Gilles Robin, Papillon 2010 Crozes-Hermitage

26 Oct 2011 by Jancis Robinson

From €12, £12.95, $23.99, NZ$35

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You know how you feel a trend coming on? I find more and more people in love with the fine-boned Syrahs of the northern Rhône. There were lots of very good examples made in 2009 (see this guide to my detailed coverage of 2009 Rhône wines) but the 2010 vintage is looking even more promising. I shall be tasting hundreds of 2010s from and in both northern and southern Rhône next month and look forward to sharing my impressions with you.

There could hardly be a more appetising introduction to 2010 northern Rhône red than this early drinking cuvée from the energetic Gilles Robin of Mercurol. It sees no oak and is bottled in May, after light micro-oxygenation to avoid the reduction to which Syrah is prone, according to John Livingstone-Learmonth in his superb *The Wines of the Northern Rhône*, and the idea is to provide us with pure pleasure. I would love to drink this any time over the next two years, but can't see much point in ageing it because it is already so pure and flattering with admirably polished tannins and lovely sappy fruit. This is obviously a particularly ripe vintage so is wonderfully accessible already. At 13% alcohol, it is slightly stronger than some northern Rhône wines but hardly excessive.

Gilles Robin, born 1972, is one of the younger vignerons who is breathing new life into this exciting and distinctive corner of the wine world, even if, alas, its total vineyard area is far from extensive. The grapes used to go to the Tain co-op but have been vinified at the domaine since 1996.

I first tasted it chez The Wine Society, who are selling it at £12.95 a bottle, which seems excellent value to me, but it is quite widely available in other European countries, the US and NZ.

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