

THE TWENTY CLUB SESSION 116 MEETING 2 WINE NOTES

The Wine Society- Southern Rhone - Lirac

Today's
wines.
Great
QPR

Laudun
The very
good value
'in case of
emergency
break
glass'
wine- from
the newest
AOC in
France



The wine I'd really like to buy- but which we can't afford, so you can't have it. Yes, you can get a bottle at about £21-25 but it will be dreadful value and too young and not as good as what is in front of you- so just don't. Although happy to be proved wrong.

In the olden days when I was an SHO I'd pop into Oddbins on Allerton Road and buy a nice bottle of Croze-Hermitage, then as an SpR, I'd bravely cross the Dock Road to Costco to buy 48 rolls of toilet paper, 8 pints of milk, half a dozen CDs and, a nice bottle of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. Because I could afford it. At Costco I even bought a couple of bottles of Penfolds Yattarana (White Grange), which I eventually got round to drinking last year after catching a particularly enormous trout (which had a belly full of 4 surprised looking mice), I'm glad to say that the wine was shared with McCormick Minor and Groom, and they made the appropriate noises; 'hummm, arggggh' etc. Very oddly Groom bought 6 bottles of Penfolds Grange in Costco at about the same time, and, if you can get him to stop sobbing, he'll tell you all about how his builders nicked three bottles. I seem to have digressed. These days, having been a consultant for only 23 years and paid the mortgage off I don't know how long ago- there's no way I can afford to drink CNdP. Why is this? Three theories 1) All my dosh is sucked out of my current account by some sort of weird money gravity black hole called 'three kids' 2) The BMA were right all along 3) I can afford to buy as much CNdP as I like- it's just that my mind has been messed up with an anchoring heuristic(Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) that can't make me think anything other than '*a bottle of Crozes-Hermitage is a bit more than a fiver, a Cotes Rotie and a few beers needn't cost more than twenty quid and a bottle of Chateauneuf du Pape is a bit less than a Cotes Rotie and a few beers- but wait a few years to open it as it is all sold too young, simples*'. So now I get very confused. But I still

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like Rhone blends, but without the psychic pain of shelling out what I can only think is three times what I should. Then again, I've just checked and it looks like I've got at least 12 bottles of CNdP cellared at The Wine Society, and a bottle of Chateau Beaucastle Blanc 2000 in a cupboard (£19.99 Costco in 2002) that I dare not open (the wine not the cupboard)- it will either be oxidised to death or amazing (the wine). So, to resolve these contradictions I rummage among the less prestigious but great value wines of the Rhone, much like a hungry badger. Then, when I find something I like, I tend to go back, which, if I was a hungry badger would be tricky on account of badger culls. Now- the absolute best of these is Clos du Caillou. Chateauneuf du Pape was the first wine area to draw up rules for terroir, grape varieties and vinification, but, when the surveyors arrived at Clos du Caillou- they were threatened at gun point! Oh dear! As a result there is a little hole in the CNdP map in which it sits, growing the same grapes on the same soil and treated the same as the grapes next door- but sold for about a third the price, it's fantastic, but not for the owners who've missed out on millions - but out of stock right now. Which brings me to...

Lirac- is also in the Southern Rhone and is right opposite Chateauneuf du Pape. It also has hot sun and galets roulés which are the larger rounded stones that sit on the soil allegedly retaining heat overnight and protecting the soil, adding a *je ne sais quoi* etc etc etc. You've got to have a story(or a narrative fallacy(Tversky & Kahneman, 1974)). Or just plain old bullshit(Frankfurt, 2005)- see what I've done there?. Ironically it was the first wine chosen to be the communion wine when The Papacy arrived in Avignon in the early 1300's. It also comes in nice fancy bottles.

Domaine Maby

60 Ha across Tavel, Lirac and Cotes du Rhone. Family run, bottling under their own label since 1946 and unusual in making a white and a rose as well as the usual red Lirac. Their wines feature in the Guide Hachette des Vins just about every year and in 2021 Richard Maby was one of their winemakers of the year. Which isn't bad considering they blind taste 40,000 wines to decide which go in the guide and then who's best.

Lirac Blanc La Fermade, Domaine Maby 2023 14.5% £13.95 at TWS or £17.50 at Yapp Brothers Grenache Blanc 55%, Clariette 25%, Picpoul 10%, Ugni Blanc 10%. 30-40 year old vines, fermented in stainless steel. Bottled December 2023 and could be aged for 4 or even up to 8 years depending on your taste: young and lively, or mature and rounded. *Chacun a son gout*. Aromas of fruit, citrus fruit and white flowers, with a finely balanced palate, full-flavoured, yet crisp and refreshing. Ideal with shellfish or a chicken risotto. Or a sunny afternoon and a book.

