

Decanter

PASSIONATE ABOUT WINE SINCE 1975

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Languedoc whites:

Its wide range of terroirs, grapes and resulting wine styles mean there's something for everyone to discover among this expansive region's wines.



Elizabeth Gabay MW
November 24, 2024

Natural wine AND HOW IT'S CHANGING THE WINE WORLD

Clos du Gravillas, L'Inattendu, Minervois,
Languedoc-Roussillon, France, 2023

Points 90

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A lemon yoghurt nose and fresh floral citrus add structure and appeal. A linear, fresh style complemented by creamy weight. An attractive finish.



384
wines tasted
in this issue

Elizabeth Gabay MW, Poppy de Courcy-Wheeler and Justin Howard-Sneyd MW tasted 158 wines, with 2 Outstanding and 30 Highly Recommended.

The wine-growing region of Languedoc is 200km in length, arcing round the southwestern edge of France's Mediterranean coastline. Diverse terroirs with schist, limestone, clay and sand can be found along the coastal plains and the southern foothills of the Massif Central.

There is an Atlantic influence in the northwestern vineyards, higher altitude coolness in the foothills of the Pyrenees in the south, and cool air sweeping down the Rhône Valley in the east. The resulting diversity can make it almost impossible to define a 'Languedoc style'.

Wines were tasted blind

A riot of varieties

A long history of producing large volumes of cheap and cheerful wines has fixed the image of the region for many consumers, but affordable land and free-minded attitudes have meant that the region has, for a number of decades, also produced some stellar wines.

Judge Justin Howard-Sneyd MW said: 'It was great to see the wines aspiring to price levels certainly not achieved 20 years ago, meaning the best wines are excellent value compared to wines of similar quality from the Rhône, Burgundy or California.'

A distinctive feature of the tasting was the rich assortment of local white grape varieties. These include Clairette, Piquepoul, Terret Blanc and Gris, Carignan Blanc, Grenache Blanc, and Riveirenc Blanc and Gris; some saved from obscurity or even extinction.

Rhône varieties such as Marsanne, Roussanne, Bourboulenc, Araignan (also called Picardan) and Viognier, as well as Rolle (Italy's Vermentino) and Macabeu (Viura in Spain), are also increasingly widespread. For Howard-Sneyd, 'the most successful wines were Mediterranean blends'.

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While there may not yet be clear regional Languedoc white styles, the range is still impressive: from rich, complex, oaked wines to lighter, fruity wines with prices from below £10 to over £50. Clearly this is a region with opportunities for exciting discoveries.