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12 Southern Rhône Values

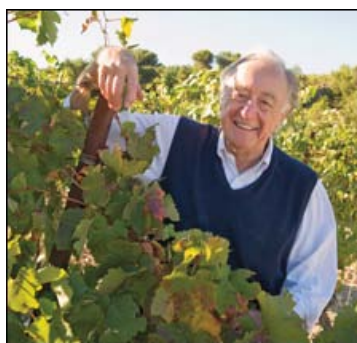
New reviews of affordable reds from France's Rhône Valley

James Molesworth

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Jon Wyand

Walter McKinlay's *Domaine de Mourchon* has a superb track record.

Both the 2011 and 2012 vintages in the Southern Rhône produced wines marked by fresh fruit, sleek textures and generally ready-to-drink personalities, though inconsistencies can be found. Both of these vintages are dominating retail shelves now, especially bottlings from the generic Côtes du Rhône and more specific Côtes du Rhône-Villages appellations, both of which are generally among the first wines to be released from the region. There are a dozen solid values listed here, nearly all checking in at under \$20 a bottle.

Walter McKinlay's *Domaine de Mourchon* has a superb track record for delivering wines with personality at a good price. Located up in the hills of Séguret, Mourchon benefits from a cooling breeze that offsets the Southern Rhône sun, marking the wines with a defining graphite edge to offset their ripe fruit. You can read more about *Domaine de Mourchon* in this [blog post from my visit there in 2012](#).

Châteauneuf-du-Pape specialist Isabel Ferrando, of *Domaine St.-Préfert*, checks in with her second vintage of Côtes du Rhône, sourced from a parcel on the southern edge of Châteauneuf-du-Pape that she bought in 2011. The wine shows her trademark style, offering silky texture, supple raspberry fruit and a lingering shiso leaf hint. It's a lovely value at under \$20. For more background, you can reference my [blog notes from a visit with Ferrando in her new vineyard back in 2011](#).

And for more on the Rhône's 2011 vintage, check out my annual tasting report in the [Nov. 30, 2013, issue of Wine Spectator](#).

DOMAINE DE MOURCHON Côtes du Rhône-Villages Séguret Grande Réserve 2011 **Score: 90 | \$26**

This is solid, with a nice core of crushed plum, blackberry and boysenberry fruit, lined with lightly briary tannins and framed by a graphite note on the finish. Drink now through 2015. 2,500 cases made. —J.M.

DOMAINE DE MOURCHON Côtes du Rhône-Villages Séguret Tradition 2011 **Score: 89 | \$19**
Ripe and polished, with nice sleek raspberry and blueberry fruit notes that combine with warm fruitcake and dark licorice through the focused finish. Drink now through 2015. 3,000 cases made. —J.M.

DOMAINE DE MOURCHON Côtes du Rhône 2011 **Score: 88 | \$14**

This shows a dark toasty edge, offering ganache and warm espresso notes that marry nicely with the fleshy

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Classifieds

core of blackberry and plum fruit., with a caressing finish. A crowd-pleaser. Drink now. 1,000 cases made. —J.M.

ANNE MARIE & JEAN LUC ISNARD Côtes du Ventoux Solence Les 3 Pères 2011

Score: 87 / \$18

Pretty violet and white pepper notes glide out from the start, with a core of silky plum and cassis fruit behind them. The long, elegant finish lets the white pepper note linger gently. Drink now. 1,200 cases made. —J.M.

DOMAINE ST.-PRÉFERT Côtes du Rhône Clos Beatus Ille 2012 Score: 87 / \$18

Ripe and direct, with raspberry and blackberry jam notes lined with a lightly singed vanilla bean hint that gives this enough spine. Opens nicely in the glass, revealing a gentle shiso leaf hint. Drink now. 150 cases imported. —J.M.

LOUIS BERNARD Côtes du Rhône Château Noël St.-Laurent 2012 Score: 86 / \$12

This has a fleshy edge, with blackberry coulis, plum sauce and gentle toast shadings. There's a hint of violet on the finish. Drink now. 1,200 cases made. —J.M.

LOUIS BERNARD Côtes du Rhône-Villages 2012 Score: 86 / \$13

Offers a racy licorice edge, with raspberry coulis and crushed plum notes. A light graphite note lines the finish. Drink now. 26,000 cases made. —J.M.

LOUIS BERNARD Côtes du Rhône-Villages Plan de Dieu Domaine du Père Hugues 2012

Score: 86 / \$15

Soft and friendly, with plum and cassis notes that show a light vanilla edge on the open-knit finish. Drink now. 16,500 cases made. —J.M.

LOUIS BERNARD Côtes du Rhône Domaine Le Garrigon Cuvée des Vieux Truffiers 2012

Score: 85 / \$14

Soft and forward, with plum and blackberry notes enlivened with a briar hint and followed by an open, easy finish. Drink now. 2,600 cases made. —J.M.

CHÂTEAU MONT-REDON Côtes du Rhône Réserve 2011 Score: 85 / \$17

A soft and friendly style, with gentle plum and blackberry notes lined with a hint of singed vanilla. Drink now. 2,000 cases imported. —J.M.

DOMAINE ROCHE-AUDRAN Côtes du Rhône-Villages Visan 2011 Score: 85 / \$20

Light but focused, with a hint of plum pit running through the currant and cherry fruit, backed by a lightly singed vanilla bean note. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now. 1,200 cases made. —J.M.

VIDAL-FLEURY Côtes du Rhône Rosé 2012 Score: 85 / \$14

Fresh and stony, with dried peach and strawberry notes that linger through the finish. Drink now. 800 cases made. —J.M.



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