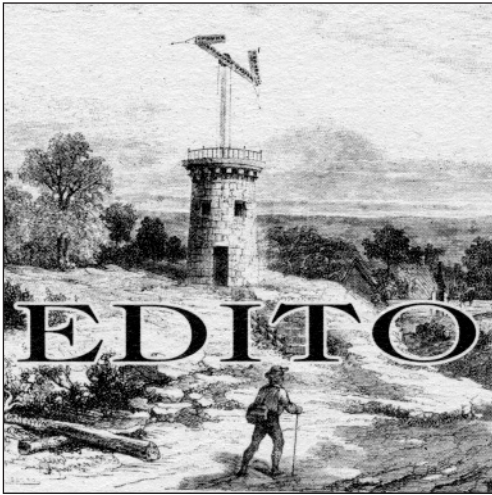


SÉMAPHORE

N°1 - NOV.DEC 1994

THE NEWSLETTER OF LE VIEUX TÉLÉGRAPHE AND DOMAINE LA ROQUETTE



We live increasingly frantic lives, with our "heads down on the handlebars" for most of the day, doing our best to ensure that every one of our businesses, large and small, rounds off the financial year in the best of health so that our products are the best or most beautiful, but should we remember more often to spend time telling all of those who have confidence in us what we really do?

And more particularly, do we vigneron, stuck between our vats and tractors, take enough time to introduce you to the last vintage or the one coming on to the market, to tell you about a new wine, a change in presentation, to inform you about the life of our appellation, to comment on a vinifying experiment... all in all, about everything that goes to make us true partners and not just companies who swop invoices for order forms and vice versa.

SÉMAPHORE intends to play this rôle twice a year for you, the Brunier vineyards' professional partners, at two high points in the vigneron's life: just after vinification, when he looks back on the harvest, and in springtime, always a magical moment in both the vineyard and the deepest of cellars.

What could be more natural than for "a child" of Claude Chappe (who invented the optical telegraph in 1794) to pass on the message?

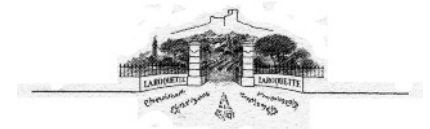
1994 VINTAGE ! TREASURE WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED

Between January and September 1994, the entire Rhône valley enjoyed ideal climactic conditions for the vegetative development of the vine: a reasonably mild, though rainy, winter, which partly offset the perennial dearth of water; an early spring, which also enjoyed a good dousing, thus adding to the water stored in the subsoil, so precious to the plant during the summer season; and finally a particularly hot summer from 20th June to 30th August, interspersed with 3 bursts of rain to favour a harmonious ripening of the grapes. This heavensent climate prompted the buds to burst very early, flowering between about 7 to 14 days ahead of normal (depending on the area), and the start of the harvest stretching from 29th August to 10th September. It was the latter half of September which proved decisive for the overall quality of the 94 vintage. From mid-September onwards, the weather took a definite turn for the worse: rain beat down on the whole valley, causing quite appreciable disparities in terms of quality between the zones that harvested early and late, between South and North. The red wines, from from the first part of the crop (about 60%), are sumptuous: beautiful colours, superbly expressed fruit and concentrated tannins, very mature and well-integrated; the whites, too, boast particularly forceful fruit, fat and rich. The later harvests gave rise to wines whose fruit tended to dominate a slightly diluted structure and richness. At Châteauneuf-du-Pape, these two periods are clearly apparent as one moves from East to West. The Domaines in the Eastern half were privileged to be able to start harvesting very early and therefore took advantage of the first fortnight in September to cellar quite gorgeous grapes, perfectly ripe and with a taste of rare strength. The vigneron couldn't recall Le Vieux Télégraphe ever beginning the harvest in August. In 1994 it started on the 29th. The result was superb: syrahs with aromas of an intensity only to be found, usually, in the Northern Rhône, and elegant, mature tannins: the grenaches are full, rich, unctuous, with fruit at once fresh and fat; the mourvèdres are

delightfully structured, bursting with fruit, and offering good vinosity, and even the cinsaults are attractively concentrated. When put together, they will certainly make the Vieux Télégraphe 94 an "explosion" of aromas, volume and structure; at present, only a 1978 can stand comparison with it.

The whites, too, are quite beautiful: as all the varieties ripened with perfect coordination, we were able to vinify with blended varieties to achieve greater complexity - something close to our hearts. At Domaine La Roquette, situated for the most part on a stony plateau in the heart of the appellation (for the reds) and in the sandy district of Pignan (for the whites), took a while long: the first grenaches were picked on 12th September, but as the Vieux Télégraphe harvest was over, the two teams needed only 4 days between them to cover the entire estate and so finish there as well, before the weather deteriorated. This has given a fine result: bags of fruit, freshness and attractive volume rounded off by fine, elegant tannins. A vintage very typical of the "Roquette", reminiscent of the 90, whose power, while present, was always contained and well matched with the wine. The whites are full of fruit, finesse, freshness, and will grow in complexity over the years, at the same tempo as the vines planted almost 10 years ago. But such overall strength is often accompanied by a lower yield: we have recorded an overall drop in production of around 20%, giving yields/hectare for the two Domaines of 26hl.

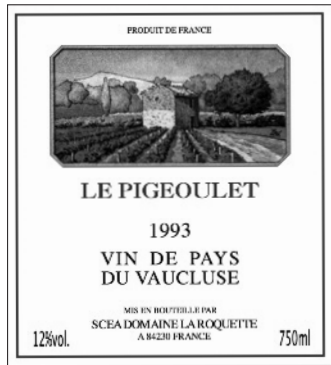
By way of conclusion, it is difficult to generalise about the quality of a vintage over a whole country or even one region: the 1994 will certainly not be "great" everywhere, but is the perfect example of the vintage that conceals real treasure.



