



## CHATEAU DE SAINT COSME

### 1st Newsletter – February 2013

Dear friends,

At the moment we bottle our 2011 wines, I transmit you a short note about this quite particular 2011 vintage.

#### **The Southern Rhone wines in 2011**

Although what we had in August can't be called a heatwave, the high temperatures at this time of the year clearly influenced the style of the wines in the southern Rhône.

Actually the acceleration of the ripening has created powerful wines: the couple Grenache + Sun can be "passionate"... The Mourvèdre and the Syrah from Gigondas adapted very well to the vintage and their co-fermentation with Grenache was more helpful than ever to find the final balance.

Finally the good yields of 2011 could be considered as a good thing because they did slow down the crazy rise of the sugar levels.

The record of precocious harvest has been broken at Saint Cosme in 2011: we had never harvested so early and we have harvest statistics since 1931.

It is as simple as that. I didn't want that the loss of balance took control of the situation, this is why I took the option to harvest not too late, which is not my usual habit !

In an extreme vintage (whatever it is a rainy or a hot one), it seems to me that we have to be flexible with our decisions relatively to what Nature proposes. The unbalanced grape is never a good idea.

So, our Gigondas 2011 will have a distinctive and different style.

The power is obvious but it is balanced by a good freshness supplied by the stems: working with full bunches was very important this year.

Of course the wines don't have the depth of the 2010 but they are as good as the 2009 and the 2004. A big proportion of the old vines of the estate were used for the cuvée classique: the quantity of Valbelle is then divided per two.

The three lieux-dits, Hominis Fides, Le Poste and Le Claux clearly show their ability to adapt to every kind of vintage.

The Gigondas wines have in common with our wines from the northern Rhône to have developed a great density over the aging in barrels. They probably needed time to "set-up themselves". Patience and time ...

In Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the weather conditions were quite similar to Gigondas, with an even quicker ripening speed. A great proportion of Mourvèdre, Syrah and Cinsaut was essential this year.

A special mention for the Cinsaut which have been extraordinary.

The Côtes-du-Rhône (Deux Albions and Côtes du Rhône) highly benefited of their high proportion of Syrah and the quality is good.

Talking about this, there is a debate that I find interesting: Grenache and Syrah, what is the best adapted grape to the hot years ?

Most winemakers from the Rhône would answer: "Grenache".

My answer is: "Syrah".

## **The Northern Rhone wines in 2011**

The story of the "North 2011" really looks like the "North 2010" story. A little light at first, they wouldn't give me a great self-confidence.

But the Crus du Nord can be magical (especially the Côte-Rôtie) and it worked once again.

The most famous example is the 1991 vintage. Sometimes it is a good idea to be patient. After a few months in barrels, the wines gain a surprising density; their terroir identity reveals with an inexorable power. Then the doubts from October are being forgotten.. Then the lightness is being transformed into a soft and intense texture.

This is when I think I know these terroirs that I discover that I don't know them. Their behaviour is sometimes difficult to understand. The Côte-Rôtie 2011 looks like the 2010: it has the charming range of aromas, between graphite, bacon, raspberry and violet. There is good balance, fruit and texture.

Our Saint Joseph is almost always a success, including in the less good years, due to our excellent source, great terroirs, great serine heritage combined to serious work. The Saint-Joseph 2011 shows a great concentration for the vintage.

In what I call the "south of the north", that is to say the Hermitage - Crozes-Hermitage area (particularly Erôme, Gervans and Larnage), 2011 is clearly an excellent success. The wines have density and depth. The way they retain themselves is a symptom of wines which have potential to age.

The Saint Cosme Crozes-Hermitage, as you maybe know, is made from the best slopes of Crozes and we never have enough wine to make everybody happy: I am sure that you'll understand that I can't make more wine of this level.

Condrieu: what a balance ! The mild weather conditions of 2011 worked really well.

Viognier doesn't like the heat, this is well known.

Just look at the great vintages of Condrieu in the last two decades: none of them is a year with a hot summer. The alcohol/acidity balance is perfect: this is a key point to have finesse and complexity in a Condrieu. This is the profile I have always supported and looked for.

