

## RHÔNE 2018

Article from <https://www.tippлетips.co.uk/>

### The 2018 vintage

The almost continuous rains from April through to May favoured the development of severe outbreaks of mildew in the vines. Mildew is a fungus that normally attacks the leaves first but this time it often attacked both the leaves and burgeoning grapes simultaneously. Some deemed it the worst mildew in fifty years. It was therefore paramount for the grape growers to be 'on it' as soon as the symptoms (brown dots on the leaves and white matter on the back of leaves) showed up and spray both the leaves and the grapes with copper sulfates, allowed in organic and biodynamic viticulture despite its polluting nature.

June to August was ideal with dry, sunny and warm weather condition. The 'canicule' (heatwave) burst in July did not affect the growing grapes adversely as it normally takes a prolonged period at 40c plus to shut the vine down. It did however slow the ripening as the hydric stress increased.

The rains in early and mid-August helped the grapes get some of the water it needed to finish its ripening.

The weather conditions from end August to mid-September have been perfect with continued sunny and warm conditions (e.g. up to 32C on the 11th September).

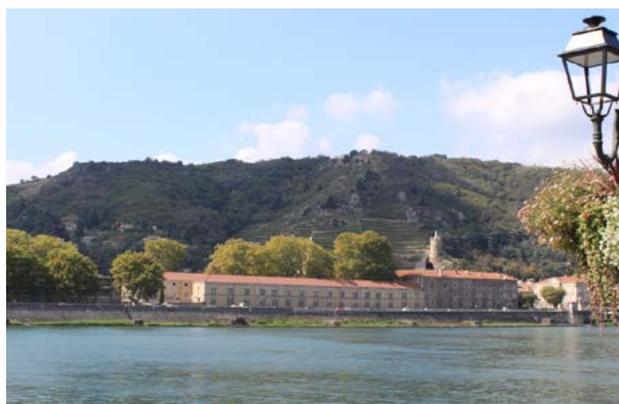
With all this, the grapes had a great concentration and showed a potential alcohol of up to 15 if not 15.5 in some areas. The acidity levels might be a little lower than usual vintages, but this should not affect the longevity of the wines. Whilst quantities remain a question mark, the quality of the 2018 vintage is deemed very good.



Traces of mildew on a leaf and final effects on the grapes at harvest time.

### Introduction

I was lucky enough to go to the Rhône valley the week of the 10th September 2018, right in the middle of harvest. This is an incredible time for any wine lover to be in and around vineyards and wineries but also the most stressful for winemakers so I'm very grateful to all the winemakers that welcomed me warmly in that week. You will find below a brief description of who they are, their domain and some of the best wines I tried with them.



## Domaine Montirius – Sarrians

Winemaker: Éric Saurel

Vineyard: 58ha

Annual production: estimated 200-250,000 bottles

### Key points:

- First biodynamic vineyard and winery around Gigondas and Vacqueyras
- Unconforming and innovative (by nature) and outstanding (by labour) family winery
- A wide range of high-quality mineral whites and velvety, fruit-driven reds.

Top wines: Le Minéral Vacqueyras 2017 (white), Terre des Aïnés Gigondas 15 (red).



6.45am - Justine, Christine, Éric and head picker Olivier organise the day's harvest

If you ever go to Domain Montirius, simply forget everything you think you know about winemaking. Christine, Éric and now their three children (Manon, Justine and Marius) just do it their way. In fact, challenging the conventional to achieve further balance and greatness has become a way of life at Domain Montirius. Pigeage on the reds? Yes but before fermentation, during a maceration at 15C. Colour and tannin extraction? Of course, but via with a canne d'aération, a long tube gently introducing air in the tanks during fermentation to break up the chapeau and help tannins and colour to develop and stabilise. Barrel ageing? No way. It would only be a fix a posteriori on a wine coming out of the tanks unbalanced. Why mix a bright living element (a fresh and fruity wine) with a dying, battered one (wood that has been chopped, charred and made into a barrel)? Wood would only suck out the life of young wines. This strive for a greater balance transpires into every aspect of the domain's life. Even during the usually manic harvesting season, there is an air of serenity floating around.

No matter what you think of these techniques, the philosophy that supports them or the wines themselves, Montirius simply cannot leave you indifferent and inevitably questions your deepest beliefs about how (and why) wine should be made.

**Le Minéral 2017 - 17/20**

is a blend of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne and Bourboulenc. The wine is delicate on the nose but rich and round on the palate with stone fruits (white peaches) flavours and a remarkable acidity supported a long mineral (saline) finish.

A must for any Rhône white lover. Perfect with a salade niçoise or a lemon sole fillet à la provençale.

**Terre des Aïnés 2015 - 17/20**

is a Gigondas red made from 80% of Grenache and 20% of Mourvèdre grown on the oldest vines of the domain (80 years old).

While some of the 2015 Southern Rhône reds can be still quite tannic (plenty of ripe grapes that year), this number is pure velvet with both a soft texture and tannins. The wine also has plenty of fruit with soft red and black fruits.



The roots of biodynamically grown vines are deemed to dig deeper for their nutrients and hence are more resilient.