

Selections



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Côtes du Luberon Gems From Château de l'Isolette



It was almost a year ago that we first met Laure Pinatel-Gilles and her husband Denis Gilles, the proprietors (along with Laure's parents, Micheline and Luc Pinatel) of Château de l'Isolette at a wine convention in Cannes. We were immediately taken by their warm, enthusiastic personalities and by their delicious wines. We were not the first to be enamoured. Pierre Cardin, whose father was a vintner, liked their wines so much that they have become the featured wines at his famous Maxim's restaurants! And, our friends in Quebec are also on to these wines; the SAQ orders 12,000 bottles per year.

Last October we visited Laure and Denis at their beautiful estate and had the opportunity to tour their vineyards and wine-making facilities, try their wines again (work, work, work) and get to know them at home. After the arduous business part of the visit we joined them for lunch on their back patio that overlooks their vines nestled in the midst of the Luberon wilderness. We started with a tasty sanglier (wild boar from the property) pâté, fresh baguette and a bottle of Château de l'Isolette rouge thinking that there were worse ways to eke out a living.



Denis, Laure and Jim

The magnificent Château de l'Isolette can be found in the rugged foothills of the Luberon in Provence between the picturesque hillside village of Bonnieux and the bustling city of Apt. The large 220 hectare property, which has been in the family since 1635 is comprised of chalky clay soil, ideal for the cultivation of Grenache, Syrah, Carignan and other wine grapes for which the A.O.C. Côtes du Luberon is renowned.

The estate also contains a delightful, completely isolated 18th Century guest house called La Bergerie which is available for rent (accessible only by a bone-jarring, breath-taking ride in a four-wheel drive vehicle that comes with the rental). Hardly a sheep fold, La Bergerie is air-conditioned, has all the modern amenities and its own sheltered swimming pool. To find out more about this gracious estate and its isolated retreat, go to www.chateau-isolette.com.

It would seem that each generation of Laure's family includes an accomplished artist and a skilled vintner. Her sister has carried on the creative side of the tradition and there is no doubt where Laure's abilities lie. As to the next generation, Laure and Denis' five year old son Clovis (named after the king of the Franks) who will either be multi-talented or soon have a sibling.

Côtes du Luberon

The Côtes du Luberon appellation encompasses 3500 hectares between Cavaillon and Apt.



Laure, H el ene and an old wine delivery truck

Eighty percent of the wine producing land is grouped into co-operative wineries. The area produces about 75% reds and the remainder ros es and whites depending on the year. The C otes du Luberon wines are appreciated for their delicate bouquet and excellent value. The reds are well-balanced and pleasing, the ros es fresh and crisp, while the whites are fruity and well-rounded. It is generally better to drink the C otes du Luberon wines when they are young. Robert Parker cites Ch ateau de l'Isolette as one of the top two producers of the C otes du Luberon.

Wine making at Ch ateau de l'Isolette

The vines at Ch ateau de l'Isolette are very old and meticulously maintained. Constant attention is lavished on the 100 hectare vineyard where only organic fertilizers are used and chemical intervention is kept to an absolute minimum. The wine making cellar is located in the heart of the vineyard. The newly harvested grapes are delivered to the upper level which makes it possible to transfer the barely crushed fruit directly to the fermentation tanks below.



Le chai at Ch ateau de l'Isolette

This traditional method avoids the use of mechanical pumps which can damage the delicate grapes. The very cool aging cellar contains about fifty large oak casks where the wine develops until bottling, in some cases for up to five years.

The wines of Ch ateau de l'Isolette

We are offering three wines from Ch ateau de l'Isolette – a fresh, expressive white; a very approachable, old vines red and; a real treat of a red from the estate's private cellars. These wines come in **twelve-bottle cases** (share with a friend if a dozen is too many). We plan to place the Ch ateau de l'Isolette order with the LCBO at the end of April

2005 Château de l’Isolette Blanc de Blancs (White) – (12.5% Alc. by Vol.)

\$16.65



This delightful white wine is made from 50% Clairette, 25% Grenache Blanc 20% Roussanne, and 5% Bourboulenc. The vines average 40 of age and the average yield is 40 hectolitres per hectare. (12-bottle cases)

A clear golden yellow with a slight green tint, this wine has a powerful, yet not aggressive aroma of ripe fruit and flowers. In the mouth it is quite explosive with notes of pears, banana (!), lime and hawthorn. It is very well-balanced and most refreshing.

