

# Selections



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## Introducing the Storied Wines of Virgile's Vineyard



“Some home-made chicken liver pâté and tender lamb chops grilled on a fire made from gnarled old vine-stocks [at Le Pressoir in Saint Saturnin] had revived me just enough to face the afternoon shift. However, hobbling back to the car, I spotted an intriguing, freshly chalked legend above a set of peeling double doors on the other side of the square.



**Hélène and Virgile Joly outside  
his Cave Particulière**

‘Virgile Joly – Cave Particulière – Depuis 2000,’ it said.

And in the second week of January 2001, how could I fail to be impressed? So, for all my good intentions on the olive terraces, I tried a tentative knock.

A cheerful ‘Come in, if you can squeeze in!’ is the immediate response, because Virgile Joly’s cave proves to be as minute as it is recent. Though little bigger than a lockup garage it is packed with far more equipment than anyone would have thought possible in such a confined space. Some of it looks conspicuously new, like his dozen or so wooden barrels and the four tall fibreglass fermentation tanks, or ‘cuves’ as he calls them; the rest, including a variety of strange machinery with unidentifiable roles in the wine-making process, looks much more obviously second or third-hand. Everything, however, is impeccably tidily ordered. Indeed, my arrival has clearly interrupted a fastidious scrubbing of the concrete floor, but Virgile still seems only too happy to lean on his broom for a chat.”

That is how Patrick Moon described his first encounter with Virgile Joly in his delightful book, **‘Virgile’s Vineyard – A Year in the Languedoc Wine Country’**. And, it was pretty much how Hélène and I found him five and a half years later. He had survived six more harvests, expanded his vineyard holdings (from one to eight and a half hectares), married (Magdalena) and had a son (César). But he still operates out of the little storefront on the main street of Saint Saturnin de Lucian as well as a few other nooks and crannies around the picturesque hillside village in the Languedoc.



**Virgile Joly and Jim in one of Virgile’s Vineyards**

We spent a most enjoyable afternoon with Virgile, touring his many vineyards, visiting his facilities and, best of all, tasting his exquisite wines. Virgile and his family team (sister-in-law Marta completes the roster) cultivate their vines organically. They believe in biodynamic viticultural management, using no weed killers or other chemicals or synthetic products. Great importance is given to the rhythm of nature and the local ecosystems and their diversity. The 25 to 50 year old vines are cultivated and picked by hand in order to produce a limited number of grapes (less than 30 hectolitres per hectare) with concentration and finesse resulting in the production of very well structured, sophisticated wines.

The vines are situated in the communes of Saint Saturnin, Jonquières and Arboras at altitudes of between 100 and 400 metres at the foot of the Larzac Plateau. The area is rich with perfumes of the surrounding scrubland and is influenced by a typical Mediterranean climate characterised by exceptional sunshine and heavy rainfalls of spring and autumn. Saint Saturnin lies in the ‘corridors’ of the cold winds of the Tramontane and the Mistral. These winds help keep the vines healthy and free from disease and mildew.

Before settling in the Languedoc, Virgile, who comes from a winemaking family with roots in the Ventoux region, had worked as a “flying winemaker” in far flung regions such as Chile and in the more familiar climes of southern France. He is absolutely passionate about his vineyards and his winemaking. He prefers to do everything by hand so that nothing is left to chance. Virgile has his well-founded, often unconventional views on each and every aspect of his craft. For example, he likes the wild grasses and other plants to grow among his vines.

Rather than weed them out like most of his neighbours, he prefers to plough them under to provide natural nutrients for his vines. He credits this practice for saving his crops in the very hot, dry summer of 2003 as the mulched earth retained what little moisture the region received. His neighbours were not so fortunate.



**Virgile’s aging and tasting lair**

### **The Wines of Domaine Virgile Joly**

The vines are in the Appellation d’Origine Controlé Coteaux du Languedoc – Terraces de Larzac with the added local designation, Saint Saturnin. The grape varieties are Grenache Blanc and Rouge, Syrah, Carignan and Cinsault. After their year’s work with the vines, Team Joly harvests all the grapes by hand and transports them to the winery in small crates to ensure they are not bruised or crushed on their way. Grapes from different parcels of vines and grape varieties are

sometimes vinified together, and sometimes separately. There are no strict rules at the domaine. The final assemblage is made by December, after which the wines are matured in cuves or French oak barrels.

