

## Les Vignes de l'Arque 2001 Vin de Pays Duché d'Uzès

15 Mar 2004 by JR

No apologies for yet another 2001 from the south of France. This is a magic combination and I urge you to buy as much as you can while it is still available, for in broad brushstrokes, 2002 was too wet and 2003 too dry in southern France. There will of course be many exceptions to these sweeping statements but is it not a joy to come across an easy shortcut, 2001 and the south of France, to reliable quality?

This wine comes from that useful zone that straddles the southern Rhône and the far eastern Languedoc where both Grenache and Syrah, the two varieties which make up this impressive wine, thrive. It's made on a 72 hectare/178 acre domaine that is called Les Vignes de l'Arque and can claim seven generations of care just north of Uzès, the small market near the extraordinary Roman aquaduct that is the Pont du Gard that is eulogised by Elizabeth David in *An Omelette and a Glass of Wine*.

What struck me about this wine when I tasted it was how vibrant and bursting with energy it seems. Only later did I learn that it is made from organically cultivated vineyards. There is great depth of colour and that glossy, savoury character of ripe Syrah together with the fruity ballast and marked tannins of dry-farmed Grenache. I reckon this wine will continue to improve - not bad for its price - and would drink it, with strong-flavoured food, over the next three years.

I much preferred this Vin de Pays, by the way, to the same producer's more expensive Cuvee Boissières, yet another oaked Merlot/Cabernet blend which is so obviously not nearly as home in this part of the world as the Rhône varieties. The producer Patrick Fabre tells me that wheels are in motion to promote Vin de Pays Duché d'Uzès to VDQS, although personally I'm not sure all that bureaucracy is worth it.

In the UK the wine is offered at £7.70 a bottle by a new specialist importer Leon Stolarski Fine Wines at [www.lsfinewines.co.uk](http://www.lsfinewines.co.uk).

The US importer is Global Vineyard. See [www.globalvineyard.com](http://www.globalvineyard.com) for your local distributor (not that there is any guarantee they will have this particular wine, I'm afraid).

In France you can find your nearest stockist via the Fabre family at Les Vignes de l'Arque, 30700 Baron  
tel +33 4 66 22 37 71, fax +33 4 66 03 04 34.

I have been given the following addresses of distributors in Germany, which I have done my best to decode but are open to alternative interpretation:

Gourmandise  
Winkolenderweg 82-84  
22085 Hamburg  
tel +49 4069709030

Link Hans  
Ebelstrasse 7  
35392 Giessen

Jainek Erika  
Steinkreuzstrasse 5  
32423 Minden  
tel +49 0571 35418

And if you can't get your hands on this particular wine, look out for other 2001 reds from smaller southern French domaines.