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MARCH 31, 2008

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# Starbound

## *Dominio de Atauta's Astonishing 2005's*

In 1999, a young Loire Valley-born winemaker headed south to Spain for a job he couldn't possibly refuse: the chance to restore Europe's largest collection of ancient ungrafted vines—many on their own roots from the time before Phylloxera. The project was Miguel Sanchez's Dominio de Atauta, and the winemaker was Bertrand Sourdis.

Working with this sea of gnarled, twisted vines, Bertrand immediately made his mark in Spanish wine. And in just his third vintage, one of his Atauta *cuveés* won a widely publicized blind tasting against the greatest wines of Spain and France, including 2000 Ch. Latour and 1994 Vega Sicilia Unico.

But Atauta's prestige has grown far beyond the startling results of a single tasting. Today, many of Spain's top sommeliers and winemakers regard Bertrand as a genius—placing his top wines within striking distance of Vega Sicilia, Pingus, L'Ermita and Erasmus. And what makes his triumph all the more amazing is the speed with which he has accomplished this.



*Dominio de Atauta*

### **Ribera del Duero's Rooftop**

The key to the greatness of Bertrand's Atauta wines can be found not only in a young man's commitment to perfection, but in a unique set of *terroirs*.

Atauta itself is located 50 miles east of the heart of Ribera del Duero, in a cooler climatic zone and at a much higher elevation: one kilometer above sea level. In fact, Bertrand poetically describes Atauta

as "sitting on the rooftop of Ribera." But even within Atauta, there are 32 different soil types, each of which he has studied exhaustively. The two things the soils have in common are their poverty and the concentration of sand that has kept Phylloxera away for the 150 years since it invaded Europe.

### **A Great Vintage**

Atauta's vines range in age from 60 to 160 years old. Like the other old vineyards in Ribera del Duero, they are Tempranillo or *Tinto Fino*, but because of their great age, they are genetically unique to this area.

Bertrand farms them biodynamically, and in 2005 these ancient vines produced incredibly perfect fruit: very small berries of great concentration and off-the-charts dry extract. The weather was providentially hot and dry, with just enough rain to keep the vines hydrated. And cooler nights allowed for longer hang-time than in 2004, enhancing the grapes' phenolic maturity and expressiveness. ►

### *Update on the Early Atautas*

As Jay Miller observes in the latest *Wine Advocate*, Atauta is built to age ... and age it does—*spectacularly*. Those RWC customers who bought Atauta from the start have been rewarded with magically evolving bottles. If you were fortunate enough to buy the first Atautas, the 2000 and 2001, check out the richness and complexity that is unfolding.

# RIBERA DEL DUERO

## Atauta's Great 2005s

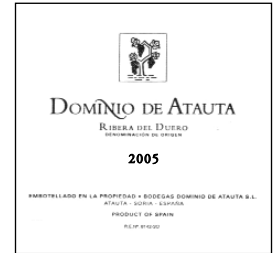
► In 2005, as in 2004, Bertrand produced four *cuvées*. The first is the flagship “Dominio de Atauta,” made from selected parcels of ancient vines within the estate. He also made single-parcel

*cuvées* from the three sites that he considers most profound: La Mala, Llanos del Almendro and Valdegatiles. It's an honor to offer all four of these remarkable wines.

*2005 Atauta:  
a monumental  
wine at an  
astonishingly  
low price*

### 2005 Dominio de Atauta \$39.95

Jay Miller: “92 rating ... offers an alluring array of mineral, black cherry, blackberry, and blueberry pie scents. This leads to a structured, balanced, tight wine that will require 6-8 years of cellaring.”



### La Mala

*54 bottles  
shipped to  
the U.S.*



The 100+ year old vines in La Mala appear to be a unique clone of Tempranillo. No one knows for sure the origin of the name (“the bad”), but it probably relates to the compact, dense grape clusters, which must have been a nightmare for earlier *vinicultores*. But for Bertrand Sourdis, it's a dream: the miniscule yields producing intensely concentrated, superbly balanced fruit that is nearly black in color.

**2005 La Mala**  
**95 Wine Advocate**  
**\$125.00**

Jay Miller: “Aromas of mineral, blackberry, and new oak can be discerned and the fruit is ripe and sweet. However, this blockbuster is in need of 15-20 years of cellaring. In short, this is not a wine for those unable to delay gratification. This is a true *vin de garde*.”