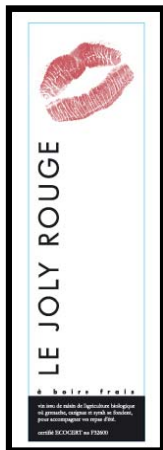
Virgile sells his wines in **twelve-bottle cases**. You might want to share your order, particularly the more expensive “Virgile Blanc” and Virgile Rouge”, with a friend or two.

To mark his debut with Arthur’s Cellar Wine Club, **Virgile will personally sign and dedicate a copy of Patrick Moon’s most enjoyable book, ‘Virgile’s Vineyard – A Year in the Languedoc Wine Country’ to everyone who orders a case of his wine.** Patrick Moon will autograph the book as well. If you would like a special note, please let us know.

We will place our first order for Virgile Joly’s storied wines on **Tuesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007.**

### 2005 Domaine Virgile Joly “Le Joly Rouge” - (13.0% Alc./Vol.)

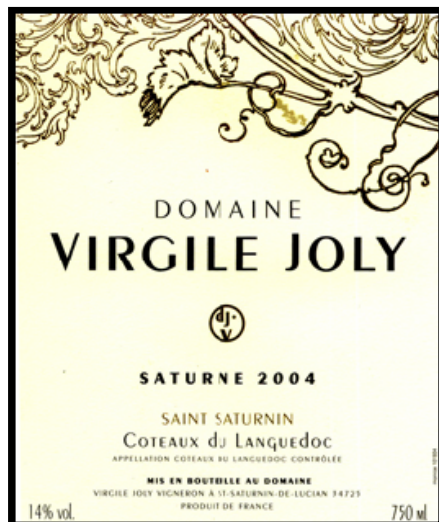
**\$15.75**



This AOC Coteaux du Languedoc is made from 50% Grenache, 40% Cinsault and 10% Syrah and has spent six months in large oak casks. Don’t let the screw cap fool you. Virgile does not make frivolous wine. It is merely reflects the fact that the wine is ready for drinking now. It is a ruby red colour with darker red glints. It has aromas of blackberries, black currants, wild flowers and rosemary. In the mouth it is supple, fresh and fruity with delicate tannins. While on the light side, it is surprising complex for such a young wine and finishes with a nice trace of acidity. It is drinking very well now and will keep nicely for at least three years – if you can resist the temptation to drink it sooner. Serve it slightly chilled but there is no real need to decant it. It will go well with pork, grilled steak, pork roast and charcuterie. [Click here](#) to order Virgile’s little gem.

### 2004 Domaine Virgile Joly “Saturne Rouge” – (14.0% Alc./Vol.)

**\$26.90**



Now we get serious! Virgile’s 2004 Saturne Rouge is made from 30% Carignan, 30% Grenache, 30% Cinsault and 10 % Syrah and is aged for twelve months in oak casks. It is a pure red colour with violet tints. The nose is alive with minerals and ripe wild berries, black currants, honey, chestnuts and thyme. In the mouth it is supple and round with well structured tannins and an extremely long, lingering aftertaste of black currants and red berries.

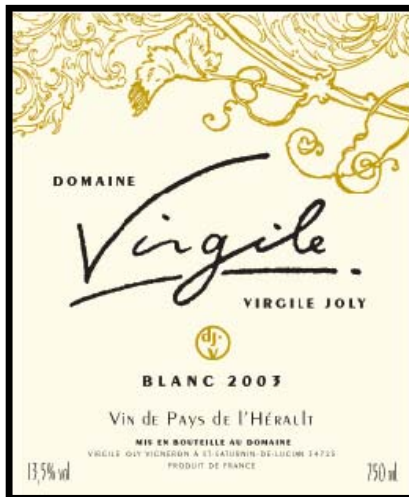
The “Saturne Rouge” is best served slightly below room temperature and should be decanted several hours before serving. It will keep nicely in the cellar for at least five years. It will go well with roast lamb or beef and other grilled or sautéed red meats. Obtain some of this tasty Coteaux du Languedoc – Saint Saturnin by [clicking here](#).



