Mourchon 2010 Ch□teauneuf-du-Pape

17 Aug 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From £99 for six bottles, $49.99 for one

Find Mourchon's 2010s

I have long admired Domaine de Mourchon, set in beautiful country between the southern Côtes du Rhône village of Séguret and Mont Ventoux. Scot Walter McKinlay and family have been building it up steadily since 1998 when he bought the vineyard and had to set about building a house, winery and brand. He and his wife Ronnie had been fans of the southern Rhône ever since choosing a Vacqueyras as house wine for her restaurant in Aberdeenshire. When he sold his IT company, they thought they would 'retire' to southern France but, from what I can see, they have worked pretty hard ever since, now helped by their daughter and son-in-law.

Funnily enough, when I searched for Mourchon in my folder of input for this website, I found two different instances of Mourchon Côtes du Rhônes, the Family Reserve 2007 and the Grande Réserve 2005, that nearly made it as wines of the week.

Their range of red Côtes du Rhônes has consistently been well made and robustly fruity, often with far more structure and potential for development than you routinely encounter in this appellation. I particularly like their 2010s, currently on the market. The unoaked Dom de Mourchon, Tradition 2010 Côtes du Rhône-Villages Séguret is really excellent, as you can

see below. (This should be distinguished from the cheaper, more basic Mourchon 2010 Côtes du Rhône, which is just $9.99 at some US retailers and £8.99 at Adnams in the UK and which I have not tasted.) See their full range below.

Tradition, a Séguret wine, is fourth from the left.

Dom de Mourchon, Tradition 2010 Côtes du Rhône-Villages Séguret 16.5 Drink 2012-16

65% Grenache, 25% Syrah, 10% Carignan. 40-year-old vines; 35 hl/ha. Raised in concrete. Brilliant crimson. Lovely combo of leather and spice on the nose. Sweet start and really lively fruit on the palate with just the right amount of acidity, energy and well-managed (not drying) tannin. Gamey. Just a hint of reduction but very honest. Very fair price. 14.5%

The partly oaked, older-vined Grande Réserve bottling will come into its own in the second half of this decade:

Dom de Mourchon, Grande Réserve 2010 Côtes du Rhône-Villages Séguret 16.5 Drink 2014-29

65% Grenache, 35% Syrah, 60-year-old vines; 20 hl/ha. 40% aged in oak. Serious stuff! Beautifully sculpted with no excess of alcohol. 15%

In 2009 they added a négociant red Châteauneuf to their range, called Mourchon as opposed to Domaine de Mourchon. I wasn't a huge fan of the debut Mourchon 2009 Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Admittedly the vintage was a very difficult one and the Mourchon tannins weren't as dry and uncomfortable as some, but the wine, at 16% alcohol, tasted rather uncomfortably sweet and unbalanced to me.

Scroll forward a year and I have now had a chance to taste the red Mourchon 2010 Châteauneuf-du-Pape, which is a very different and much more satisfying kettle of fish. As is the way with wines of this appellation nowadays, the alcoholic strength is pretty frightening, but you really don't taste it, so well balanced is the wine. My tasting note:

Mourchon 2010 Châteauneuf-du-Pape 17 Drink 2013-20
70% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre, 10% Syrah. 60-80-year-old vines from a mixture of parcels on La Crau and sandy soils. 25-30 hl/ha. 30% aged in concrete; 70% in demi muids for 12 months. Warm, spicy nose but not over the top and with excellent tannin management. This is neither dry nor hot with alcohol. Topnote of gaminess. Bursting with life, it's approachable without being simple. Very vigorous. Really bright and satisfying. Not too sweet. Well done 15%

You could actually enjoy it already and I may be being pessimistic about its longevity since 2010 was an excellent vintage for Châteauneuf. They have managed to secure fruit from the famous Crau (we will have a detailed map of Châteauneuf terroirs in the next, 7th, edition of *The World Atlas of Wine*) and presumably blended in some grapes grown on sand to lighten the whole. This is a substantial wine, to be enjoyed ideally in cooler temperatures and with hearty food. We finished up my tasting sample on our last night in the Languedoc on Wednesday with a very mild chicken curry, but I suspect it could stand up to much fiercer spices.

It's sold by the single bottle at $49.99 in the US, but better value is the £99 for six bottles from Averys and the *Telegraph* wine club in the UK. I see it is also listed by the Norwegian monopoly, which seems eminently sensible; I'd love a bottle of this in the middle of a Scandinavian winter. They are now making a Viognier-dominated white Côtes du Rhône under the Mourchon label, but I think reds are their stronger suit.

You can also order direct from domainedemourchon.com and see their distributors here.

I ended my 2008 article Pursuing a dream - as vignerons about Brits making wine in France with this: 'I asked Walter McKinlay, whose southern Rhône wines are some of the most successful from a British domaine, whether Domaine de Mourchon was financially viable. He frowned. "Just about", he said cautiously, then smiled. "But it's a lovely lifestyle though."'

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