

# Wine Spectator Insider

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## Insider Special Report: Rhône Valley

THIS week's *Wine Spectator Insider* spotlights the wines of France's Rhône Valley from the tremendous 2005 vintage. These are James Molesworth's most recent tasting notes for wines which were not released in time to be included in his annual Rhône Valley tasting report, which appears in the Nov. 30 issue of *Wine Spectator*, on newsstands now.

"2005 is a great vintage, like '89," said Michel Tardieu of Tardieu-Laurent about the current release. He notes that both were drought-influenced years that were warm early, but cooled down later in the growing season, which led to very rich tannins and excellent acidity. That structure—ripe, authoritative and well-embedded in the vintage's ripe fruit—is the hallmark of 2005, a superb vintage up and down the Rhône Valley.

The first of Tardieu-Laurent's 2005 Rhône releases are listed here, and this Southern Rhône-based négociant has turned in a stellar performance. Along with Tardieu-Laurent's releases are the wines from Les Vins de Vienne, another négociant house that also produces modern-styled wines.

Yet while both wineries offer wines with flashy fruit and toast notes, don't think they forsake their *terroir*. These wines are grounded in their origin and will reward cellaring once the copious but ripe tannins of the vintage begin to meld into the background.

There are also some additional 2005 Châteauneuf-du-Papes here, including Domaine de la Charbonnière, Domaine Vacheron-Pouizin and Etienne Gonnet. And as always, you'll find the best of this week's wines, including three classic-rated red Châteauneufs, among the Hot Wines, on page 4.

## France Rhône

### DOMAINE DE LA CHARBONNIÈRE

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée Vieilles Vignes 2005  
**94 points | \$49 | 225 cases imported | Red**

Really plush, with velvety tannins that carry raspberry ganache, red licorice, molten chocolate and mulled spice notes. Nice hints of sandalwood, black tea and graphite fill out the finish, which just sails on. The velvety quality makes this accessible now, but try to wait. Drink now through 2030.—*J.M.*

### ETIENNE GONNET

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Domaine Font de Michelle Cuvée Etienne Gonnet 2005  
**94 points | \$85 | 350 cases imported | Red**

Sweet raspberry fruit leads the way for perfumy floral and spice notes, with a fleshy palate of mocha, mesquite and red licorice. The long, tight-grained finish just keeps going and going. Not as muscular as most 2005s, but really well put together. Drink now through 2027.—*J.M.*

## DOMAINE VACHERON-POUZIN

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Domaine du Caillou Cuvée Unique 2005

**94 points | \$60 | 1,000 cases made | Red**

Very dark and juicy, with currant paste, fig, briar and cassis bush notes pushed by a deep, loamy undertow. Finishes with raspberry ganache, graphite and sweet spice hints, while also showing great cut. Drink now through 2030.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Condrieu La Chambée 2005

**94 points | \$58 | 650 cases made | White**

A lush, modern style, with alluring grilled almond and hazelnut aromas giving way to ripe fig, pear and melon flavors, all kept honest by lingering hints of acacia and lemon verbena. The very long finish delivers a great encore of anise and mineral. Drink now through 2010.—*J.M.*

## DOMAINE DE LA CHARBONNIÈRE

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Hautes Brusquières Cuvée Spéciale 2005

**93 points | \$49 | 400 cases imported | Red**

This shows some brawn, with coffee, cedar and game hints mingling with the dark cherry, tobacco and mineral notes. Braised chestnut and bittersweet cocoa frame the finish, which has solid grip. Best from 2009 through 2027.—*J.M.*

## CHÂTEAU DE VAUDIEU

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Val de Dieu 2005

**93 points | \$90 | 350 cases made | Red**

A very ripe, modern style, but superfresh and defined, with a racy graphite edge guiding the raspberry ganache, mocha and red licorice notes. The long, structured finish shows great grip, with a *terroir*-driven underpinning. Best from 2009 through 2026.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Cornas Les Barcillants 2005

**93 points | \$49 | 550 cases made | Red**

Shows the packed fruit and grippy profile of the vintage, with layers of currant, plum sauce, graphite, licorice and charcoal. As modern as Cornas gets, but stays true to its *terroir*, with flashes of iron and olive buried deep on the finish. Best from 2009 through 2015.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes Sotanum 2005

**93 points | \$55 | 1,300 cases made | Red**

Very juicy, with well-focused layers of cassis and plum fruit riding on top of chocolate, graphite and toast notes. The long, dark finish shows flashes of fruit, mocha and mineral, and the tannins are ripe and well-embedded for cellaring. Drink now through 2015.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes White Taburnum 2005

**93 points | \$55 | 500 cases made | White**

Bold, with white peach, green fig, blanched almond and persimmon notes. The long, creamy finish really glides nicely, with buried minerality stretching it all out. Really brings you back for more. Drink now through 2011.—*J.M.*

