

AURIC PACIFIC FINE WINES

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On Chateauneuf-du-Pape <*New Castle of the Pope* when translated literally>

Robert Parker Jr. once commented, “Chateauneuf-du-Pape has the potential to consistently produce some of the finest and longest-lived red wines in the world”

Chateauneuf-du-Pape has one of the most magnificent *terrior*, an unbelievable percentage of very-old vines; and an exquisite microclimate that produces fine wines with glorious, expansive perfume, sumptuous texture and heady alcohol content.

Chateauneuf-du-Pape derives its name from the rich history of the area, with a close proximity to the city of Avignon. When Clement V was installed as Pope in 1305, he moved the papacy to Avignon. (Pope Clement was no stranger to vineyard operations, having planted the famous Graves vineyard, *Chateau Pape-Clement*). Subsequently, Pope Clement’s successor, Pope John XXII, built a summer residence in the area hence derives the name.

Following World War I, many growers were forced to abandon their vineyards; Chateauneuf-du-Pape then fell into low regard due to overproduction. Those excess grapes and processed wine were then sold (in bulk) to Burgundy producers, who, with the small amount addition of this Southern Rhone wine, transformed an acidic, sharp and diluted burgundy into a textural wine.

In the early 1920’s, led by the late Baron Le Roy, series of controls for improving the quality and image of Chateauneuf-du-Pape were implemented. Those self-imposed guidelines subsequently became the basis for the French *appellation controlee (AOC) system*.



Castle ruin in Châteauneuf-du-Pape

On Domaine André Brunel, Chateauneuf-du-Pape

The Brunel estate of *Les Cailloux* at *Chemin du Bois de la Ville* was established in 1919, and was named after the famous *galet roulés* (large stones) found in the vineyards of Châteauneuf. The Brunel family has lived in the area since the 18th century, although André's grandfather was the first in the family to turn his hand to winemaking and the tradition has continued since. André joined his father in 1971 and, during his career as a *Vigneron*, has turned *Les Cailloux* into a world-class domaine.

2000 Domaine André Brunel, CDP les Cailloux “Cuvée Centenaire” \$298.00

The Cuvée Centenaire is one of the world's most compelling red wines. It is produced primarily from a plot of ancient Grenache vines that were planted in 1889. This magnificent red is made of Grenache (80% of the blend), together with younger vine of Syrah (8%) and Mourvedre (12%), all aged 18 months in oak casks. It is tempting to say this is a modern-styled Chateauneuf du Pape. Though the use of barriques puts it in that category, there is no noticeable new oak in this wine; nevertheless, the wood provides structure and delineation. The Centenaire has been produced in 1989, 1990, 1995, 1998, 2000, and 2001. My personal favorites are the 1998 and 1990, but the 1989 still has not hit full maturity. Moreover, the 2000 and 2001 are both phenomenal efforts. Life's too short not to experience at least one bottle of Andre Brunel's Cuvée Centenaire!

Robert Parker 96pts

2005 Domaine André Brunel, CDP les Cailloux “Cuvée Centenaire” \$338

The blockbuster 2005 Chateauneuf du Pape Cuvée Centenaire, which is 80% Grenache (from the aforementioned vineyard planted in 1889 in the sector of Chateauneuf du Pape known as Fauguerol), and the rest 20% Syrah and Mourvedre aged in small barrels, is normally a 600-case cuvee, but in 2005, because of the low yields, it's around 400 cases. Brunel thinks this is the best cuvee he has made of this particular wine since 1998. It is a wine of great intensity, beautifully sweet creme de cassis notes and cherry liqueur intermixed with licorice, incense, flowers, and a subtle hint of smoke. Full-bodied, opulent, and rich, with huge layers of fruit and remarkable concentration and purity, this

is always one of the great Chateauneuf du Papes, and it is certainly that in 2005. **Robert Parker 95 pts**

On Domaine du Clos du Caillou, Chateauneuf-du-Pape

This Domaine produces a stunning range of top quality Côtes du Rhône and three outstanding Châteauneuf-du-Papes. The Domaine is located in the north east of the appellation between Rayas and Beaucastel. They have just 8.5 ha of Châteauneuf-du-Pape planted on soils including sand and galets rous and 45 ha of Côtes du Rhône adjacent to Châteauneuf on the same soils.

Leading the domaine, was the talented up and coming young winemaker, Jean-Denis Vacheron, who learnt his winemaking skills from the leading estates at *Sancerre, Loire Valley*.

In 2001, an untimely tragic struck the domaine, Jean-Denis Vacheron whose 2001 Reserve scored the magical 100 points from Parker, was killed in traffic accident.

The classic wine made by Jean-Denis, whose dedication to quality lives on.

2000 Domaine du “Clos du Caillou” Chateauneuf du Pape Reserve \$488.00

Possibly the wine of the vintage is the 2000 Chateauneuf du Pape Reserve Le Clos du Caillou. I tasted this wine four times from bottle, and it has blown away some tough competition. A wealth of fruit, power, and balance, amazing purity, and a sumptuous, 65-second finish are the stuff of legends. As usual, it is a blend of 45% Grenache, 40% Mourvedre, and the rest Syrah as well as miscellaneous varietals. The Mourvedre must be picked incredibly ripe as there is never any of that grape's astringency or toughness. However, being an anti-oxidant varietal, I am sure this is a sign of how much aging potential these wines possess. This is an enormous, well-delineated, superb wine. **Robert Parker 99pts**

Readers lucky enough to find any should not hesitate to buy as much as they can of the flagship wine, the Chateauneuf du Pape Reserve Le Clos du Caillou. Over the last four years, every vintage has flirted with perfection.

Also available:

2005 Pierre Usseglio Chateauneuf du Pape **\$59.00 Robert Parker 94pts**

2003 Pierre Usseglio Chateauneuf du Pape Reserve des Deux Freres **\$328.00 Robert Parker 98pts (Limited)**

2003 Pierre Usseglio Chateauneuf du Pape Cuvée de Mon Aieul **\$165.00 Robert Parker 97pts (Limited)**

1998 Pere Pape Chateauneuf du Pape Crau du Mere **\$189.00 Robert Parker 92pts (Limited)**

2003 Vieille Julienne Chateauneuf du Pape Rouge **\$69** *Robert Parker 92pts (Limited)*

2003 Vieille Julienne Chateauneuf du Pape Rouge 1.5L **\$139** *Robert Parker 92pts (Limited)*