stewed sweetness. It can give a little more. The palate has a wave of oily content, a good southern depth, with tinges of citrus fruit brightening the second half. There is a spearpoint clarity within the finish, and the length is very attractive. This is interesting, has character. The finish on the up is a good card to play. To 2022/23. | 90

**Le Vieux Donjon 2015**

(50% Roussanne, 50% Clairette; 14.5% ABV) | 88

**SF** | A youthful, slightly raw and unformed nose; fermentation aromas and something almost rubbery. The palate does little to alleviate the situation, its overwhelmingly coarse subtext undermining the eminently laudable aspirations of this particular varietal pairing. | 84

**AJ** | Full yellow. Sweet, warm, haunting. The unusual blend gives this wine a singular charm: something sweet and blossomy from the Roussanne, but something more ancient and primeval and earthy from the Clairette.

On the palate, the wine is quite lush, generous, splashy, and open, without quite having the aromatic finesse of the very best, but it retains its singular character well, making this a haunting aficionado's choice. Fascinating and good. | 92

**JLL** | Quite a full yellow robe. Peach stone and blackcurrant leaf are present on the front nose, which is a little out of the loop. There is a salted, glazed-nuts underlay. The palate is compact, with a steady line of *gras*, which comes with a subdued expression for now. There are pockets of dried white fruits, a little tannic grip on the close. Decant this understated wine; it has quiet virtues. To 2027/28. | 88

**Clos du Mont Olivet 2015**

(30% Clairette, 25% Bourboulenc, 25% Roussanne, 18% Grenache Blanc, 1% Picpoul, 1% Picardon; 13.5% ABV) | 87

**SF** | Slightly dusty nose; this blows off quickly and behind are aromas from the hayloft, with citric poise and almond subtext. The palate has a slight spritz but plenty of *matière* and panache. Slightly raw on the finish, assertive and fulsome. | 89

**AJ** | Very pale steel gold. Gentle nougatine nose; needs plenty of aeration to rouse it into articulation. Sinewy and sappy on the palate, with some acid balance and glycerol, too. It's a firmer wine than the nose led one to expect, and decidedly vinous, but without much intricacy or finesse. Satisfying, nonetheless. | 87

**JLL** | Fine yellow robe. A cooked lemon aroma is set in a spritely nose, butter and soft spring flowers; saltiness and greengage are also present. The palate has a light tread, is sculpted for *apéritif* and steamed cuisine. It's what I term "new wave," with elegance and a relative lack of local body on the agenda. The finish brings in some dried fruits. It could have more character and is unconvincing. To 2021/22. | 85

**Clos La Roquette 2015**

(40% Grenache Blanc, 30% Clairette, 30% Roussanne; 13.5% ABV) | 87

**SF** | Golden color and a creamy, slightly oxidative nose; the palate remains faithful to this cloying misdemeanor, its oaky grip undermining the fruit character and, in extremis, any particular scope for enjoyment. | 82

**AJ** | Full yellow-gold. Very rich and honeyed in aroma; blind, you might guess it was a dessert

wine. Luscious and dripping... with honey, toasted almond, banana, vanilla sugar. An attractive prospect! Rich, full, and lush on the palate, too, though of course it is dry and not sweet. Succulent and generous white Châteauneuf-du-Pape, though it is not the most subtle wine on the table. There are some outstanding aroma traces, though, and though it is low in acidity, it is not in any way deficient. I'd love to drink a bottle of this tonight (though perhaps not on my own). A total simple delight. | 92

**JLL** | Pretty, full yellow robe. The nose leads on glazed fruits, brioche, has an underlying ripe sweetness. There is a nudge of cooked lemon. It has a ground force rather than being airborne, or air related. The palate rests on very ripe fruit and content, with a brown-sugar, baked-apple heart. It's stage-managed over free-flow wine and will be good with sweetbreads, *vielle France* cuisine. Don't look for freshness with this. To 2023/24. | 88

**Château de la Font du Loup 2015**

(30% Grenache, 30% Roussanne, 20% Clairette, 20% Bourboulenc; 14.5% ABV) | 87

**SF** | Gentle color and intriguing, slightly reticent nose; a prelapsarian wilderness. The palate is clumsy, a little coarse; the reticence betrayed, the intrigue compromised. | 85

**AJ** | Very pale steel gold. Pretty if shy nose: talc, apricot blossom, a hint of jasmine. The palate is more delicate and fresh than many of its peers, with relatively prominent acidity (though very ripe acidity, too) and sinewy drive behind the fresh charm. A contemporary rather than traditional, oxygen-informed style. | 89

