Les Clos Perdus 2004 Languedoc Roussillon reds

3 Jan 2006 by JR

As you can see in my survey of 100 distinctive southern French wines published today in purple pages, I was particularly struck by the three 2004s released by Les Clos Perdus in their second year of production.

Hugo Stewart is a young farmer in Wiltshire. Paul Olds became so keen on wine that he decided to gain winemaking experience in and St-Emilion before giving up his career as a dancer. The two of them have established Les Clos Perdus (the lost vineyards, sort of) in Peyriac de Mer, a village on a flamingo-filled lagoon in the north east of the Corbières region in the Languedoc.

They farm biodynamically (but please, sceptics, don't let that put you off - just concentrate on how good the wines taste) and source fruit from three different locations.

Near Peyriac with coastal influence it's Mourvèdre, and Carignan which they say was planted in 1905 (so that's all right then). Up on a hilltop in the Corbières near Villesque they concentrate on Grenache and the increasingly fashionable Cinsault, while they also have access to some intense Lladoner Pelut (hairy-leaved Grenache) and Syrah on the schists of Maury in the upper Agly valley where, it sometimes seems, every man and his dog makes wine nowadays.

The wines sing out with fruit and confidence and are presented in solid, clearly-labelled burgundy bottles. **Prioundo 2004** from Villesque is very open and jolly with 30 per cent Cinsault to add life to the Grenache and is usually £7.50 a bottle or £90 a case. **Cuvée 21 2004** from around Peyriac de Mer is mainly Grenache with 25 per cent old Carignan and Mourvèdre and is also £7.50 a bottle or £90 a case. This is a wine that is still a bit angular (because of the Carignan?) and should repay keeping. Arguably the most distinctive or at least arresting wine however is **L'Extreme** which is Lladoner Pelut with 30 per cent Syrah, grown on north-facing schist made with some cold maceration and barrel fermentation. It sings, dances *and* tells jokes. It is sold at £11.25 a bottle or £135 a case.

The Prioundo and Cuvée 21 are Corbières but L'Extreme has to be sold as a table wine because it was grown in Roussillon but vinified in the Aude departement, and Messrs Stewart and Old didn't fill in sufficient forms in triplicate to be allowed special dispensation for this.

I suggest that the best value option is to take up their special offer of four bottles of each wine at £99 (usual price £105). An additional £5 a case is charged for delivery within the . I think you would enjoy tasting the differences between them and suggest that Prioundo is probably the most forward and L'Extreme the most powerful.

For the moment the wines are available only from www.lesclosperdus.com and stock is kept, duty paid, in Wiltshire. I feel rather nervous about recommending such a new outfit so do please let me know if you have any problems, but I do wonder whether this sort of direct sale (as for Domaine de Ste Rose whose Sirocco white was an earlier wine of the week) is not the way forward for many smaller French wine producers. It helps of course to have a direct connection with one of the more important export markets.

09 jan The wine, or at least Cuvée 21, is now available at Abbey Stores of Salisbury. For details see the directory.