Lirac Rouge La Fermade, Domaine Maby 2021 14% £14.50 at TWS or £17.50 at Yapp Brothers Grenache 40% Syrah 40% Mourvedre 20% Could be cellared for 10 years if you wanted to but I think this will be just right- will need a bit of air. Should have plenty of dark fruit and a good balance of acidity and tannin. At £14.50- a top bargain, a bargain at £17.50 as well. Would be great with liver, beef or hopefully some game.

Dessert Wine- Gaillac Vendanges Tardives Renaissance, Domaine Rotier 2020 50cl 11.5% £17.50 at TWS or (hilariously) £29.50 at Cave Bristol for the 2018

A continuation from October's wines from Southwest France. In just a flash this winery has achieved a lot, including innovation. Established only in 1985 and this style was pioneered from 1994. This has become an almost mythical wine, winning countless awards. It is made from 100% loin de l'oeil (far from the eye) it has a particularly long peduncle. Unless clipped it over produces and was not really used for anything other than not great white wines, until Domaine Rotier began to clip and then leave and pick late and selectively with noble rot. Oak aged. It is intense and concentrated, with flavours of honey, apricot, figs and quince. Would go with blue cheese and fruit-based pies and tarts, much like O'Mahoney. Whilst some say drink now to 2028 others say can be left for 20 years. Who knows? I've not had any yet- but I'm looking forward to it. Organic, but you can't have everything. Another Guide Hachette favourite.

The Society's Tawny Port 19% £12.95 TWS A young port made for the Wine Society by the Symington family. Port blend. Youthful fragrant and fruity, good with figs and nuts, much like O'Mahoney. Some say serve slightly chilled- have a look at the back of the bottle- because I know you don't believe me. Which is hurtful.

House Red Chateau Courac Cotes-du- Rhône 2020. The Wine Society £9.75 14.5%

In case of emergency. Was reviewed in The Daily Telegraph 12.10.2024 '*If I could give this 6 stars I would.*' (What's Ed doing reading the DT!??)

PORT- A Human Factors approach(Reason, 1995) At the first meeting of the 116th session of The Twenty Club- the port was not passed. Confidentially precludes naming the culprit, but rumour has it that he is himself portly, has very curly hair and a surprisingly cherubic visage. Whilst naming and shaming is emotionally satisfying, does this really help? I have decided to perform an SUI. More next month



P: You're drunk.

I: Just bring out the cake.

Withnail: Cake, and fine wine.

Miss B: If you don't leave, we'll call the police.

Withnail: Balls. ***We want the finest wines available to humanity. We want them here, and we want them now.***

P: The police, Miss Blennerhassit.

References

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BUYING EN PRIMEUR / FIRST RELEASE

Problem: The price of wine goes up more than the wine call by a lot. AND *'We want the finest wines available to humanity. We want them here, and we want them now.'*

Context: The Treasurer says he has carefully built up a healthy surplus of some thousands. It is just sitting there deflating.

Solution: Buy some wine en primeur (before bottling) and at first release (after bottling and ready to ship) both before duty and VAT. Drink on arrival or keep it for a year or two (cellaring about £0.90 / bt) open and enjoy. Spend the same/less for more & better.

FAQs

Q. Aren't the only wines on offer really expensive? A- Nope. Current first release White Rhones start at £58 for 12 in bond. That's £8.60/bt with tax. Ready early 2025 Would be £12 in the shops. 2 other 12 bottle cases under £65 retail about £15/bt including a Chapoutier.

Q. Don't you have to wait for years? Nope- First release are sold when bottled and ready to ship- so a few months. But yes for some a couple of years eg Bordeaux, but for many 1 year. Over the last 6 years I've had various en primeur offers which cost between £9-20 tax paid, but for which I'd have had to pay £15-35 and in once case up to £70 to get elsewhere. Which I wouldn't have done. Because- why?

Q. Will we end up with loads of expensive wine in some cellar and get swizzed? A. No. Only buy wines that after duty, VAT and storage will be no more that we usually spend and with The Wine Society which is a co-op that has been around for 150 years.

The club could become a member of TWS- one off £40 for ever. Or I can buy and keep in my account-a bit like Father Ted. More info here- [The Wine Society](#)