**JLL** | Shiny yellow robe. Lemon and white peach, licorice, and a little acacia blossom mingle on the nose. There is possibly some SO<sub>2</sub>, sherbet style in the aroma. The palate presents a brief case, has a small orb of *gras*, then drifts. There is a small spot of citrus on the aftertaste. It's a bit dull, best suited to *la table*, fish, poultry. To 2021/22. | 86

**Domaine de la Janasse 2015**

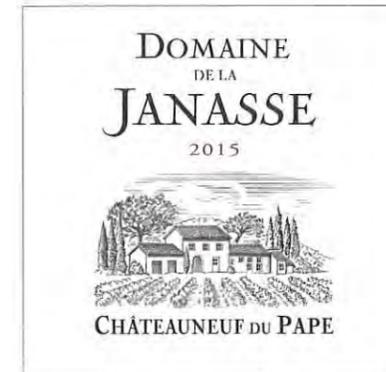
(60% Grenache, 20% Clairette, 20% Roussanne; 14.5% ABV) | 86

**SF** | Straw color and a ripe nose, with verbena and hints of marzipan. The palate adds nougat and pineapple—all in all, powerful and quite alcoholic, but its potency is not necessarily mirrored by potential. | 83

**AJ** | Pale old gold. This wine has a lovely toasted almond richness to its aromas, though no wild flowers or fruit blossoms. On the palate, too, it is quietly impressive: long, succulent, sumptuous, close-textured, and lush, with armfuls more of that almondy richness. There is some acidity, some vanilla, some marrow: a truly super glass of white Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and a wine that really couldn't come from anywhere else (and which must surely come from very good vineyards). Outstanding. | 92

**JLL** | Yellow, lustrous robe. Roasted nuts, apricot skin airs lead the nose, a murmur of white peach. The palate holds a stewed-fruits content, with

a glazed nature, a relative sweetness apparent. It lacks the class of the leading wines, and the vintage high heat has played its role in flattening its freshness. Drink *à table*, and get on with it until 2020. | 84



**Château Maucoil**

**Trézor des Papes 2015** (70% Grenache Blanc, 15% Clairette, 15% Bourboulenc; 13.5% ABV) | 87

**SF** | The nose marries herbs and fruit: oak, however, masks the ensemble with a heady, slightly dirty, drying finish. | 81

**AJ** | Pale to mid-gold. Sweet, lifted, rich, and fragrant: a charming nougatine nose, flecked with honey and almond. On the palate, this is a soft, rich, vinous, and generous wine of artless style, but very classic in its profile and allusions, with copious almond and honey. It has lovely concentration, depth, and softness, subsiding slowly and drily. There is quiet supporting acidity. Wholly what you want. | 91

**JLL** | Quite a full yellow robe. The nose is hefty, with a deep inset of dried fruits, beeswax, varnish. There is a suggestion of cooked fruits within, but it's hardly left the cellar. The palate is in thrall to its toffee-oak raising, and plays to the gallery on that score. It is lined with suave white fruits, compute in style. It needs parking in the corner for a good three years or so. From 2019—but the wait will reward you. To 2028/29. | 88

**Château La Nerthe 2015**

(42% Grenache, 30% Roussanne, 17% Clairette, 11% Bourboulenc; 13.5% ABV) | 87

**SF** | Deeper in color than many and marked, aromatically, by notes of bacon fat, litchi, youthful pineapple, and soft spice. The palate shares this enigmatic vista, the fruit tempered by herbal notes, pepper, and a dry crushed-almond finish. Mediterranean indulgence has been disciplined by modish winemaking—successfully overall. Grenache, so often seen as an overvalued actor in the ensemble, is here, at least, given a faithful and eloquent outing. | 88

**AJ** | Full gold. Sweet and warm, in essence, but a touch herbaceous, too. Not quite perfect or pristine. Fine concentration and plenty of classicism to the flavors (almond, fennel, peach, honey), but there is just a slightly grassy edge to

the acidity and a straightforwardness of delivery (white Châteauneuf-du-Pape needs great artistry) that holds it back for me. | 88

**JLL** | Firm yellow robe. The bouquet lacks precise definition for now, shows nuttiness, a charged peach fruit and petrol, white tobacco. The palate serves vanilla with greengage, has a fine freshness. It's not showing that openly and isn't a wine of great detail. Try from now, but decant it. To 2023/24. | 86

