Monty□s French Red 2007 Vin de Pays des C□tes Catalanes

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Regular visitors to this site will know that I do my utmost to cater to those tens of thousands of you who live outside Britain. Every now and then however I find a wine that's available only in the UK and is of sufficient interest to be chosen as a wine of the week.

Monty's French Red 2007 Vin de Pays des Côtes Catalanes

is one of these. Virtually all wines have some sort of story but the story of this particular wine is of such interest that it is to be told over six half-hour programmes on Channel 4 in the UK from 8.30pm on Thursday 4 Sep in the tv series *Chateau Monty*. It's not the smartest title and the graphics are not the best thing about it but from what I have seen of the first episode it should prove riveting viewing for anyone remotely interested in wine. The fact that Monty is so easy on the eye doesn't do any harm either, and presumably helped to pique the interest of the producers Tiger Aspect.

Like all these 'reality' shows, the thesis doesn't quite hold water, or wine. Supposedly Monty, after years as a UK-based wine writer specialising in organic and biodynamic wines, is sinking everything he has into renting a small vineyard in the busy Agly Valley in Roussillon – conveniently close to Eric Laguerre and Gérard Gauby of Le Soula, who have been his biodynamic mentors. Doubtless they will feature in future episodes. Of course the commentary and associated literature, which includes a book, makes much of 'his BIG gamble' and "he has only 18 months to prove himself", "will he lose everything?" Of course he won't, you silly sausages. This series will make him a household name.

Those who remember Britain's best loved wine merchant, the late Bill Baker

, will find scenes of him pouring scorn on Monty's nettle potions and lunar cycles in his inimitably *larger* than life way particularly poignant. I hope that the series will eventually be shown outside the UK. It deserves to be for its managing to humanise the processes of wine-growing, albeit with a, probably necessarily, quirky bent.

This Carignan-based wine was fermented initially by carbonic maceration (in an enclosed vat) and then given light pumpovers (squirting the must over the cap of skins) towards the end of fermentation, thereby 'adding Bordeauxness to Beaujolais', as Monty puts it. But it is all the careful biodynamic work in the vineyard that really created the wine and the tv series. You can't beat spreading municipal compost from nearby Perpignan plus a bit of horn manure and horsetail tea. All operations, including bottling, were performed according to the most propitious dates on the lunar calendar. Etc. About a fifth of the wine is made up of a blend of the other varieties planted in this vineyard high up in the fashionable Agly Valley in Roussillon: Syrah, Grenache and the white Maccabeu. Purple pagers can access Monty's own story of how he grew and made it here.

I really liked the wine. It's not grand and it's not ambitious. It's a nice fruity, thoroughly healthy, natural-tasting southern French red that has none of the usual harshness of Carignan (unless from very, very old vines). I would *ideally* drink it any time over the next six months. It tastes so round and ripe that I had to enquire whether it has any perceptible residual sugar. It doesn't and is a very serviceable 12.5% alcohol.

This debut vintage can be bought, at £7.99 or £89 a dozen, from Adnams of Suffolk and Richmond-upon-Thames. Click here

for a list of all Adnams stores with contact details. Roberson of London Wil will also be selling it at £7.95.

Click here

to order. (I know this link is going a bit further than I normally do but I have no commercial connection with this wine, Monty or Adnams whatsoever. Just thought it might be helpful.

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