### Valdegatiles

*114 bottles  
shipped to  
the U.S.*



This is the fifth vintage for Valdegatiles. Grown mostly on sand, the vines range in age from 80 to 160 years old and are all ungrafted. Such vines—combined with Atauta's unique microclimate—produce a wine of unparalleled depth.

**2005 Valdegatiles**  
**94 Wine Advocate**  
**\$125.00**

Jay Miller: “From a single site on the estate with ungrafted vines over 100 years old .... Notes of cedar, saddle leather, mineral, blackberry, and black cherry are enticing. This leads to a wine with huge structure but excellent balance. The wine is intense, layered, and very long but it demands 12-15 years of cellaring.”



### Llanos del Almendro

*114 bottles shipped to the U.S.*

Llanos debuted as a single-vineyard *cuvée* in 2001 and Bertrand believes that it is the finest *terroir* in the valley. The soils contain more limestone and clay, and this gives the wines the density of La Mala, but with even more aromatic intensity. In many ways, this is a perfect synthesis of the other wines' styles. A very great wine.

**2005 Llanos del  
Almendro**  
**96 Wine Advocate**  
**\$165.00**

Jay Miller: “... gobs of sweet fruit, complex aromas and flavors, and a very long finish ... This is a true *vin de garde* that will require much patience but in the end, it will be rewarded.”

# T O R

## *A Napa Valley Veteran Launches a Hot New Cult Label*

In 1977 when Tor Kenward arrived, Napa Valley had one foot in its sleepy past and the other in a future of unimagined success.

He'd just taken a job in the front office at the old Beringer winery—joining Ed Sbragia who'd been hired to one day replace the legendary Myron Nightingale as winemaker. Little did Tor know that within 25 years, Beringer and Napa Valley would become two of the biggest names in American business and culture.

But in 2002, at the age of 54, he decided to start afresh, creating his own collection of hand-crafted, small-lot wines, each from an extraordinary Napa Valley vineyard. He named the series "Tor," and the excitement it's generating is palpable.

### **Destiny**

Tor was certainly well-equipped for his new role. While at Beringer, he not only got to know most of the valley's vineyards and their owners, he also earned a degree in viticulture. And he gained the respect of Robert Parker and other critics, having conducted all the Beringer tastings for more than a decade.

As his winemaker, Tor has tapped the gifted young Jeff Ames, whose own Rudius Syrah will be offered later in these pages. Jeff shares Tor's philosophy of letting "great vineyards produce great wines." The



*To Kalon near the turn of the last century.*

grapes are picked cold at dawn and crushed cold, and fermentation is with indigenous yeasts. The mostly Taransaud barrels are custom-made and the wine is minimally racked over 21 months of aging.

### **To Kalon**

The ultimate prize in Tor's portfolio is his To Kalon Cabernet, from a site historically regarded as California's greatest Cabernet vineyard. Here, a gravelly soil and gentle slope combine to create wine that is magically balanced between power and finesse.

Originally planted in the 1860s, and an icon in subsequent decades, To Kalon's supernal fruit came to be underutilized by Beaulieu Vineyards and Mondavi. But in 1993, BV sold 89 acres from To Kalon's tenderloin to the great vineyardist Andy Beckstoffer, who has meticulously restored the site to its former splendor. The fact that there is a Tor "To Kalon" Cabernet is a measure of Beckstoffer's respect for Tor Kenward.

### **This Offer**

Tor has generously given The Rare Wine Co. a small, but prized, allocation of his three best 2005s: **To Kalon Cabernet**, **Cimarossa Cabernet** and **Torchiana Chardonnay**. This is remarkable because he makes so little of these wines. Needless to say, this is a ground-floor opportunity. But you'll need to hurry.

### **2005 Cabernet 'To Kalon'**

**96 Parker**

**\$125.00**

**14 barrels made.** Parker: "A magnificent effort ... reminiscent of a Bordeaux Pauillac. Cedar wood, crème de cassis, licorice, and spice box aromas soar from the glass of this opaque ruby/purple-colored cuvée. With fabulous fruit, intensity, full-bodied power, authoritative richness, and multiple flavor dimensions, this is a blockbuster."

