

Cornas 2000 Eric et Joël Durand

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Once upon a time, long long ago (in May 2000, six months before this website even existed) I was a very wicked person, and wrote an FT [article](#) describing an evening during which a few of us wine enthusiasts got together and, for the first time, opened examples of the Cornas that had been sitting in our cellars waiting to mature. (The literature was agreed that Cornas needs considerable bottle age - though nowadays I think that this observation was probably based on the wines of the leading producer Auguste Clape.)

The result was that after tasting 17 different Cornases, from 1991 back to 1972, we had the greatest difficulty finding one that we thought delicious enough to want to drink with dinner. (Though I have to admit that a tasting of a certain type of wine is not generally the ideal prelude to a dinner featuring that type of wine.) This did not play well in Cornas, nor with my friends Mark Williamson and Tim Johnston, the Englishmen behind Will's Wine Bar, Juveniles and Macéo in Paris who have long been huge fans of Rhône wines.

Later that year I was summoned to Paris to take part in a big tasting of Cornas at Macéo and eat my words. The leading producers were there. I sat opposite Monsieur Clape himself at lunch and had to make a speech in French. In it I majored on the sterling qualities of Steven Spurrier, a Williamson/ Johnston mentor, and the future of Cornas rather than the past for the likes of Thierry Allemand, it seemed to me, were showing just how much fruitier and more supple Cornas would become.

Subsequently Stéphane Robert of Domaine du Tunnel and Domaine Courbis have also demonstrated a new zest and conviction in Cornas for the modern drinker. And here's another name to look for, Joël Durand whose 2000 is deliciously *echt* yet approachable. The Durands, who have managed to expand their total holdings to 6 hectares (15 acres) in Cornas and 4 hectares (10 acres) in St Joseph, pick relatively late so this wine had great richness, yet is very far from tasting over- the- top. There is that lovely savoury, smoky overlay of all good north Rhône Syrahs to keep the tasting experience in check and appetising. These particular vines are apparently no more than 17 years old but the wine is testament to some very fine, sensitive winemaking with lots of fruit in the middle to compensate for well- managed tannins.

In the UK this wine is available from Great Western Wines of Bath for £17.95 a bottle and from Nickolls & Perks. Specialist search engine www.wine searcher.com lists retail stockists in the US (cheaper than the UK for once), Germany and Canada.