**Sémaphore*: n. (from sema- and -phore). In days gone by, an arm-waving transmitter of Claude Chappe's aerial telegraphy.

LA ROQUETTE'S PIGEOUTET

Since 1988, Domaine La Roquette has had its own Pigeoulet. It could, just as easily, have been called "Le Pitchounet", which is Provençal for "the little one", but with an idea of "sweet little baby". Le Pigeoulet is, in fact, a wine from the Pays du Vaucluse (red and rosé) lucky enough to be vinified in cellar at Châteauneuf-du-Pape, where it receives all the care given to the wines of this noble appellation. It is of course meant for daily drinking, and must give enjoyment from one day to the next, without trying too hard or dulling the palate, standing proudly next to the baguette. And it's not so easy: managing to extract the fruit necessary to tantalise, acquiring a volume which makes it a Provençal wine, without the shoulders of a Côte-du-Rhône, and agreeable tannins that

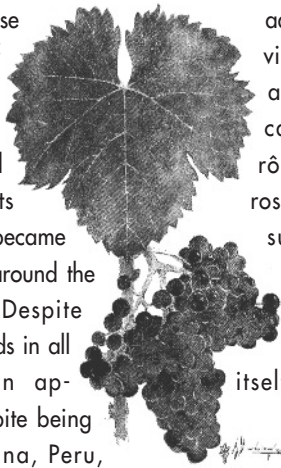


are unassuming and not oversized. We have spent 5 years humbly trying to attain a balance close to what we wanted. Now, the 93 and 94 vintages have silky tannins, fresh fruit and attractive volume. The varieties used for the reds are Grenache, Cinsault, Terret and Cabernet-Sauvignon; for the rosés, a blend featuring a high proportion of Cinsault with the Grenache Noir. While we are on the subject, this is a blend rosé, vinified in vats at 20-21°. The result is a pleasurable wine, abundantly fruity and sufficiently fat to be served equally well as a summer apéritif, with salads, grills or even a plate of charcuterie. But why Pigeoulet, after all? Quite simply because it's a pretty name which suits the wine very well.

VITI-ENOLOGY

GRENACHE : THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

Some varieties of grape are much talked-of, while others are more discreet: the Grenache, which originated in Spain and to be more precise in the vineyards of Aragon, belongs to the second category. It was around 1860 when it left its home country and became the king of grapes around the Mediterranean. Despite making strong inroads in all the Mediterranean appellations, and despite being present in Argentina, Peru, California and Australia, the Grenache has never rivalled the media coverage of some. Perhaps this is due to it often (nearly always) needing the help



of "old friends" (such as Syrah, Mourvèdre or Cinsault) to fully express itself. But in any case, one can't blame it for not adapting to different vinification methods and different soils: it can play the easy rôle of the summer rosé in the Provence sun or the greedy red wine in the heart of the Rhône Valley, give itself full rein as a mellow wine in the Pyrénées Orientales, and, of course, lead the orchestra in the great crus of the Southern Rhône Valley. One can even happen across it in a White through its

twin, the Grenache Blanc. Only the colour of their fruit is different: both are characterised by their large vine-trunk, their strong light yellow shoots and slightly shiny, delicately green foliage. It excels in harsh conditions, when drought, strong winds and poor soil combine, but does not take kindly to moving far from a Mediterranean or similar climate. Moreover, it is in these "extreme conditions" of production, producing little and harvested at 14% sugar, that it gives the best of itself: unctuous tones, concentration and elegant tannins. At Châteauneuf-du-Pape, it has truly found its favourite land and now accounts for 80% of the region's grapes.

• IN BRIEF •

Are all France's wine wholesalers the slaves of the supermarkets?

The supermarket buyers have run out of ideas to divide the aficionados of traditional sales in France.

They call on reputable wholesalers who, in these hard times, have resorted (in a short time) to underhand devices, to buy a few bottles which they cannot yet acquire by the front door. These last months, three such characters have found some Vieux Télégraphe and proudly arranged it on their shelves. The cases were coded, and so the false friends unmasked, and the entire profession has lost the trust of Le Vieux Télégraphe, which, in future, will no longer be distributed through wholesalers in France.

A big "Bravo!" to Eric Beaumard

Congratulations to Eric Beaumard, sommelier at La Poularde - Montrand les Bains - France, who won the prestigious title of Best Sommelier in Europe - Trophée Ruinart 1994. It was the result of several years' hard work.

"The runner-up had also put in a lot of work - I was just lucky," he told us. Luck, as everyone knows, has a hand in every victory, but some know how to attract it better than others. Wouldn't you say so, Eric!

• SUGGESTIONS •

Now it's your turn!

You're holding issue N°1 of Sémaphore, and it would be very nice to hear what you think about its content, presentation, and the degree of interest it aroused in you. Thanking you in advance for your candidness and spontaneity.

An hors d'oeuvre for 5 people

• *Ingredients:*

10 small purple Provence artichokes - 1 tomato - 1 onion -

1 carrot - 1 lemon - 1 clove of garlic - 20 coriander seeds - thyme - bay leaf - white wine - olive oil

• *Peel the artichokes carefully, keeping virtually only the hearts*

• *Cut them in 4. Put them in a pot, add the lemon*

Artichokes in white wine

by MAGUY BRUNIER

two spoons of olive oil.

• *Heat to boiling, then simmer.*

• *When the vegetables are cooked, let them cool and add 1 tablespoon of olive oil.*

• *Serve cold as a starter.*

and all the (sliced) vegetables),

thyme, bay leaf, coriander, salt and pepper.

• *Cover with white wine and add*

SÉMAPHORE

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PRINTED BY:
Imprimerie Laurent