### **2005 Cabernet**

**'Cimarossa'**

**93 Parker**

**\$75.00**

**24 barrels made.** Parker: "Dominated by minerals, tannins, and earthiness ... it exhibits sweet black raspberry and blackberry fruit along with crushed rock, white flower, and spice characteristics ... it will benefit from several years of bottle age and should drink well for two decades."

### **2005 Chardonnay**

**'Cuvée Torchiana'**

**94-96 Parker**

**\$59.95**

**5 barrels made.** Parker: "... another Old Wente clone of Chardonnay made from a cool climate site. It exhibits lovely notes of caramelized tropical fruits, lemon oil, orange blossoms, and nectarines ... there is only a subtle hint of new oak in this full-bodied, long white. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years."

# Il Caberlot

## *A Tuscan Icon Scales Monumental New Heights in 2004*


Until late 2005, not an ounce had ever been offered for sale to America. Bottled only in magnums and double magnums, just two *enotecas* in Tuscany get any, and restaurant allocations are limited to the likes of Paris' 3-star L'Ambroisie and Florence's Il Cibreo. Members of Florence's elite Teatro del Sale can buy one magnum per year, a privilege handed down from generation to generation.

Today, two years after we were honored to be named its first-ever American importer, Il Caberlot remains inaccessible to all but a few insiders. With only about 200 magnums allocated to the U.S., how could it be otherwise? Yet demand for this rarity has suddenly skyrocketed, thanks to Antonio Galloni's rapturous tasting report last May on *erobertparker.com*.

The cornerstone of Galloni's report was his note for the **2004 Il Caberlot**—the highest-rated wine in his vertical tasting that went back to Caberlot's first vintage, 1988. Now, nearly a year later, this legend-in-the-making has finally arrived, accompanied by its superb second label, **2004 Carnasciale**. Both wines are not to be missed.

### Providence on the Arno

As we explained in our first Il Caberlot feature in Sep-

 "Caberlot is every bit deserving of its status as one of Italy's great cult wines. Consumers owe it to themselves to check out this highly singular wine ...."  
Antonio Galloni

tember 2005, the Caberlot grape is a unique genetic clone that possesses characteristics of both Cabernet and Merlot. Agronomist Remigio Bordini discovered the grape in the 1960s, and refused all requests for cuttings until 1986, when enologist Vittorio Fiore convinced him that a rocky, southfacing bluff above Tuscany's Arno River would be a perfect place to grow it.

The site was owned by a German couple, Bettina and Wolf Rogosky, and to limit yields, Fiore planted the site at a then-revolutionary 10,000 vines per hectare. As if to presage Il Caberlot's future, the Rogoskys buried a bottle of Sassicaia under the first vine.

From the first vintage, 1988, Il Caberlot has been a huge cult wine in Europe, its scarcity driven by nature and the vineyard's size of less than an acre. As Antonio writes: "Signora Rogosky is very particular in deciding who receives an allocation of Caberlot. She personally hand numbers the bottles and keeps track of their owners in a small notebook."

If one needed any proof of the Caberlot grape's soaring potential, they will find it in the glorious 2004 Il Caberlot and its little brother 2004 Carnasciale. But you'll need to act fast.

### 2004 Il Caberlot

95 Antonio Galloni

**\$275.00 mag. \$595.00 3-liter**



Antonio Galloni: "All class and elegance, the stunning 2004 Caberlot presents expressive, exotic aromatics and layers of black currants and blueberries buttressed by prominent mineral notes on an ample frame with fine tannins. Showing plenty of structure as well as stuffing, it should offer its most rewarding drinking beginning around age ten, so patience will be required."

### 2004 Carnasciale

90 Antonio Galloni

**\$49.95 bottle**



Antonio Galloni: "A great introduction to the wines of this estate. It is a gorgeous, open-knit effort that reveals notes of herbs, menthol, roasted espresso beans and sweet dark fruit on a medium-bodied frame, displaying excellent length, fine tannins and a lingering note of sweetness on the finish. Made in a more accessible style than Caberlot, Carnasciale is sure to provide more immediate pleasure than the estate's 'Grand Vin.'"

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## RHONE VALLEY

# Chave: The Full Monty

Few who cherish the power and perfume of classically made Hermitage would argue that the greatest red *and* white examples emerge from the Chave family cellars. It was consistently the case throughout the 1990s and it is proving so in the new Millennium.

