

Selections



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Brilliant Châteauneuf-du-Pape from Vignobles Mousset-Barrot (And a Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages Treasure too!!)

You can't miss it as you drive along D17 towards the storied town of Châteauneuf-du-Pape – the



neo-gothic castle looming high on the hill to the right, standing guard over countless rows of impeccably tended vines. Over the years we had driven by it on many occasions and wondered who lived there and what secrets and treasures lay behind those imposing stone walls. Little did we know that one day we would not only meet the family that owned the château, but that we would be able to present their delicious wines to the Members of Arthur's Cellar Wine Club!

It all started a couple of years ago when Hélène invited a number of good friends to join us on a vacation to Provence. She found a wonderful country home (bastide) between Avignon and Châteauneuf-du-Pape that could accommodate the revellers in the style to which they had become accustomed (watch for *'Arthur's Travels'* to learn more about the bastide and adventures in southern France). The owner, Béatrice Navarre turned out to be a most gracious host. When she learned that we were going to a big wine show in Montpellier, she suggested we look up Amélie Barrot, the daughter of her close childhood friend, Catherine. And, what do you know? It turns out that Catherine grew up in that familiar castle and now, along with her husband Robert owns three highly-regarded vineyards in and around Châteauneuf-du-Pape!



Amélie with a family treasure

Vignobles Mousset-Barrot

Take a look at the picture to the right of Louis Mousset, Catherine's father. Does he not look like a



Catherine

genuine bon vivant - exactly the kind of man who would create a family-run wine business in the heart of Châteauneuf-du-Pape? Louis acquired Château Fines Roches situated in the heart of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation along with Château du Bois de la Garde a couple of kilometres away (just outside of the Châteauneuf-du-Pape appellation) in the mid-1930s. Louis and his wife Louise raised Catherine and her two older brothers, Guy and Jacques and developed a flourishing wine business. Subsequently, Catherine inherited the vineyards and the winery and along with her husband Robert, ably assisted by their daughters Amélie and Gaëlle continued the family's viticultural traditions. In 2003 they purchased a neighbouring property (with vines averaging over 70 years of age) and named it Château Jas de Bressy where elegant, stylish red and white Châteauneuf-du-Pape is being produced. This new property is also the location



Louis Mousset

of their tasting room and shop which is open to visitors in the afternoons from May to October and December. Combined, the vineyard holdings of VMB are on of the largest in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. You can find out more about the estate and the Mousset-Barrot family at www.vmb.fr.

The Wines of VMB

Hélène and I were very impressed with the Vignobles Mousset-Barrot wines when we first tasted them in Montpellier. We have since tried them on two visits to the estate and on several other occasions (we can't be too careful when it comes to the interests of our wine club Members!). They come from old vines in meticulously maintained vineyards. These are very, very good wines from the Southern Rhône made in the traditional style. In recent vintages, these wines routinely receive 90+ ratings from Robert Parker in the Wine Advocate. And, as a bonus, they are very reasonably priced.



Amélie, Robert and Gaëlle outside their office

Due to the wide range of delicious wines produced by VMB, thoughtful deliberation (and a few extra tastes, of course) was required before deciding which ones to offer. We settled on the 2005 Château de la Garde red Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages and the 2005 Château des Fines-Roches white Châteauneuf-du-Pape because they are such wonderful wines from a great vintage. We also selected two different 2001 Châteauneuf-du-Pape from deep in the VMB cellars because they are drinking so wonderfully right now and 2001 was another fine vintage. All three wines come in **twelve bottle cases**. To make the selection process a little easier, Robert has created the **VMB red wine sampler case** for Arthur's Cellar Wine Club – 5 bottles of the 2005 Château Bois de la Garde Côtes-du-Rhône, 4 bottles of the 2001 Château des Fines Roches Châteauneuf-du-Pape and 3 bottles of the premium 2001 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée Fines Roches. What a great way to become familiar with three superb wines from the estate that Louis built.

2005 Château Bois de la Garde Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages – (14.5% Alc./Vol.) \$20.00

The appellation Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages represents a distinct step up in quality, and often value, from generic Côtes-du-Rhône. The basic maximum yield is 42 rather than 50 hectolitres per hectare.



This stunning, pure red wine comes from vines averaging more than 50 years of age and is made from 60% Grenache and 40% Syrah. It has undergone traditional vinification in stainless steel tanks and has not received any oak aging. The only things separating this vineyard from Châteauneuf-du-Pape are the N7 and A7 roadways. The soil is very similar, consisting of large pebbles covering a sandy-red clay subsoil.

The aroma is filled with red fruits such as plums and strawberries, spices and leather which persist in the mouth. It combines the freshness of the Côtes-du-Rhône with the structure of a Châteauneuf-du-Pape. It is drinking beautifully now and will go delightfully with grilled or roasted meats flavoured with thyme and rosemary. Only 6,600 bottles were produced.