This wine is a big hit with importers around the world. It should be served quite cool (seven to eight degrees) and will go beautifully with fish and other seafood. It is drinking nicely now and will keep for at least another three years. [Order here.](#)

2004 Château de l’Isolette “Prestige” Red – (13.5% Alc. by Vol.)

\$17.25



This marvellous, quaffable red wine is made from 60% Syrah, 30% Grenache and 10% Mourvèdre. The vines are fifty years and older.

Traditionally fermented at a regulated temperature, the wine was aged for one year in old oak barrels and then racked and kept in stainless steel tanks before bottling. The late bottling ensures that the wine will be fresh and the corks in perfect condition for long aging. While drinking quite nicely now, this wine will age for seven or more years.

It is a deep garnet and has the aroma and taste of black berries, raspberries combined with new leather and a hint of vanilla. It is silky, well-balanced and warming in the mouth with a prolonged aftertaste. It is a steal at this price. [Order here.](#)

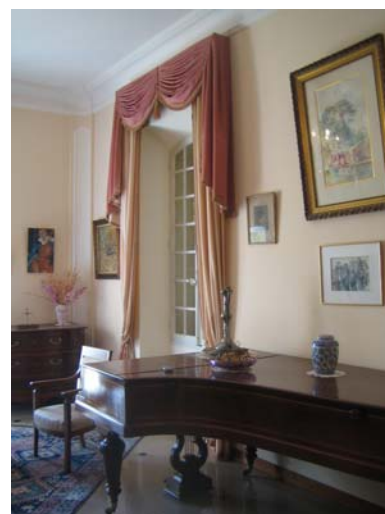
1998 Château de l’Isolette “Aquarelle” Red – (13.5% Alc. /Vol.)

\$28.00



We asked Laure and Denis if they could find something really special in their cellars for Arthur’s Cellar Wine Club. They came up with a real treasure – their 1998 Rouge Aquarelle, so named for the watercolour on the label that was painted by Laure’s great grandfather, Joseph Cabasson.

The 1998 “Aquarelle” was made from 60% Syrah, 30% Grenache, 5% Cinsault and 5% Mourvèdre. The vines are over sixty years old. The wine completed its fermentation in new Tronçais oak barrels and then spent another five years in old oak casks before bottling. It is dark purple, almost black and begins with a very subtle fragrance that develops into a definite note of prunes. The prunes persist in the mouth and are joined by black berries, old leather and warming, pleasant tannins. Dry raisins dominate the long after taste. My tasting notes show an underscored “WONDERFUL”.



The original “Aquarelle” in the family sitting room

Here are a few of the medals that the 1998 “Aquarelle” has garnered:

- *Médaille d’Or, concours des Vins à Orange*
- *Médaille d’Or, concours National du Luberon*
- *Médaille d’Or, concours des vins d’Avignon*
- *Vinalies d’Or, concours Vinalies internationales*

Click here to order.

Soon to Emerge from Arthur’s Cellar

Next will be the brilliant white Vins de Pays Duché d’Uzès (a recent find) from Domaine Chabrier Fils, two marvellous Italian Barbera d’Asti from Poderi Rosso Giovanni and Az. Agricola Ferro Carlo, wonderful Cahors from Château Famaey, nectar from the Burgundian house of Alex Gambal, some more Parker rated Châteauneuf-du-Pape (these from Mousset-Barrot) and many others.

Special Events – Food and Wine Pairing Evenings

We are very excited to announce that we will be hosting two food and wine pairing evenings in April with not one, but two French Vintners. Jérôme Caillé of Château Robin and Charles Pacaud of Domaine La Croix Chaptal will join us at Bodega Restaurant in Toronto on Wednesday, April 18th and at Thyme Restaurant and Wine Bar in Oakville on Thursday, April 19th. You will find all the details in the last issue of ‘Selections’ (Volume 07, Issue 03)

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).

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 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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