Since early 2006, when word first began to leak out about a monumental 2005 vintage in the Northern

*"(2005 Hermitage) should rank among the great Chave vintages."  
"Chave believes that his 2005 Hermitage blanc is a wine for the ages."  
— Josh Reynolds*

Rhône, collectors have been salivating over the thought of how great 2005 Chave Hermitage and Hermitage Blanc must be. Now that the wines have been released, those dreams have become reality. The two wines are truly the stuff of legend.

Of course, demand for Chave's two iconic wines grows with each passing year and so our annual allocation is stretched increasingly thin. Fair warning.

**2005 Chave Hermitage**  
**97+ Josh Reynolds**  
**\$275.00 limited**



**2005 Chave Hermitage Blanc**  
**97 Josh Reynolds**  
**\$259.00 limited**

J. Reynolds in Tanzer's *IWC*: "Hugely aromatic bouquet of red and dark berries, cherry, Asian spices, fresh flowers, minerals and cured meat; smells like a great grand cru from Vosne-Romanée but with a wilder side. Flat-out gorgeous wine ... seems to actually expand on the finish ... leaving a sweet trail of smoky red fruits behind." Also: ★★★★★ *John Livingstone-Learmonth*.

J. Reynolds in Tanzer's *IWC*: "Fabulously complex nose ... this has the texture of a serious red wine, offering dense, chewy pear, yellow plum and peach skin flavors and picking up licorice and toasted nuts on the long, sappy finish, which ends with a whiplash of smoky minerals. Does this ever let up? An incredible young wine." Also: ★★★★★ *John Livingstone-Learmonth*.

## Chave's 2005 St. Joseph Offerus

With demand for his Hermitage far outstripping supply, Jean-Louis Chave's St. Joseph "Offerus" is a gift.

The wine's origins date back 100 years, when the Chave family's vines were mostly in St. Joseph. Since then, they have always enjoyed friendships among the growers there, who are the source of this wine.

Jean-Louis combines parcels from nine growers, producing one of St. Joseph's most expressive red wines. Aged for just over a year in seasoned barrels, the 2005 Offerus is a must-buy in this great year.

**2005 St. Joseph "Offerus"**  
**91 Josh Reynolds**  
**\$27.95**



Josh Reynolds: "Deep red. Explosive aromas of vibrant strawberry, raspberry and kirsch, with a subtle licorice undertone ... seductively sweet and nicely framed by velvety tannins. Finishes with very persistent red fruits and gentle, sappy grip."

## Chave's 2006 "Mon Coeur"

It's hard to believe that this is the eighth vintage for this celebrated wine—the first appellation "Côtes du Rhône" wine in Chave's 500 years as *vignerons*. Like Offerus, Mon Coeur is made with grapes provided by family friends, but in this case the vineyards are all in Southern Rhône. And as in St. Joseph, the growers were chosen for their low yields and the exceptional quality of their fruit.

The 2006 Mon Coeur rivals anything made prior to this: given its low price, it is simply stunning for its richness and complexity. Not to be missed.

**2006 "Mon Coeur"**  
**88-91 Josh Reynolds**  
**\$18.95 bt. \$225.00 cs.**



Josh Reynolds: "... blackberry aromas and flavors ... Weighty, chewy and powerful ... good finishing thrust ... a long, sweet finish."

# Pure 'G'enius

## *The Sensational Dry White Wine of Sauternes' Ch. Guiraud*

Ever since Ch. d'Yquem unlocked the secret of *botrytis* 200 years ago, Sauternes has been sweet wine country. Yet, a few châteaux, including Yquem, make serious dry white wines from the same vineyards.



*Ch. Guiraud in the 1800s.*

While Yquem's "Y" has recently ridden the *grand vin's* coattails to a shocking \$250 price, happily it's not the only game in town. One of Sauternes' most interesting dry whites comes from Yquem's back fence neighbor, Guiraud, which years ago also gave its initial, "G," to a dry white wine. Today, despite the insanity of much Bordeaux pricing, "G" remains stunningly good—and stunningly low-priced.

### History's Tie-In

Guiraud is among Sauternes' most historic estates, and its history has a direct bearing on the existence of "G". The château itself takes its name from its owner in the 1760s, Pierre Guiraud. Several changes of ownership later, in 1855 the estate was classified a *premier cru*, and by 1869 it had climbed to fourth place, with a selling price nearly equal to that of Yquem.

