

Crozes Hermitage, Les Hauts de Fief 1999 Cave de Tain

14 Jun 2005 by JR

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As purple pages can see in detail in the tasting notes section, I thoroughly enjoyed a recent tasting of significant [1999 North Rhône](#)s and found many of the less grand wines ready to enjoy now.

The best value wine of the entire tasting to my mind was this superior Crozes from the highly reputable co-operative in Tain l'Hermitage whose wines showed pretty consistently well throughout the tasting right up to Hermitage level (better than Jaboulet's in many cases). The Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board, for example, are currently offering this superior Crozes with five years' bottle age at just \$11.99 a bottle, just over £6 in sterling!

There is admittedly the small problem for Brits: crossing the Atlantic. For the sad fact is that while this vintage is still widely available in the US, and [wineseacher.com](#) lists one stockist in Australia, it is at least four years since it was on offer in France and Britain. The UK importers are currently selling the 2003 vintage of the co-op's Crozes. We Brits are just too impatient to my mind because I think that ideally this wine should be drunk from next year – and there seems to be quite enough tannin to keep it going for another 10 years! There may be a touch of British necrophilia in this prediction but the wine has no shortage of tannin.

Because it's a 1999 however there is masses of ripe Syrah fruit too – it's a thoroughly meaty, full, broad-shouldered wine that is better than some Hermitages I have tasted. I gave it a score of 17 out of 20, I was so impressed. All that and a direct link to a past century...

You can find out more about the Cave de Tain at [www.cavedetain.fr](#). This well-run company produces almost half of all the wine made in North Rhône appellations and keeps up an admirably high standard.

This Hauts de Fief bottling of Crozes is their superior cuvée, made from selected particularly warm plots and given much more barrel ageing than most of their Crozes. It's available in much smaller quantities than the regular cuvée that keeps popping up at around £6.99 in British retailers such as M&S, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Thresher, Unwins and Morrisons in various different guises and slightly different blends. It is well worth seeking out.

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