Le Soula Blanc 2001 Vin de Pays des Coteaux des Fenouill□des

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This wine, made in the region described in my article on Maury/Fenouillèdes - a great new region for dry French red - is really stunning. No, it's not red. Indeed it's the only dry white wine I have tasted from this region so it is a pretty unusual beast. But it is very fine on any basis.

The team behind it includes local grower Eric Laguerre, British importer Richards Walford and, perhaps most crucially, Roussillon superstar winemaker Gérard Gauby of Domaine Gauby in Calce. Gauby proved more than a decade ago that he is an extremely gifted maker of white wines (the red wine proof followed in my view). Here he obviously has some quite exceptional fruit to work with, grown on the high schists of the upper Agly valley in the foothills of the French eastern Pyrenees. (In fact Tom Stevenson in the notes to launch his interesting new book, *The Wine Report* £9.99 Dorling Kindersley, gave 1600 feet as the altitude, which is probably about right.)

It's made from a blend of Roussillon white grapes Marsanne, Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, Chenin Blanc and Rolle/Vermentino but what you taste is the place rather than any specific variety. It's like a cross between a particularly fine Chassagne Caillerets and a full-bodied dry Mosel such as one of Heymann Loewenstein's more successful bottlings. There are minerals here in spades, or should I say hods? This would make a great first-course wine for entertaining serious wine freaks.

Only a tiny amount of this wine is made but you can find it at various French retailers using either Raeburn Fine Wines of Edinburgh will soon have it in stock at the VAT-inclusive price of £19.50. A B Vintners list it at just £18.25. It is worth it.