## ETIENNE GONNET

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Domaine Font de Michelle 2005

**92 points | \$48 | 850 cases imported | Red**

A lilted, perfumy style, with lots of floral and spice notes up front, followed by plush fruitcake, red cherry and incense notes. Fine-grained tannins carry the rich but elegant finish. Drink now through 2022.—*J.M.*

## TARDIEU-LAURENT

Gigondas Vieilles Vignes 2005

**92 points | \$39 | 53 cases imported | Red**

Ultramodern, with very suave mocha- and spice-filled toast leading the way for lush raspberry, boysenberry, licorice and graphite notes. The long finish lets the minerality blaze while still pumping out the fruit in spades. 80 percent Grenache with Syrah and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2013.—*J.M.*

## TARDIEU-LAURENT

Vacqueyras Vieilles Vignes 2005

**92 points | \$36 | 68 cases imported | Red**

Really exotic, with fig, raspberry, Port reduction, mocha, cinnamon and melted licorice aromas and flavors rippling over creamy tannins. The superlong finish shows notes of sweet earth and fruit mingled together. This has to resolve itself a bit more before it fully hits its stride. 85 percent Grenache with Syrah. Best from 2009 through 2013.—*J.M.*

## CHÂTEAU DE VAUDIEU

Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2005

**92 points | \$63 | 3,750 cases made | Red**

Crammed with fruit—raspberry, boysenberry and blackberry—that has a great macerated feel and confiture aroma to it, backed by dark loam, mineral and toast notes. Muscular but pure on the finish. Best from 2009 through 2024.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Otéliées 2005

**92 points | \$50 | 250 cases made | Red**

Has nice aromatics, with cedar and cocoa powder notes that then give way to a firmly structured palate of game, braised chestnut, tobacco, black currant and fig. Slightly grippier than most on the finish, but cellaring should round this out well enough. Best from 2009 through 2022.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Côte-Rôtie Les Essartailles 2005

**92 points | \$64 | 1,000 cases made | Red**

Well-built and sleek, with lavender, linzer torte, raspberry ganache, hoisin sauce and incense notes that race along prominent but seriously ripe, racy tannins. Best from 2009 through 2015.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Hermitage Les Chirats de St.-Christophe 2005

**92 points | \$70 | 165 cases made | Red**

Racy and well-structured, with solid tannins guiding enticing raspberry and boysenberry fruit. The long finish shows flashes of licorice, graphite and incense. Has the grip of the vintage, and will need some time to flesh out fully. Best from 2009 through 2015.—*J.M.*

## DOMAINE DU PÈRE PAPE

Châteauneuf-du-Pape La Crau de Ma Mère 2005

**91 points | \$39 | 500 cases imported | Red**

Fresh and primal, with pure red cherry, plum, sweet tobacco and *garrigue* notes braced by a taut, stony undertow. There's solid grip and depth on the finish. Drink now through 2022.—*J.M.*

## CHÂTEAU ST.-JEAN

Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2005

**91 points | \$45 | 300 cases imported | Red**

Nice racy fruit—blackberry, plum and currant—is layered with notes of tobacco, dark licorice and sweet earth. The rich finish has solid grip. Drink now through 2022.—*J.M.*

## TARDIEU-LAURENT

Côtes du Rhône Guy Louis 2005

**91 points | \$24 | 70 cases imported | Red**

This is amped up with layers of suave mocha- and mesquite-tinged toast, showing richly layered blackberry and black currant fruit and a long finish tinged with graphite and iron. Shows serious grip. Equal parts Grenache and Syrah, from 30- and 80-year-old vines. Drink now through 2009.—*J.M.*

## DOMAINE VACHERON-POUZIN

Côtes du Rhône Clos du Caillou Les Quartz 2005

**91 points | \$34 | 1,000 cases made | Red**

Big, modern styled wine, packed with fig, currant preserve and raspberry ganache flavors, along with a dark toast and mocha-filled finish. But then the finish is cream, pure and filled with minerality. Impressively rendered. Drink now through 2009.—*J.M.*

## DOMAINE VACHERON-POUZIN

Côtes du Rhône Les Clos du Caillou Réserve 2005

**91 points | \$45 | 550 cases made | Red**

Super silky and alluring, with lush boysenberry and blueberry fruit riding along creamy textured tannins through a long spice and fruitcake filled finish. Hypermodern, and totally delicious. Drink now through 2009.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

St.-Joseph White L'Élouède 2005

**91 points | \$34 | 650 cases made | White**

Buttery up front, this shows more stone fruit and melon notes as it opens, with a long, creamy finish that shows a nice flash of minerality. Modern, with a very pure display of fruit. Drink now through 2009.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

St.-Péray Les Bialères 2005

**91 points | \$28 | 650 cases made | White**

Has nice purity, with stone fruit and bracing mineral notes fronting for a richly textured palate of brioche and peach. The long, juicy finish lets a fresh, chalky hint play out. There's a good combination of fruit and mineral. Drink now through 2008.—*J.M.*

