# Southern Rh□ne vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

**2012** is much more successful than 2011. It was a low-acid year in both the northern and southern Rhône. Alcohols are roughly average, but volumes are down by up to 15% on 2011. Clement weather late in the season made for relaxed harvesting however, and vignerons are optimistic about the results which seem to combine ripeness with some freshness.

**2011** Good quality and good yields, but won't be as brilliant as the preceding two vintages.

**2010** A very successful vintage, with precision and freshness allowing great expression of terroir. Equally outstanding for whites and reds. Excellent.

**2009** Hot and dry throughout August, but decent levels of rainfall too, and plenty of wind to keep the vines healthy. Very satisfactory quality fruit at harvest. Impressive.

**2008** Quite gutless reds, thanks to the rain, although whites are worth a look.

**2007** Very wet spring but the region had a much drier summer than most of the rest of France. Wines and tannins are very ripe.

**2006** Some very lusciously fruited wines that may not last as long as the 2005s but should provide much drinking pleasure in the medium term.

**2005** Great concentration and potential coinciding with increasing consistency of winemaking quality.

**2004** A little sterner than the 2006s but similar in style.

**2003** Excessive heat had fewer ill effects in this hot region than in the (usually) more temperate climes of Bordeaux and Burgundy. But the wines tend to be low in tannin and high in acid and only the best have the balance to last.

**2002** So wet that there was flood damage just before harvest.  Much downgrading of fruit into humbler bottlings than usual.

**2001** Lauded vintage, the result of a very hot, dry summer. An unusually prolonged *mistral* at the end of August resulted in thick-skinned berries and accentuated tannins. Later harvesting resulted in better balanced wines - especially in higher-yielding vineyards - but acid levels are dangerously low in some cases. There should be some very long-lived top wines however.

**2000** Conditions were excellent until quite heavy rains arrived on 19 September. The results, especially from those who picked early and fast, are plump, approachable wines capable of giving great pleasure even if they will not be the longest-lasting.

**1999** Rather more challenging vintage than 2000 for growers and wines with less obvious richness than 1998 for wine drinkers. Heavy rains plagued the harvest and quality is distinctly variable.

**1998** Much garlanded vintage that is struggling to live up to its reputation. Perhaps just in a teenage sulk?

**1997** Rather muddy flavours from well ripened grapes.

**1996** Coolish, damp summer produced lighter-than-usual wines.

**1995** Very good colour and really ripe, concentrated reds. Some producers claim it is better than 1990.

**1994** Early harvesters were luckier, most picked in rain, so only average quality.

**1993** An unwelcome repeat of 1992's weather: diluted, easy-drinking wines.

**1992** Torrential harvest rains drowned the vineyards and the results are pretty dilute.

**1991** The Grenache failed at flowering and harvest time was uninspiring. Best forgotten.

**1990** Exceptionally sumptous, powerful and heady wines with fairly low acidity. Only the finest survive.

**1989** Fabulously concentrated with perhaps more backbone than 1990.

**1988** Good in all areas: full bodied and with firm tannins, often termed 'classic'.

**1987** Pretty poor generally, cool and wet weather with thin wines the result.

**1986** Mostly picked before the rains, these were firm and tannic in their youth.

**1985** Charming and ripe, even opulent, and now quite soft.