

## Northern Rhône red vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2012 looks good for the Rhône, against the trend of the year in Europe at large. It is defined by lower than average potential alcohol - indeed some chaptalisation was practiced. Acidities are also generally below the norm, while tannins are more pronounced than in 2011.

**2011** Untimely rain in early September diluted what was otherwise a very promising crop. Quality still good, but certainly not at the level of 2010 or 2009.

**2010** Low yields of exceptionally good quality. One of the very best years in the northern Rhône - possibly the best in history!

**2009** Warmer and drier than average: volumes were down and harvest was early. Ripening was quick but complete, and quality looks to be very good.

**2008** Lots of rain gave a disappointing and dilute vintage. Some producers opted not to make their top wines at all. Largely best to avoid.

**2007** Very wet spring, a patchy summer but the vintage was saved by decent weather in September.

**2006** Very promising. As elsewhere in France, the region experienced a very mixed August but a warm September seems to have resulted in an excitingly high success rate.

**2005** As successful as elsewhere in France. A long term prospect which may rival 1990.

**2004** A welcome return to normal temperatures but this post-2003 heatwave crop was not generous and wines have developed fast.

**2003** Some exceptional heatwave wines with enormous concentration and, we hope, a long and glorious life ahead.

**2002** Poor weather at flowering dramatically reduced the potential crop and paved the way for a thoroughly horrid summer resulting in rotten, unripe grapes. Some growers declassified a large proportion of them although the odd late-picked bottling may surprise. Reds should have been drunk. Good white wines though.

**2001** One of the most successful regions in France in 2001. Almost as good as 1999 if more elegant and less concentrated than 2000. Very respectable levels of ripeness and good acidity and ripe tannins to support them.

**2000** Good to very good if overshadowed by its predecessor. August was hot with heavy rain on August 21. September enjoyed exceptionally fine weather allowing a particularly prolonged harvest. Both red and white wines are very charming.

**1999** Exceptional quality. A sunny harvest saw good quantities of healthy grapes - a cause for real celebration in the northern Rhône. Quality is at least as good as 1998 (some compare it with 1947) and the quantity was much higher.

**1998** Very dry summer stressed the vines. Some tough wines for the long term.

**1997** Early maturing, soft wines from an early harvest.

**1996** Solid, unexciting but ready and competently made.

**1995** Very promising vintage which is just starting to come round at the top end.

**1994** All-too familiar autumn rains before the fruit could ripen.

**1993** A great summer then rain, hail and mildew, so light, soft wines are the rule.

**1992** Heavy September rains gave a mixed bag of early-drinking wines.

**1991** A good vintage, superb in Côte Rôtie: fragrant, forward and charming.

**1990** The heatwave slowed ripening. Côte Rôtie suffered but the Hermitage hill produced some monster wines destined for a very long life.

**1989** A drought year, irregular in Cornas, otherwise rich and opulent.

**1988** Unfairly overshadowed by 1989 and 1990, with majestic Côte Rôties for long ageing.

**1986** Guigal's wines are the exception to a rather lean, charmless year.

**1985** Opulent and soft, these wines were delicious but have matured relatively early.

**1983** Outstanding muscular wines now ready to drink.

**1979** Lovely soft, elegant and balanced wines that should now have been drunk.

**1978** A sensational year, highly aromatic, complex and big-framed. Now very rare.