## DOMAINE VACHERON-POUZIN

Côtes du Rhône Le Clos du Caillou Cuvée Unique Vieilles Vignes 2005

**90 points | \$20 | 2,165 cases made | Red**

Dark and winey, with aromas and flavors of warm raspberry and fig sauce, fruitcake, licorice and sweet spice. Juicy finish stretches out nicely. Drink now.—*J.M.*

## LES VINS DE VIENNE

Vin de Pays des Collines Rhodaniennes Heluicum 2005

**90 points | \$34 | 1,200 cases made | Red**

Delightful violet and cassis aromas give way to a racy palate filled with licorice, graphite, plum and game, with a tangy lavender and pepper-tinged finish. This is made from the young vines juice culled from the Sotanum cuvée. Drink now through 2008.—*J.M.*

## TARDIEU-LAURENT

Côtes du Rhône Les Becs Fins 2006

**89 points | \$18 | 280 cases imported | Red**

Pure and polished, with delicious boysenberry and raspberry fruit mixed with hints of mocha, graphite and dark licorice. The finish is long and pure. Very solid for the appellation. Equal parts Grenache and Syrah, from 25- to 50-year-old vines. Drink now through 2009.—*J.M.*

# HOT WINES

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in *Wine Spectator Insider*. They are high-scoring, low-production wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

## DOMAINE VACHERON-POUIZIN

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Clos du Caillou Réserve 2005  
**97 points | \$170 | 550 cases made | Red**

Gloriously pure, with a massive core of boysenberry and blueberry fruit that glides effortlessly over seamless but dense tannins. Plenty of additional charcoal, fruitcake, mocha and fig paste notes chime in on the back end, extending the lengthy, well-structured finish. Really stunning. Best from 2009 through 2032. *From France.—J.M.*

## TARDIEU-LAURENT

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes 2005  
**96 points | \$51 | 65 cases imported | Red**

This is still shrouded by its bacony toast and has a lot to resolve, but the massive core of blackberry, black currant, fig, loam, dark tobacco and dark molten chocolate is very, very impressive. The finish shows the grip and balance of the vintage, boding well for serious cellaring. 90 percent Grenache with Syrah and Mourvèdre. Best from 2009 through 2032. *From France.—J.M.*

## DOMAINE VACHERON-POUIZIN

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Domaine du Caillou  
Les Quartz 2005  
**95 points | \$87 | 1,000 cases made | Red**

This delivers mouthfilling mocha, blackberry confiture, fig paste and licorice flavors, with loamy tannins and lots of bittersweet cocoa and coffee on the finish. Despite its heft, this is polished and driven, showing the strength of this great vintage. Best from 2009 through 2032. *From France.—J.M.*

## DOMAINE DE LA CHARBONNIÈRE

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée Mourre des Perdrix 2005  
**94 points | \$43 | 1,000 cases imported | Red**

This is seamless, with a torrent of raspberry and boysenberry fruit racing along lip-smacking licorice, mulled spice and graphite notes. Superlong, racy finish has great latent structure. Enticing now, but built for the cellar. Drink now through 2030. *From France.—J.M.*

## WINE SPECTATOR'S TASTINGS

*Wine Spectator* reviews more than 12,000 wines each year; our senior editors comprise the most experienced staff of professional wine tasters of any publication in the world. Each editor specializes in the wines of specific regions; their initials identify the taster of each wine reviewed.

We always taste wines blind, in our offices in San Francisco, Napa, New York and Tuscany, and in the vineyard regions of Europe. This is your guarantee that a wine's reputation or price does not influence its score. We score wines using our 100-point scale, explained below.

**James Laube** Senior editor, Napa  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat: California

**Kim Marcus** Managing editor, New York  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:  
Austria, Greece, Portugal, Southern France

**Thomas Matthews** Executive editor, New York  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1988. Tasting beat:  
New York, Spain

**James Molesworth** Senior editor, New York  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1997. Tasting beat: Loire Valley, Rhône Valley, South Africa, South America

**Bruce Sanderson** Tasting director, New York  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1993. Tasting beat: Alsace, Burgundy, Champagne, Germany

**Harvey Steiman** Editor at large, San Francisco  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1983. Tasting beat:  
Australia, New Zealand, Oregon, Washington

**James Suckling** European bureau chief, Italy  
Joined *Wine Spectator* in 1981. Tasting beat: Bordeaux, Italy, Port

### Wine Spectator's 100-Point Scale

95-100	Classic
90-94	Outstanding
85-89	Very good
80-84	Good
75-79	Mediocre
50-74	Not recommended

### Tasting staff:

**Jo Cooke** (Veneto),  
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**Alison Napjus** (Alsace),  
**Daniel Sogg** (New Zealand),  
**MaryAnn Worobiec** (California)