Made in France - by Brits

7 May 2008 by JR

Here is a selection of some of the best French wines to have come my way that are made by those who have left Britain to pursue their (often relatively untutored) dream to make wine. There are many other excellent wines made by British wine professionals in France. See Pursuing a dream - as vignerons for details of some of the most prominent of them. There are so many Brits making wine in France that I'm sure I have overlooked some of the most obvious, and many of the less obvious. (See also [illegible] on members' forum for purple pagers' suggested additions to the list.)

WHITES

Domaine Begude Chardonnay 2006 Limoux
High altitude (350m) vineyards in south-west Languedoc translate into a particularly fine, refreshing Chardonnay. Great value now that it's on promotion (until 13 May) from £8.99 to £7.49 at Waitrose in the UK. K&L import it into the US. The Kinglakes are also making some very fine special bottling such as **L'Étoile de Begude 2006 Limoux**, which is designed to be a bargain alternative to Chassagne at 10 euros less than the Toques et Clochers collection of barrel-aged Limoux Chardonnays, and **L'Esprit de Begude Pinot Noir 2006 Limoux**, which, most unnervingly, tastes exactly as though it were made in Russian River Valley in California. Goedhuis are UK importers. www.domainebegude.com

Ch de Berne, Cuvée Spéciale 2006 Côtes de Provence Blanc
Lovely sleek, polished texture. Round fruit with herby topnotes from Martin Dixon's eco-friendly hotel and tourism centre in Lorgues. www.chateauberne.com

Dom Gayda, L'Archet Maccabéo 2005 Vin de Pays d'Oc
See a previous wine of the week.

Clos Nardian 2006 Bordeaux Blanc
Made by Jonathan Maltus of Ch Teyssier in St-Émilion, who is perhaps most famous for his garage wine Le Dôme. He has gone into Bordeaux (and South Australia) with all guns blazing and deserves every success. www.maltus.com

Ch de Roques Sauvignon Blanc 2006 Bordeaux Blanc
Made by the Iles at **Ch Lezongars** in the Premières Côtes de Bordeaux, this is very fresh and fruity and sells for 6.40 euros at the cellar door. Their pneumatic press has really paid off. "First I have to sell Bordeaux, and then I have to sell our particular wines", says Philip Iles, who notes that the UK market is slightly friendlier towards Bordeaux than it was a few years ago. www.chateau-lezongars.com

Dom Sainte-Rose, La Nuit Blanche Roussanne 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes de Thongue

Charles and Ruth Simpson bought this property in the Languedoc in 2002 and have made a range of well-conceived, relatively modern reds and whites there, building up a following in the UK (this excitingly herby, oaked wine is £8.99 at Majestic if two bottles are bought) and selling direct from www.domaine-sainte-rose.com

Le Soula Blanc, Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes
This oaked blend of organically and quasi biodynamically farmed Grenache Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Marsanne, Roussanne, Maccabeu and Malvoisie grown on llimestone and granite has long been a favourite of mine and of many a three-star restaurant in France. The 2006 saw a breakthrough in **Le Soula Rouge,** another multi-varietal blend. The analyses of past vintages suggest it is the lower acidity that beguiles. Joint venture between UK importers Richards Walford, Gérard Gauby and Eric Laguerre of the upper Agly valley in Roussillon. www.r-w.co.uk

Ch de Sours, Le Source Blanc 2007 Bordeaux
Still in barrel, this top selection of Martin Krajewski's Sauvignon Blanc displays the superiority of the 2007 whites in Bordeaux. The regular 2004 Bordeaux Rouge is currently on sale and is very easy and fruity but is no bargain at £8.99. www.chateaudesours.com

PINKS

Dom du Fontenay, The Naked Rosé, Côte Roannaise
Simon Hawkins has evolved a *méthode ancestrale* style in the image of Bugey's Cerdon for this refreshing aperitif with only 8% alcohol. Very fresh with lots of strawberry fruit and refreshing acidity. About 8 euros at the cellar door. www.domainedufontenay.com

Jules 2007 Côtes de Provence Rosé
Bordeaux-trained son of British wine-producing émigrés, Julian Faulkner has established his own négociant wines, of which this is just one of the well-priced, well-made examples: a blend of Grenache, Cinsault and Carignan available at Noel Young in the UK. www.jules-wines.com

REDS

Dom de Chamans, Hegarty Chamans no 2 2005 Minervois
Rich, spicy, Grenache-dominated blend. www.hegartychamans.com

Les Clos Perdus 2004 Languedoc-Roussillon reds
See previous wine of the week

Maison des Bulliats, Tradition Romantique 2006 Regnié
Very fresh, correct and bursting with healthy fruit. Grown in one of the Beaujolais crus by Helen and Fred Lockwood who bought the property in 2005 after teaching careers. He, a Canadian, calls it a folly. She proclaims herself "totally happy" with their decision to buy this 7.75 hectare vineyard.

Matassa, Romanissa 2004 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes 17 Drink 2008-12
Sam Harrop MW is a New Zealander but he is UK-based and, with Tom Lubbe of South Africa, produces this fascinating schist-influenced blend of Grenache Noir with Carignan, Mourvèdre and Cabernet very close to Le Soula. £17.99 at Majestic in the UK or £14.99 if two bottles are bought.

Ch Méaume 2004 Bordeaux Rouge
The Johnson-Hills' wine has been sold by Majestic in the UK since the beginning and this 2004 at £6.99 is great value – and arguably more refreshing than the low-acid, 14% **2005**, which is yet to be released. www.chateaumeaume.com

Ch des Mille Anges 2005 Premières Côtes de Bordeaux
Rich and full of fruit yet with real personality. Very honestly made by the daughter of a Loire négociant in a renovated chai, with flavours that bloom in the glass. Impressively long. This would be a very good buy for 5.50 euros at the cellar door BUT is still not bottled because they haven't managed to sell the 2003 yet. Tragic. See www.milleanges.com

Dom de Mourchon, Tradition 2006 Côtes du Rhône-Villages Séguret
Unoaked but with fruit this concentrated, from a fine terroir north of Châteauneuf, does not need any make-up. Lots of fruit, juice and charm. The McKinlays' winemaker has also made an impressive, massive **Family Reserve 2006** that would give many a Châteauneuf a run for their money and the **Loubié Rosé 2007** from a parcel of Cinsault is also super-fruity without being too obviously sweet. www.domainedemourchon.com

14 May *- Jonathan Hesford of Trouillas, Roussillon writes:*

It would be nice to see mention of British winemakers who actually work the vineyards and make the wines themselves, such as **Domaine des Chandelles, Domaine de Pujol, Domaine St Croix, Domaine Saumarez, La Pertuisane, La Colline** and us. **Domaine Treloar**.

It's hard work running a domaine and I guess I get frustrated to see those with ghost-winemakers getting all the publicity.