

Rhône Valley

- Named after the Rhône River (which actually stretches from Switzerland down to the Mediterranean), though the wine region refers to the clusters of vineyards on both of its banks in southern France
- Main red grapes are Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre
- Main white grapes are Viognier, Marsanne and Roussanne
- Marked differences in climate and viticultural practices between northern Rhône and southern Rhône appellations
- Southern Rhône's Châteauneuf-du-Pape was first *appellation d'origine contrôlée*

1) **Éric Texier Brézème Roussanne '11 – Côtes du Rhône, France**

- Côtes du Rhône is a large appellation for the entire Rhône Valley
- Côtes du Rhône covers red, white and rosé, though most are from the southern Rhône and Grenache-based
- However, this is 100% Roussanne from a small, “at one point nearly lost” vineyard in the northern Rhône (the vineyard produces Syrah as well)
- Soil is rocky with *galets roulés*, the region's famous large, rounded stones
- Roussanne has characteristic floral, herbal tea and orchard fruit notes
- Éric Texier is highly praised for his support of underdog vineyards and non-interventionist winemaking; almost never uses sulfur, copper or plowing

2) **Domaine de Montvac '11 – Côtes du Rhône, France**

- This is from the southern Rhône and is mostly “declassified,” young vine Gigondas and Vacqueyras (other southern Rhône appellations) meant to be drunk sooner
- Classic southern Rhône blend of 75% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 5% Mourvèdre
- Domaine de Montvac has been passed from mother to daughter for three generations
- Today run by Cécile Dusserre, on what they call a “particularly tormented geological site” and includes plateaus of red clay with large rounded pebbles and steep terraces



3) **Domaine Gour de Chaulé '06 – Gigondas, France**

- Gigondas is a small appellation in southern Rhône that was formerly part of the overall Côtes du Rhône appellation; it's differentiated by its red clay alluvial soils
- Southern Rhône is much warmer, influenced by the mistral wind and the local *garrigue* scrubland that tends to contribute aromatics to the wines
- Mostly red wines, mostly from the Grenache grape, with some Syrah and Mourvèdre
- This is 80% Grenache with 10% Syrah and 10% Mourvèdre
- Gour de Chaulé is today run by fourth-generation Stéphanie Fumoso; previously wines were made by her grandmother and her mother

4) **Domaine Faury '09 – St. Joseph, France**

- St. Joseph is a very large, long region running along the west side of the Rhône River
- Whites and reds allowed but mostly reds are made; from the Syrah grape with up to 10% Marsanne and Roussanne blended in or co-fermented
- Quality and style can vary greatly based on soil type, microclimate, vintage, producer
- Soil type is schist and gneiss over granite bedrock
- Domaine Faury is run by father and son Philippe and Lionel; they do not fine the wines and only lightly filter them, never use new oak

5) **Domaine Entrefaux '10 – Crozes-Hermitage, France**

- Crozes-Hermitage is a large appellation in the northern Rhône, basically an extension of the more prestigious, steeply terraced Hermitage appellation
- Whites and reds allowed but mostly reds are made; from the Syrah grape with up to 15% Marsanne and Roussanne blended in or co-fermented
- Co-fermentation means whites are fermented at same time and in same vessel as the reds; this adds aromatics, helps set the color and moderates overall tannin structure
- Soil type is granitic slopes or alluvial soils
- Domaine Entrefaux farms organically and practices some biodynamic techniques

6) **Bernard Levet La Chavaroche '04 – Côte-Rôtie, France**

- Côte-Rôtie is most northerly and one of most prestigious northern Rhône appellations
- Super-steep granite and schist slopes; must be manually harvested
- Almost all Syrah, though up to 20% Viognier can be blended in or co-fermented
- Two main “sub-sections”: Côte Brune (said to be stronger, more assertive) and Côte Blonde (said to be softer, more elegant in structure)
- Bernard Levet admired as one of the “traditionalists” of the appellation making a more structured, age-worthy style; he works with his wife Nicole and their daughter, Agnes

