

Saint Cosme, Rhône Valley

"Grace, purity, and singing fruit are three of the Barruol hallmarks..."
Andrew Jefford, *The New France*



Driven by an irrepressible curiosity, Louis Barruol, the young Turk of Gigondas, launched a micro-*négociant* enterprise in 1997 so he could try his hand in other appellations. Over the past ten years, Louis has sought out and discovered some dynamite vineyards throughout the Rhône and developed close relationships with several of the region's more meticulous growers. In addition to his Gigondas wines, Louis now makes three northern Rhône wines every year—Côte Rôtie, Saint Joseph and Condrieu—as well as

an array of other southern Rhône wines, including an extraordinary Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Today, with the *savoir-faire* of a *vigneron*, he pushes the envelope just as hard with these wines as he does with his Gigondas. A minimalist, he looks for the best *terroirs*, old vines, and fully ripe fruit; the rest, he says, is a matter of paying attention.

Northern Rhône

The following are Louis' notes:

2006 Côte-Rôtie: 100% Syrah planted on schist and granite *terroirs*. Aged 15 months in new oak and bottled without fining or filtration. "Elegance is the major word in 2006 which will remain as a good classical vintage. Our vines in the Côte-Blonde confirmed a quality improvement related to the draught of the last vintages.. All the vines around the Viaillère developed as usual their incredible typicity: sweet texture, aromas of graphite and smoked bacon. This vintage reminds me of 1998, but with more freshness. 1998 tastes very well at the moment. Côte-Rôtie 2006 will age with harmony because the grape ripening went just to the right level. Squashed lead, black currant, bacon, roasted coffee."

2006 Saint Joseph: 100% Syrah from late-ripening granite *terroir*. Aged twelve months in a combination of new (20%) and older (one to three-year-old) barrels. "Because our harvest finished in October, we managed to get a good ripening level, which was not always easy in the northern Rhône. Austerity is my enemy for St Joseph winemaking! The malolactic fermentations went well through springtime, which allowed us to run a good work in barrels. Nice structure, round tannins: it develops diverse aromatic dimensions. These various dimensions fight or combine, depending on the stage. Jasmin, rose, blackberry, wood coal. Bottled without any filtration."

2007 Condrieu: 100% Viognier from granite *terroir*. Aged eight months in a combination of new (40%) and older (one to two-year-old) barrels. "2007 definitely looked like 2006 in Condrieu: two vintages with freshness, acidity, relief and minerality. These reserves of freshness allow us to begin the ageing with confidence: a balanced *élevage*, some refined aromas, the opportunity to avoid the oversized Condrieu style. Making Condrieu is about anticipation. It is crucial to know exactly what we want before the harvest. As an informal information, 2001 and 2002 are the vintages which taste best at the moment. Grapefruit, orange skin, mango, licorice. We will bottle the wine by gravity in June 2008, after the malolactic fermentation. It will be very slightly filtered."

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Southern Rhône

2005 Châteauneuf-du-Pape: 60% Grenache; 40% Mourvèdre in La Crau and Valori; aged twenty-four months in two-to-four-year-old barrels. "The vintage 2005 was an outstanding vintage in the Rhône valley and the most impressive appellation in this vintage was probably Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Balance! Strength! Structure! Complexity! With the entire range of magical aromas from Châteauneuf! In Châteauneuf, the Mourvèdre works so well on the *galets roulés* above the red clay.. When it ripens, its shoulders, instead of being rough, get the roundness to offer a blend of strength and gentleness. For the first time I went for a 24-month ageing time and I don't regret this choice: a profound Châteauneuf needs a long ageing to get a kind of complexity which is not necessarily easy to get in bottle. Brandied cherries, squashed strawberries, truffle, thyme, black olive tapenade. Bottled without any filtration."

2007 Côtes du Rhône: 100% Syrah; aged in vats. "The *galets roulés* (rolling stones!!) from the hills in the Gard and the red clay from Vinsobres produced an exceptional quality in the vintage 2007 !! The final blend is explosive with an intense colour, a meaty texture and it's more about eating a wine than drinking it! We get some fruit, some happy aromas jumping out of the glass! How strange, it's exactly the style I am looking for. As you probably understand: I'm happy with Côtes du Rhône 2007. The work accomplished since 1997 provides few realities: by now, we only work with great *terroirs* cultivated by passionate growers motivated to work with us. When someone loves his work, Mother Nature usually gives back. The story of our Côtes du Rhône is as simple as that. You'll see that 2007 is a nice vintage in the Rhône Valley. Smoked meat, raspberry, humid forest, black pepper."

2007 Côtes du Rhône white: 30% Roussanne (red clay with gravel), 30% Viognier (limestone), 20% Marsanne (limestony sand), 10% Clairette (yellow clay in Gigondas at 400 meters altitude), 10% Picpoul de Pinet (limestony sand). Fermented in barrels and aged on the lees for five months. "As usual, we had to fight like crazy to manage to keep the alcohol level at a reasonable level. Hopefully, the clairette and the picpoul give the right balance to the final blend. The roussannes were fantastic this year and the viogniers got a great physiological ripening. I build my wine around these two grapes. They are my basements. The austere clairettes bring the structure and the picpoul some crisp acidity. The 2007 really looks like what we have been making in the last two or three years. What really changed was our every day work: vinifying in the new cellar has been absolutely great. Yellow peach, apricot, pineapple, squashed limestony rock, smoked."

2007 Little James' Basket Press - Vin de Table red - Non Vintage "Old-fashioned, almost decadent wine-making for the soul. Aged in vat. Be ready to receive the next bottles of Little James with a magnificent screwcap on the top! The wine will evolve in a better way. Little James is for us the wine of freedom. Our Solera took advantage of a new origin this year: an extraordinary Grenache origin, among the most noble ones. A great name. Shhhh, don't tell anybody, it's a secret.. The fresh violet will come back to your mind, like a song which never leaves you, like a small tight bunch of flowers announcing spring-time. Actually Little James is like our everyday life: love the beautiful things and laugh at the same time. Little James will have its own small internet site from 2008. You'll be able to find a few tons of information and a couple of funny videos. Violet, almond, oriental spices, ripe strawberry."