Guiraud remained one of Sauternes' elite properties until the Depression, when under the ownership of a M. Rival, 40 years of neglect left the château and vineyards in ruins. By the 1970s, things got so bad that M. Rival replanted much of the vineyards with Sauvignon Blanc, seriously undermining the classic cépage of 75% Semillon and 25% Sauvignon Blanc.

Though Rival sold the estate a few years later, this imbalance remained. And so the new owner, Hamilton Narby, seized on the idea of complement-

ing the sweet wine with a dry white whose cépage is 70% Sauvignon and 30% Semillon.

### Barrel Fermented

Today's incarnation of "G" was first made by Narby's winemaker Xavier Planty in 1988, fermented in barriques that had held

Guiraud's Sauternes for two vintages. Still the wine-maker today, Planty preserves "G's" acidity by blocking malolactic fermentation, and he gives the wine six months in barrique.

As evidenced by the **97-point** Wine Spectator rating for its 2005 Sauternes, Guiraud is back on top—under the new ownership of Planty, Olivier Bernard of Domaine de Chevalier, Count Stephan von Neipperg of Canon La Gaffelière, and Robert Peugeot of the car family. And "G" has risen to new heights as well.

We had the chance to taste the 2006 "G" a few weeks ago and bought a pallet on the spot. This wine has one of the greatest price-quality ratios in the world today. You won't want to miss it.

### 2006 "G"

**\$19.95** *bt.* **\$230.00** *cs.*



Beautifully mineral with wonderfully juicy, bright, well-focused fruit, thanks to the fresh and invigorating acidity. The Semillon component shines through with rich flavors of honey, beeswax and grilled nuts. If it reminds you of white Graves, that could be because Graves is a stone's throw from the Guiraud vineyards. For anyone looking for a complex, refreshing summer white that won't break the bank, here it is.

## *Elegance in a Bottle: 2005 Chandon de Briailles Corton-Bressandes*

**2005 Chandon  
de Briailles  
Corton-Bressandes  
92 Burghound  
\$110.00**

*Burghound:* "As it often is, the nose is more elegant though more reserved with refined red pinot fruit and obvious minerality that continues onto the sweet, rich, precise and firm flavors that possess good vibrancy and excellent finishing punch and length. This is very firmly structured and crafted in an understated, 'built to age' style."



# PIEDMONT & CAMPANIA

## The Soul of its Soil

### *Burlotto's 'Monvigliero' Defines Terroir and the Magic of 2003 Old-Style Barolo*

In the late 1800s, when Giovan Battista Burlotto decided to buy vineyards in Barolo, he had his pick of the greatest sites. In the end he chose two: Cannubi, the region's most prestigious *cru* since the 1750s, and Verduno's south-facing Monvigliero.



Monvigliero

Burlotto's Barolos from Monvigliero were so revered that this became his iconic vineyard—not Cannubi. But after his death in 1927, Monvigliero faded from view. It was not until Burlotto's great-great-grandson Fabio Alessandrio took over in 1996 that the vineyard began to become known again.

We first wrote about Monvigliero last year, urging our customers to experience Fabio's 2001. Many of you took our advice and have relished the black olive tapenade bouquet and creamy texture that separate Monvigliero from every other Barolo made.

Now, with the release of the beautiful 2003, we ask you to take our advice again. Like other "old style" 2003s, Monvigliero is a dream come true: classically structured and nuanced, but captivating to drink today.

#### Secrets of the Ancients

Fabio is a classicist, still macerating the skins for two months, a practice that otherwise died out in the 1980s. But he also treads the grapes by foot, giving the wine its silken texture. (Foot treading doesn't break the seeds or stems, avoiding the bitterness and hard

tannins that can result from mechanical extraction.)

Fabio's wine also has the black olive tapenade bouquet that made his great-great-grandfather's 'Monvigliero' the most celebrated Barolo of its day. In fact, if there were ever any doubt that this nuance comes from the soil, we have now tasted eight vintages back to 1989, and the black olive character is in every glass—a quality we *never* find in other Barolos.

With so much of wine's history and *terroirs* now thoroughly traversed—and *great* wines steeped in history increasingly inaccessible—it sometimes seems that there are few discoveries left to be made. This is a blessed exception. Don't miss it.