2001 Château des Fines Roches Châteauneuf-du-Pape – (14.0% Alc./Vol.) \$36.00

This is the workhorse of the VMB stable as the 200,000 bottle production rate would attest. But don't let the quantity fool you – the quality is first class and this is a great price for aged Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The vines average more than 40 years of age and it is comprised of 70% Grenache, 15% Syrah, 8% Mourvèdre, 5% Cinsault, and 2% Muscardin and Counoise (Châteauneuf-du-Pape regulations, the strictest in all of France, allow for up to 13 prescribed grape varieties in the final blend). The wine receives traditional vinification in stainless steel tanks, 21 days in vats and about twelve months aging in oak.



It is a deep ruby colour with prevailing aromas of Provençal spices and red berries combined with a trace of new leather, a bit of pepper and a hint of stone and flint. In the mouth it exhibits splendid finesse and elegance, smooth and very well balanced. This wine is drinking wonderfully now and will keep nicely for years. My underscored note in my tasting book for this wine is 'Excellent'. It would be a perfect companion for meats in wine sauces, in particular game (wild hare or wild boar stew!). This is marvellous stuff for the price.

For the Serious Collector

2001 Cuvée Fines Roches Châteauneuf-du-Pape – (14.0% Alc./Vol.) \$61.00

Oh boy, is this ever delicious. Made of equal parts Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre from vines averaging over 40 years of age, the 2001 Cuvée Fines Roche is a monumental wine that is drinking very well now and will cellar nicely for a decade or two. Only a little over 6,000 bottles were made.



Cherries and strawberries are prominent on the nose along with plums, spices and a delicate note of vanilla. In the mouth it is a real stunner – rich, full and round, displaying great finesse. It will go brilliantly with coq au vin and would be ideal with a Black Forest cake or any other chocolate dessert. Personally, I would sip it quite happily all by itself. My underscored tasting note? 'Magnificent'! This is a premium Châteauneuf-du-Pape for the price many other houses charge for their regular cuvées.



SUPER SELECTIONS

Robert's VMB Red Wine Sampler Case

\$36.00

Thanks to Robert, you get five bottles of the 2005 Château Bois de la Garde Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages, four bottles of the 2001 Château des Fines Roches Châteauneuf-du-Pape and three bottles of the 2001 Cuvée Fines Roches Châteauneuf-du-Pape in one twelve-bottle case. What a great way to get your introduction to the wonderful wines of Vignobles Mousset-Barrot!



Tasting note: Each of these wines benefits from some time in the decanter; in fact the winery serves them after spending seven or eight hours in the decanter.

2005 Château des Fines Roches Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc – (14.0% Alc./Vol.)

\$36.00

Unfortunately we do not see very much white Châteauneuf-du-Pape in Ontario, but it is a most delightful quaff. The VMB 2005 version is made from 50% Grenache Blanc, 20% Bourboulenc, 20% Clairette and 10% Roussanne. The vines average 20 years of age and the wine has not been placed in oak. Right now this beautiful clear pale yellow wine has aromas of wild flowers and over time will develop strong notes of apricots and honey. It is a full, voluptuous wine with lovely acidity.



It is delightful as an apéritif and would go wonderfully well with grilled fish and white meats. As a special treat, try it with fresh goat cheese. Only 20,000 bottles were made of this very special wine.

We will be taking our order for these wines to the LCBO on Wednesday, February 13, 2008.

Soon to Emerge from Arthur's Cellar

Next will be some more marvellous Italian Barbera d'Asti, this time from Poderi Rosso Giovanni. After that there will be some delightful Beaujolais from Domaine du Penlois, some delicious whites from Domaine de Tara (Côtes de Ventoux) and the terrific, value-priced Côtes-du-Rhône from Château Bosc la Croix along with the return of many of your favourites.

2004 Notturmo, Barbera d'Asti Superiore – Wonderful Response

Response to our 2004 Notturmo, Barbera d'Asti Superiore has been overwhelmingly positive. It is still available at many LCBO VINTAGES stores for only \$19.95 a bottle - product # 026088. If you haven't tried it, we encourage you to do so; if you have and enjoyed it, please let others know.

Over 35 of the VINTAGES outlets that originally received this wine have sold out, yet 39 cases remain in the LCBO central warehouse! We got in touch with Vintages management to see how we could get this wine out to the wine-loving public and they answered that it was up to the local LCBO managers to request it. If your local VINTAGES store is out, we encourage you ask them to order more from the warehouse

Member Feedback

Your feedback is greatly appreciated. It helps us improve our club and better respond to your requirements. Many of your suggestions have been implemented and we are working on several others. Thank you and please keep the comments coming (jaswalker@arthursellers.com).

For the wine club to be successful, we need as many wine buying members as possible – please forward this newsletter to likely prospects and keep those referrals coming.

Thank you and best wishes for the holidays!

Hélène and Jim

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