

Tasting Notes
Feb 2020 Pick-up
Wines of Languedoc-Roussillon



Welcome to your February 2020 Smart Wine Club pickup. The theme this quarter is the large region of Languedoc-Roussillon (L-R from now on) in southern France. This region runs west from Provence along the southern coast of France, ending in the Pyrenees mountain range and the border with Spain.

This is not a region I knew much about when I was deciding on a new theme for this pickup. Perhaps like you, I had a vague idea that they drink reds made from Mediterranean varietals like grenache and syrah. Beyond that...? What I've learned during my research and tasting is that L-R is an interesting historic wine region and incredibly prolific in wine production. This area alone produces over a third of French wine!

You may be scratching your head and wondering how to pronounce this region. It is something along the lines of: long-duck roo-see-yone. But you really have to give it some Frenchness – it may help to Google the pronunciation and listen to an audio clip. ☺

The history of wine in L-R started out splendidly and unfortunately went downhill for some time. Several varietals of this region are traceable to vineyards planted by Greeks in the 5th century BC – the oldest in France. The area was known for extremely high-quality wines through into the early 19th century; however, the Industrial Revolution unfortunately shifted them towards mass production and low quality. Simultaneously, they were badly affected by phylloxera and unfortunately the hardy American rootstock that solved this problem elsewhere didn't thrive in the soil there. More recently, in the late 20th century, overproduction in the area contributed to major EU wine surplus issues.

However, I think in the last couple decades, L-R is on the rise! Smaller producers are focusing on quality over quantity and you can taste the results for yourselves.

Please share your wines with your wine-loving friends and introduce them to the Smart Wine Club. If you introduce a friend who then decides to join, you'll BOTH receive 10% off your next tote.

Don't forget, you can always return your wine club red bags to the store when you come in to pick up. We are happy to re-use them and reduce waste!

- **2018 Caves de Florensac Picpoul de Pinet “Les Poissons”** – This wine is made from 100% Picpoul de Pinet grapes, one of the oldest white grapes of the region. It's aged in stainless steel only and is a crystal-clear lemon color. On the nose you'll enjoy hints of grapefruit, honey and peach. The taste is well-balanced and highly acidic, with a touch of salinity. Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$12

Pairing: The must-have pairing for this wine is shrimp or really any shellfish. Also try it with rich, fatty cheeses or charcuterie.

- **2018 Mas la Chevalière “Rosé de la Chevalière”** – The name of this winery means “farmhouse of the knight’s lady”. Although the farmhouse and surrounding property is quite historic, this winery is known for their excellent modern equipment. From picking to pressing to filtration and bottling, each step is carefully designed to protect the wine and achieve maximum flavor. The rosé is 60% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 15% Cinsault, with lovely fresh ripe red fruit and berry flavors and aromas. Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$12

Pairing: I just discovered a new rosé perfect pairing that I really love – fish and chips! Try it, it’s wonderful. I’ve also been loving it with Thai food recently. Rosés from this region are nice and bold, so don’t be afraid to try this with stronger flavors.

- **2017 Chateau Jouclary Cabardès Rouge** – This red blend is 30% each Merlot and Cab Franc and 20% each Syrah and Grenache Noir. The region is unique for requiring that blends combine typical Mediterranean varietals with typical Bordeaux varietals and this is the result. A beautiful garnet color with bold aromas of pomegranate and hints of floral notes and white pepper. Easy to drink with or without food. Reg retail: \$14 Smart price: \$13

Pairing: A perfect pairing with braised meats or even a spice-rubbed grilled chicken.

- **2018 Domaine Tour Boisée “Plantation 1905”** – This wine is truly a piece of history. During the phylloxera epidemic in 1905, the small village of Laure-Minervois planted about four acres of grapes right in the middle of their village, to try and preserve their local grape varietals. 23 varietals were all planted inter-mixed and are now harvested and pressed all together to create this wine. The varietals are: Aspiran, Aubun, Alicante Bouschet, Aramon, Varousset, Clairette Blanc, Morrastel Bouschet, Petit Bouschet, Carignan, Grenache Noir, Cinsault, Terret Noir, Terret Gris, Lladoner Pellut, Bourboulenc Blanc, Cardinal, Alphonse Lavallée, Italia, Muscat and four unknown varietals. Reg retail: \$16 Smart price: \$14

Pairing: While the weather’s still cold, try this with a classic lamb shepherd’s pie.

- **2016 Domaine de Fontsaïnte Corbières Rouge “Réserve La Demoiselle”** – The original domaine at this winery was built around a thermal spring named for the local saint, hence the name. The grapes for this reserve, grown in the parcel of land known as “La Demoiselle,” recently celebrated their 100th birthday! The blend is 70% Carignan, 20% Grenache Noir and 10% Mourvèdre. Look for aromas of vanilla, raspberry jam and nutmeg. Reg retail: \$19 Smart price: \$17

Pairing: Thinking of cheese pairings, this one would go perfectly with nutty aged cheeses like parmesan or aged gouda.

- **2017 Domaine d’Astruc d’A Malbec “Lot 19”** – Domaine d’Astruc was founded in 1862, and Jacques Astruc still manages all winegrowing. It is known today as a leader in producing excellent value wines in the Pays d’Oc area of L-R. This bottle is 100% Malbec with a deep ruby-purple color. Aromas of plum, clay, black currants and toasted notes are followed by flavors of black cherry, smoke and spice. Reg retail: \$13 Smart price: \$12

Pairing: Try with roasted pork with mushroom sauce; or a blue cheese burger.