**2003 Burlotto Barolo**  
**"Monvigliero"**  
**\$47.95**



The intense perfume of black olive tapenade, tar, cherry blossom, truffle, clove and incense screams that something unique is in your glass. In the mouth, the wine expands to fill every corner, but there is also a gentleness and sublime delicacy. It revels in the miracle that is old-style 2003 Barolo: despite its size, it has exquisite balance and a sweetness that normally takes Barolo years to acquire. We've never seen a year quite like it. Even if you normally drink your Barolo much older, you'll want to pull some corks *now*.

## Terra di Lavoro

*"One of Italy's top cult wines ... often profound." Antonio Galloni*

To many, Terra di Lavoro is an apparition. With tiny production, stratospheric ratings and high prices, it can be nearly impossible to find. And the great 2004 may prove to be among the most elusive ever.

This 80/20 blend of Aglianico and Piedirosso grown in Campania's volcanic soils offers dizzying levels of concentration and richness. Just reviewed by Antonio Galloni, the market price is already north of \$120, making our price possibly the lowest in America.

**2004 Terra di Lavoro**  
**95 Antonio Galloni**  
**\$95.00**

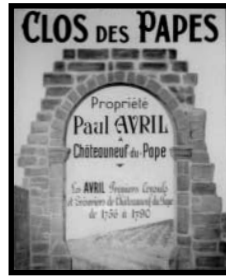


Antonio Galloni in *The Wine Advocate*: "... compelling, beguiling aromas of ash, tar, smoke and spices that lead to waves of dark fruit that coat the palate with superb intensity and depth. Structured and seamless ... a joyous wine ... profound."

# When Old is New

## *Clos des Papes' Heroic 2006 Fires CDP's Classicist Revival*

Lovers of old-style wines have to be feeling pretty good right about now. Everywhere in Europe you look—from Burgundy to Italy to the Rhône—classicists like Roumier, Freddie Mugnier, Giacosa, Giacomo Conterno, Soldera and Chave are at the top of their games. And their wines have the real star power, eclipsing the ingenues who a decade ago promised to take over the world of wine.



*An old advertising poster in Clos des Papes' cellars.*

Shining brightly in this firmament is Clos des Papes, perhaps the greatest success story of all. While the aforementioned producers never lacked in critical or market support, Clos des Papes was for decades the overlooked old-style jewel in Châteauneuf du Pape, always losing out in popular opinion to Beaucastel and Rayas.

Today, of course, the tables are turned, and Clos des Papes is, along with Henri Bonneau, the superstar of the Southern Rhône. Having long made great Châteauneufs that were known only to followers, Clos des Papes is now an icon. The Avril family's traditional approach to winemaking is back in fashion, and the consistent magic of recent Clos des Papes has made it the go-to Châteauneuf-du-Pape for classicists.

### **Business as Usual**

Little has changed at this old family domaine. Vincent has taken over from his father Paul, and he has installed temperature control in the barrel aging room, but new wood and extract are still downplayed, the vineyards are still old, and there continues to be

only one red and one white cuvée produced—making Clos des Papes one of the last holdouts in the rush to create luxury Châteauneufs.

But what goes around comes around. Today, Clos des Papes is in the middle of a formidable run of vintages, of which the 2006 could be the best of all. As usual, it is a blend of *all* the estate's best and oldest vines, with a healthy percentage of Mourvèdre. Not a drop was removed to feed a barrique-aged luxury cuvée.

The 2006 Clos des Papes rouge promises not only to be one of the elite wines of a great vintage, it is still the hands-down best value among the top wines. We are pleased to offer this legend-in-the-making at a sensational price. Don't miss it.

### **2006 Clos des Papes Châteauneuf du Pape\* 96-98 Parker**

**\$99.95 bottle \$215.00 mag.**  
**\$57.50 half bottle \$650.00 jero.**



Parker: "Opulent, full-bodied, and lush ... with a sweet nose of framboise, raspberries, garrigue, spice box, and earth, the wine is gorgeously concentrated, with low acidity, and very ripe but high tannins. The overall impression is one of opulence, generosity, and a sexy, hedonistic style of Châteauneuf du Pape that puts it among the very finest of the vintage ... This remains one of the irrefutable reference point estates for traditional Châteauneuf du Pape."

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