The following two collectible wines are the third and fourth of many we will be offering under the banner 'Super Selections'. These wines are widely sought after by collectors around the world and are not available through the LCBO. Due to their limited supply, we will have to act very quickly to secure a small quantity for our Members.

**2003 Domaine Virgile Joly “Virgile Blanc” – (13.0% Alc./Vol.)**

**\$47.00**

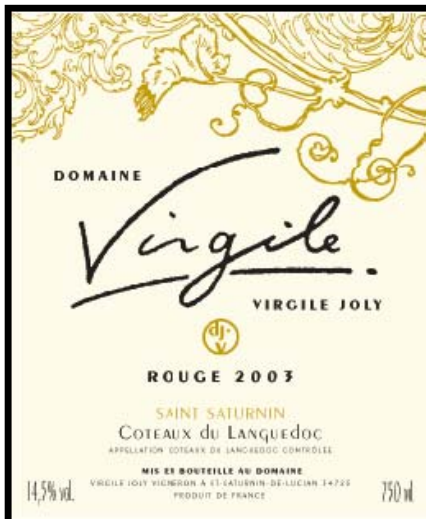


Gasp! Forty-seven dollars for a white wine? And, it is a vin de pays – Vin de Pays de l’Herault to be precise. Actually, most white wines are more expensive to make than their red counterparts and this one is no exception. Made from 100% Grenache Blanc, it was fermented and aged for eighteen months in 500 litre oak barrels, then bottle aged for another year. It is a clear and brilliant wine with a lovely colour of white gold with reflections of yellow straw. The nose is of pure white peaches, white flowers, breadcrumbs, stones and anise. The initial taste is quite round, refined and extremely well balanced with beautiful white fruit and splendid acidity. The white peaches linger in the aftertaste with hints of wild fennel and clean, crisp citrus. This wine is drinking beautifully now and will mature gracefully through at least five years of cellaring. I would decant this wine shortly before serving – slightly, but not overly chilled. It is

sheer ambrosia by itself, but will go well with creative seafood dishes. For a really, really special white, [click here](#).

**2003 Domaine Virgile Joly “Virgile Rouge” – (14.0% Alc./Vol.)**

**\$47.00**



La pièce de résistance! Made from 30% Carignan, 40% Grenache and 30% Syrah, the 2003 “Virgile Rouge” Coteaux du Languedoc Saint Saturnin spent nine months in fibreglass tanks and then another twelve months in small oak barrels. It is a bright ruby colour with tinges of purple. The nose is wonderful, with aromas of black current purée, spices, raw leather and red fruit. The secondary aroma expresses the scents of more spice, olives and garrigue. In the mouth it is complex, supple and round with dense, somewhat closed tannins and the flavour of exotic woods, minerals and red berries. The endless aftertaste is of liquorice, black olives and minerals. This mammoth wine is actually drinking well now (infanticide?) but will reward those who can resist temptation for ten to fifteen years. To order a real Coteaux du Languedoc treasure, [click here](#).



## **Get Your Own Copy of ‘Virgile’s Vineyard’**

Would you like to find out more about Virgile Joly and his very special wines before ordering? Click [here](#) to go to go to [www.chapters.indigo.ca](http://www.chapters.indigo.ca) to order the book. The soft cover version is only \$14.40, the hard copy \$19.76.

## **Soon to Emerge from Arthur’s Cellar**

Next will be more wonderful Minervois, this time from La Famille Léonore, some special Côtes du Luberon from Château de l’Isolette, the brilliant white Vins de Pays Duché d’Uzès (a recent find) from Domaine Chabrier Fils, some more Parker rated Châteauneuf-du-Pape, these from Mousset-Barrot, nectar from the Burgundian house of Alex Gambal, two marvellous Italian Barbera d’Asti and many others.

## **Delivery Updates**

We have added a new section to our website that will provide you with delivery progress reports on the wines you have ordered.

## **Member Feedback**

We really appreciate your feedback because it allows us to improve and better respond to your requirements. Many of your suggestions have already been put into place and we are working on several others. Thank you and please keep the comments coming ([jaswalker@arthursellers.com](mailto: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.**

Happy NewYear and cheers,

Hélène and Jim

PS: Our wines are also available for restaurants and other establishments that serve beverage alcohol by the glass – their prices will be a little lower because PST is not charged. If you are aware of any that might be interested, please let us know.

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