

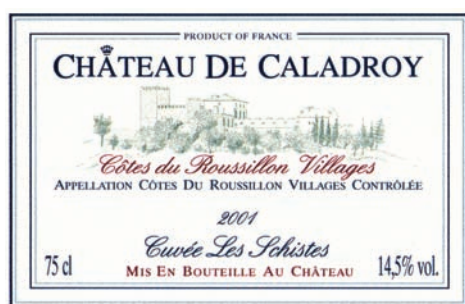
Château de Caladroy

Côtes du Roussillon-Villages



88 Château de Caladroy Côtes du Roussillon-Villages Cuvée Saint Michel 2004

"Ripe, rich and concentrated, with lovely raspberry, dark plum and cassis flavors. Fine-grained tannins, with luscious spice notes. Balanced and structured, with a lilting finish of ganache and thyme. Mourvèdre, Syrah, and Grenache. Drink now through 2011."
Wine Spectator, January 2007



In its heyday, Château de Caladroy was a small outpost high in the arid hills behind Perpignan. It had its own school, workers' quarters, stables, an elegant 19th century chapel, a manor house and other dwellings, and an ancient fortress dating from the 12th century—for Caladroy was once a fortress on the ancient Kingdom of Majorca's frontier. All of this is perched on a knoll; below, on a broad saddle of a ridge, grow the vineyards.

Although the school no longer functions and the workers' quarters lie empty except at harvest, the chateau and its surroundings are striking. You drive up from Perpignan, a city which has a whole lot more in common with Barcelona than it does with Paris, and climb winding roads into the hills where the sparsely populated land is rocky and covered with scrub hardwoods and the ever present garrigue. At the top of the last rise, the road turns onto the saddle of vineyards; at the far end, beyond a windbreak of cedars, rises the Caladroy knoll with white buildings and red clay-tiled roofs. Looming in the distance are the snow-capped Pyrenees.

This is Roussillon, the sunniest viticultural area in France, forever battered by a dry wind that sweeps off the high Pyrenees known as the tramontane. Fully exposed at over 1,000 feet above the nearby Mediterranean, Caladroy and its vineyards occupy the top of the Fenouillèdes hills, isolated between two river valleys. This altitude gives Caladroy's wines a certain measure of finesse that nicely balances their darkly concentrated flavors.

Today the vineyards have been extensively replanted, with Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre dominating. Yields here average 25hl/ha, far below the permissible 45hl/he granted the top "Côte du Roussillon-Villages" AC designation. Moreover, the cellar was completely revamped in 2001, enabling cellarmaster Jean-Philippe Agen to make some super wine. And he has, from Les Schistes to the Syrah-based La Juliane, to the luxury cuvée named Le Saint Michel, a Mourvèdre-based wine that gives top Bandol a serious run for the money. At all levels the wines of Caladroy represent unparalleled value.