



Off to France for lean and dry reds with great structure



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If you set your WABAC machine to somewhere in the early 1800s, you will discover that the wines of choice came from the South of France. Between about 1814 and 1850, the red wine of choice in the U.K. was from the Rhone. These wines were the inspiration of what is now the New World Wine style, and often the heavy lifting was carried by Syrah.

Today, the Rhone still produces dry red wines, but they are considerably leaner and drier than their Australian and North American cousins. If your palate drifts to the lean and dry (mine does) these are wines you need to be trying. They are also almost routinely organically produced, although this may not be obvious. Chapoutier and Perrin are both predominantly, if not entirely, organic and seldom bother saying so on the labels. So do many smaller vineyards.

Cote Mas is a wine from the Languedoc and slightly cheaper than the other wines listed here. (None of which are priced competitively with other provinces. Thanks, Brad!) The grapes are primarily Grenache, Carignan and Cinsault. It isn't oaked, so it offers a clean, fruity bouquet, with some hints of spice. There is enough tannin to support you all the way through your steak and buttered 'taties. This is probably the easiest drinking wine of the set, and my pick for Wine of the Week.

Louis Bernard's Cote du Rhone is about a buck more, because of course it can claim the more prestigious AOC. The bouquet is red fruit and some preserves. The palate is round with enough structure to please, and that kind happy flavour set that make Grenache and Syrah such amicable drinks. This is one of the most popular wines with winos, and for good reason. It's a solid pick for meat, pizza and casseroles. The Grenache-Syrah blend has enough residual sweetness to complement all of the above.

I'd say all of these are great dinner wines, and you should pick according to your budget and tastes. I'm likely drinking Belleruche but I'd never turn down a glass of any of them.

Wine of the Week: Cote Mas, 2015 \$16

Cotes du Rhone Perrin Reserve 2013 \$18

Chapoutier Belleruche Grenache-Syrah 2015 \$20

Louis Bernard Cotes du Rhone 2014 \$18