

## Côtes du Rhône red, Bouquet des Garrigues 2004 Domaine Clos du Caillou

18 Nov 2005 by JR

When you read this, the chances are I will have my nose in a glass of 2004 red in the southern Rhône checking out on your behalf whether the vintage is all it's cracked up to me (some producers say they are already much more thrilled by 2005). But I tasted quite a range of 2004s from the northern and southern Rhône and Languedoc last week in London and was immediately impressed by this wine. It won't be bottled until March or April according to winemaker Bruno Gaspard but is already being offered en primeur in Britain at least so I thought I would draw your attention to this excellent buy.

Bruno took over the winemaking at this highly regarded Châteauneuf property in 2002. His first two vintages therefore were far from the easiest for the southern Rhône (rain in 2002 followed by the heatwave-shrivelled 2003) but these 2004s show that he has really got into his stride - and prices are at the same levels as for 2003. Particularly convincing are the **Châteauneuf-du-Pape white 2004** (£216 a dozen in bond from Genesis Wines of London SW1), the **Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Les Quartz red 2004** (£312 a dozen in bond) and their principal product **Côtes du Rhône red, Bouquet des Garrigues 2004** (£71 a dozen in bond). All these prices are those of Genesis Wines [www.genesiswines.com](http://www.genesiswines.com).

The white Châteauneuf, substantially Roussanne like the beautifully fragrant **St Joseph white 2004 Pierre Gaillard** (£132 a dozen), manages to combine richness with freshness, which is pretty much the signature of the best wines of Domaine du Clos du Caillou. The strong scent is herbal, somehow reminiscent of sunshine on gorse, and intriguing. It is not flabby.

The red Quartz bottling positively vibrates with minerality and has great intensity: 80 per cent Grenache and 20 per cent Syrah grown on sand. I much preferred it to the **Châteauneuf-du-Pape Reserve 2004** (£425) which is an oakier, smoother, more 'international' selection with strong animal notes thanks to its 30 per cent Mourvèdre.

But the best value has to be the red Bouquet des Garrigues 2004. It probably won't be bottled until March or April so is unlikely to be shipped before May or June but should be a great buy. Once duty and VAT are paid, British buyers will end up paying £8.44 a bottle plus delivery, but the wine is much, much better than many a commercial Châteauneuf-du-Pape selling at almost twice that price. From a vineyard between Château de Beaucastel and Château Rayas in that large chunk eaten out of the Châteauneuf zone due west of Courthézon, it has great ripeness and intensity (not the case by any means of all southern Rhône 2004s), quite a bit of tannin, but real definition and excitement. Tasting it in a line-up of other southern Rhône reds I thought it smelt a bit more evolved and open than the estate-grown Châteauneufs but also on the palate as though it were especially tightly-laced, with real energy ready to explode. It's made up of 85 per cent Grenache with Syrah, Mourvèdre, Cinsault and Carignan.

I was much more impressed by this red than by the **Bouquet des Garrigues white 2004** (£71), by the way, which seemed interesting but a bit loose and slack compared with the red, which should provide great-value drinking between 2006 and 2011.

Another great red from this estate is **Côtes du Rhône Réserve red 2004** (£138) which is truly sumptuous (and more interesting than the **Côtes du Rhône Villages red** at £108, I thought). The former bottling is extremely rich, long and lovely.

Domaine Clos du Caillou's wines are imported in the US by North Berkeley Imports of California.

[find this wine](#) (I am including this link for future use even though it won't work for the red until more offers are made)