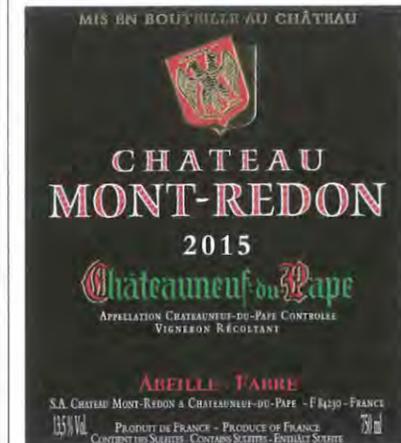
**Château Mont-Redon 2015**

(55% Grenache, 20% Clairette, 10% Bourboulenc, 10% Roussanne, 5% Picpoul; 13.5% ABV) | 86

**SF** | Floral notes and hints of straw; gentle and unassuming; rather more confident on the palate, citric energy and ornate robust upholstery. Grenache is seldom overly demonstrative, but this is a nicely balanced example, the minor shareholders adding zest and spice, albeit with deferential discretion. | 87

**AJ** | Pale and steely. Rather tight, controlled aromas; just a hint of white hedgerow flower. Taut and tight on the palate, too, but the whack of Grenache gives it a sappiness and a fullness, too. Good stuff, if not the most articulate wine on the table, and fish-friendly. | 89

**JLL** | Clear yellow robe. Has a quiet nose, an implication of white plum fruit, a hint of smokiness. It is set up more for *apéritif* and light dishes than for the main event *à table*. The palate is tame beside its peers, gives a brief offer of white fruits, a note of white strawberry. The finish lacks brightness and true depth, drifts. To 2019/20. | 83



**Domaine Roger Sabon**

**Renaissance 2015** (30% Roussanne, 30% Grenache Blanc, 20% Clairette, 20% Bourboulenc; 13.5% ABV) | 86

**SF** | Closed and tight, grippy and reticent; an elegant ensemble of varieties, poised and inscrutable; closed in on itself at the moment and hard to gainsay—the finish is dry and a little hard... But there is authenticity here, dried and raw maybe, but waiting to come into its own... Maybe. | 85

**AJ** | Mid-gold. Slightly dry and reserved on the nose. Succulent and full on the palate, but

the wine in the mouth also has that slightly controlled, subdued quality in terms of its articulation and expression, which is alien to an appellation this extravagant. | 85

**JLL** | Yellow robe. There is a cool, menthol-like note on the nose, with toasting and brioche depth beyond. The palate glides along with suave matter, is attractive and persistent on that texture and easy content. It's a bit dumb for now, so wait until 2018. Decanting needed. There is good heart for the future, and the balance is sound. To 2025/27. | 89

**Domaine du Vieux Télégraphe**

**2014** (40% Clairette, 25% Roussanne, 25% Grenache Blanc, 10% Bourboulenc; 13.5% ABV) | 86

**SF** | Fruits of a very different harvest, this example disappoints a little, its awkward structure inclined to early oxidation and unresolved tensions, which appear to have become more rather than less prominent. | 85

**AJ** | Pale gold. Rather dry, reserved, sulfur-snipped aromas. Dry, taut, and inarticulate on the palate, too. It's concentrated and has prominent acidity and is a serious wine nonetheless. | 86

**JLL** | Firm yellow robe. Smoke and elderberry combine on the front nose, with melba toast over roasted nuts. It's slightly dumb and backing off its first flush of youth. The palate is lined with dried fruits, a savory quality emerging as it goes. There is a compressed juice in its late moments. This is shutting down now, so leave it for at least a year. 2018–27/29. | 88

**Clos Saint-Jean 2015**

(25% Grenache Blanc, 25% Clairette, 25% Roussanne, 25% Bourboulenc; 14% ABV) | 85

**SF** | Medium color, straw and a pale rim; aromatics a little subdued, with hints of yellow fruit evidenced behind the citric swell. Authenticity bolstered by *matière*, just balancing acidity, and a potent, generous finish. Quite simple, but hints of spice and even white pepper demonstrate provenance and reveal an unassuming Pagnol-esque personality. | 86

**AJ** | Pale steel-gold. The typical soft seedy fullness of the category, but beyond that this is an aroma without much detail or nuance, and indeed it seems just a little sulfur-hard and abbreviated. The palate, too, is rather hard and clumsy, and the overall effect a little charmless. | 82

**JLL** | Yellow color. Dried fruits, a little note of flan, airs of white tobacco, aniseed, and peach. The nose has variety. The palate comes with immediate delivery of grainy, white stone-fruit content, tapers and drifts toward the finish. Chamomile and stewed fruits feature in the flavor. Rather mainstream, but it has enough body for Provençal dishes. A *bonhomme* of a wine. To 2022/23. | 87

The following two wines were also tasted but deemed faulty by two tasters: *Domaine Giraud Les Gallimardes 2015* and *Château Simian La Font d'Hippolyte 2015*. ■