

Dom des Luquettes 2006 Bandol

21 Sep 2012 by Jancis Robinson

£15.63

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In Europe we are starting to feel the cool grip of autumn, particularly at night and in the early morning. Time, then, to reach for fuller reds with an autumnal blast of mellow fruitfulness but preferably one that tastes of sunshine. Step forward, Bandol!

That south-eastern corner of Provence where Bandol is grown is quintessential summer-holiday country. Cicadas, thyme, lavender, umbrella pines, warm sun on pale stone, all that stuff - and vines to boot. This is France's Mourvèdre homeland, a grape variety with a tendency to reduction in barrel so winemaking has to be sensitive.

We came across **Dom des Luquettes 2006 Bandol** on the list at Fergus Henderson's famous St John restaurant in Smithfield, London, and really enjoyed its combination of warmth, spice and maturity. I'm afraid this family domaine is so small that its wines seem to be available only via the wine retailing sister company to St John, HG Wines, named after Henderson and his business partner Trevor Gulliver (profiled in Nick's absorbing new book [The Art of the Restaurateur](#)).

It is the idiosyncratic but astute Gulliver who generally assembles the wines and, from the start, St John saw restricting the selection to France as a real distinguishing mark (which says quite a bit about the eclecticism of most London restaurant wine lists). A bottle of this 2006 Bandol is priced at £15.63 on the HG Wines website (£52.80 on the restaurant wine list), but you have to buy at least a dozen mixed bottles or spend at least £200, and then delivery may be a further £10. Nevertheless, this per bottle price seems to be lower than that for any other 2006 Bandol on sale in the UK.

The wines are made by Elisabeth Luquettes, pictured here, and here's HG Wines' profile of the producer: 'The first bottles of Domaine les Luquettes were released in 1997, but the Domaine has a history of wine making stretching back as far as 1852. In fact the old vertical press built in 1892 has been preserved and is still used every year. The rest of the cellar has been recently modified to bring the wine making up to modern standards whilst still respecting the environment around them. Care for the environment is of paramount importance for the Domaine. The vines are all tended, worked and harvested manually, pesticides and weedkillers have not been used for over 20 years and 400 sheep roam the estate, fertilising and grazing on the grasses between the vines. All this to ensure an ecological balance that promotes the best possible growth and flavours of the fruit.'

I like the sound of those sheep. And we really enjoyed this wine. The smoothness and spiciness went superbly with my juicy pigeon with beetroot salad, Nick's saddle of rabbit, our Australian friend Barry McDonald of Fratelli Fresh's Middlewhite pork and his stepdaughter Nina even lapped it up with her sole, for the tannins are already fully resolved. I'd drink this any time over the next two or three years.

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