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Rhône 2016 – other southern
reds

Congratulations on finding the best buys of the southern **Rhône in 2016!** Some Châteauneufs may have the highest scores (see these reviews of the Tradition bottlings and Cuvées Spéciales) but they never come cheap.

Whereas the best wines of Gigondas, **Vacqueyras** and the other village of Grenache-land can be bought for a much more satisfying QPR, in most cases.

The benefits of such amenable vintage conditions means that the general standard is high, with harmonious technical balance and well-defined fruit ripeness. Some producers fall into the trap of trying to work this bounty too hard, **resulting in over-extraction and toughness**, but generally speaking such incidences are rare. Wherever the grapes are allowed to speak for themselves, **the results are delicious.**

I don't believe these villages can be ranked by quality, nor differentiated by style. All of them can offer excellence, and in a vintage such as 2016 where ripeness is universal, it is really down to individual producers **to make the best of their fruit.**

Most of these wines were tasted in the Rhône in October 2017, either at the Caveau du Vacqueyras, Caveau du Gigondas or Maison des Vins in Avignon, or at specific domaines, supplemented by some wines tasted at importers' tastings in London. Some of the wines are pre-bottling samples – this is indicated in the few instances where it is known.

Prices, where listed, were provided by the merchant named at the end of the note. All the wines were tasted **non-blind.**

MONTIRIUS, TERRE DES AÎNÉS 2016 GIGONDAS 17+

80% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre.

Bitter, peppery palate with more savoury substance than primary fruit. High, grippy tannin. Good acidic crispness too, although the tannin conquers all at this stage. Needs a long siesta in bottle before being roused.

MONTIRIUS, LA TOUR 2016 GIGONDAS 16.5+

80% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre.

Meat, chocolate, black cherry, a touch of iodine adding interest. Plump with fruit from this generous vintage, although the finish isn't hugely lengthy. A thin layer of fine tannic grip supports the finish.

MONTIRIUS, CONFIDENTIEL 2016 GIGONDAS 17

80% Grenache, 20% Mourvèdre.

Cooked black fruit, firm tannin and fresh acid and plenty of depth on the palate. Hard, gruff structure with a long savoury finish giving cedar, cocoa and spice.