

Chante Coucou 2002 Côtes du Marmandais, Elian Da Ros

8 Mar 2005 by JR

Here's an appellation you don't see every day. The Côtes du Marmandais is one of south west France's lesser known zones immediately east of Bordeaux. It tootled along on the fringes of everything vinous until Elian Da Ros arrived back there and took over his family's vines, inspired by stints working for Zind Humbrecht in Alsace and at Grange des Pères in the Languedoc and determined to make the best possible wine.

Chante Coucou 2002 Côtes du Marmandais is a mix of south western French grape varieties, 60 per cent Merlot with equal parts of Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon and is absolutely classic, rigorous, deep- coloured, appetisingly dry south western red designed to age and to be drunk with food. If it were a Médoc it would be classed growth status – by which I mean it should not for a moment be confused with common or garden AC Bordeaux – but it has a little extra spice. This is serious stuff whose chief distinguishing characteristic is freshness – really lively fruit without a dead grape in that vat but with quite sandy tannins still in evidence. It's undeniably dense yet also quite crisp. . You could certainly drink it now, ideally next year, but you could also cellar it for at least five years with confidence.



This unfiltered wine, just 13 per cent, is currently available from Adnams of Southwold in the UK at £12.75 a bottle and from K & U of Nürnberg Germany at about 15 euros. US importer is Eric Solomon. Da Ros's wines were first imported into the UK by the enterprising Liz and Mike Berry of La Vigneronne, who currently are selling their stock of **Clos Baquey 1999** (which contains a bit of the local Abouriou grapes) for just £9.95 and £19.95 a magnum via their new business www.grandcruwinesltd.net. Like the Berrys, Adnams found it via Grange des Pères and this led them on a trail to other friends of Da Ros making particularly interesting wine in south west France.

I would commend to those who like really quirky whites Jean- Mary and Catherine Le Bihan's **Domaine Mouthes Le Bihan 2001 Côtes de Duras**, a blend of Sémillon and Muscadelle, the grape that does so well on the Bordeaux fringes, with 20 per cent barrel- aged Sauvignon Blanc which Adnams are also selling, for £7.99 a bottle. It is fully mature, if anything a little low in acidity and certainly nothing like any New World white I can think of with the possible exception of that California Colombard they used to have on the Chez Panisse wine list. Big and bold with masses of flavour, this tastes

like the most mouth- filling white currant juice with just a hint of Sauvignon to give a bit of nerve to the blend. This would be a really interesting aperitif for wine lovers, but needs drinking soon, I would submit.