

tasting through...

THE RHÔNE

RHÔNE WINE BENEFITS FROM:

- ★ SUNSHINE (optimal ripening conditions lead to concentrated and expressive wines)
- ★ DEFINED MICROCLIMATES (these vary from the cooler steep north to the warmer flat south and influence the style and types of wines grown in each)
- ★ DRY (less disease pressure and more flavor concentration)
- ★ BLENDING (various grapes are allowed, which helps balance flavor and structure)
- ★ HISTORY (long winemaking history, sense of tradition and consistency)

TOP VARIETIES:

- ★ VIOGNIER (white)
- ★ SYRAH (red)
- ★ GRENACHE (red)

HISTORY

- winemaking dates back to the Roman Empire
- over 1,000 years after the Pope moved the Roman Catholic throne from Rome to Avignon - legend suggests a knight built a small chapel on the hill overlooking the river - "Châteauneuf-du-Pape" translates to "New Castle of the Pope," which is now a symbol of some of the region's greatest wines
- after phylloxera in the 1870's, grafting vines onto resistant American rootstocks helped save the vineyards
- Châteauneuf-du-Pape became one of the first regions to be granted AOC status in 1936

CLASSIFICATIONS

- **The North** has clearly defined AOC's (known as Cru's) (*ex: Cornas*)
- **The South** has more levels: IGP wines, the overarching Côtes du Rhône and Côtes du Rhône village AOC's, and individually defined Cru AOC's (*ex: Gigondas*)
 - **Côtes du Rhône AOC:** For reds - Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre must make up at least 60% of the blend and Grenache must be at least 30% of this. For whites - Viognier, Marsanne, Roussanne, Clairette, Grenache Blanc, and Bourboulenc together must make up 80% of the blend
 - **Côtes du Rhône village AOC:** reds must have 66% of at least two of Grenache, Syrah, and/or Mourvedre + must include Grenache + slightly lower yields
 - **Cru AOC's:** vary in permitted varieties, %s allowed, and yields

CLIMATE/LANDMARKS

- **moderate to warm climates** (Cooler in the North = more structure and acidity) (Warmer in the South = more body and ripeness of fruit)
- **varying climate types** (Continental in the North, Mediterranean in the South) allow for growing various mid-later ripening varieties in different conditions
- **Mistral wind** - keeps disease at bay (Syrah vines must be trained and tied) (Grenache is typically bush vine in S. Rhone, so protected in that way)
- **Rhône River** - aids in ripening in the north and irrigation source in the south
- **soils** (*Galet* stony soils in the South, retain heat to aid in ripening) (Granite soils in the north aid in the defining structure of northern varieties)
- **steep slopes** in the north (*Côtes*) provide good drainage and expose the vines to more sunlight = more concentration of fruit

WINEMAKING

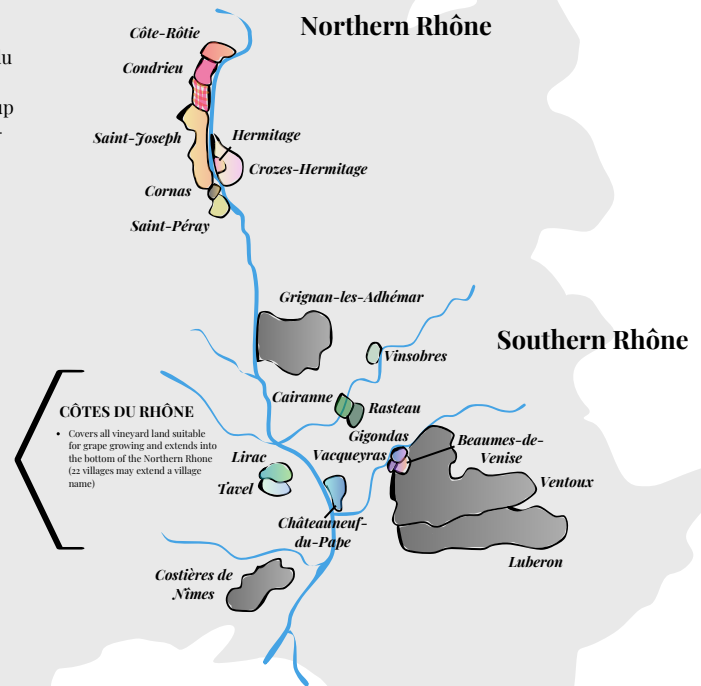
- hand harvesting in the North - steep slopes require labor, which is why many of these Cru's are costly
- can use whole bunches which promote aromatics and texture
- winemaking is typically traditional with more use of large neutral barrels (Syrah is more likely to see oak)
- blending is a key component (for consistency, quality, balance, and as part of AOC regulations)

VIOGNIER

- signature variety of Condrieu region (must be 100%), allowed to be 20% of Côte-Rôtie red wines, otherwise found as a small percentage of Côtes du Rhône white blends
- early budding and mid-ripening, but need accurate picking time or too much sugar accumulates and acid diminishes
- low yielding, so ability to become very aromatic and concentrated
- generally higher alcohol, fuller body, and lower acid variety with notable texture
- typically see stainless steel or large barrels (only slight oak influence), both malolactic and lees aging are common

SYRAH

- notable in the Northern Rhône regions as a single variety, and in the Southern Rhône as a blending component
- cool climate in the North, but still warm enough to fully ripen Syrah, especially with sun exposure
- this bold variety can be more elegant here in cooler vintages
- notable black pepper, meaty/savory, with herbal and floral notes
- moderate to moderate plus acid, tannin, and alcohol
- less overt use of oak/typically neutral in the north (although Hermitage and Cornas may see some new oak)



GRENACHE

- high-yielding and very vigorous - accumulates sugar quickly, so typically higher alcohol
- needs long ripening period and dry soils
- dominant variety in Southern Rhône blends (% varies by AOC)
- on its own: pale ruby in color, with ripe red fruits, + floral and herbal notes although almost always influenced by blending varieties here
- Côtes du Rhône wines are more likely to be stainless steel, while Cru areas like Châteauneuf-du-Pape can see oak (sometimes new oak)

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VIOGNIER

HISTORY

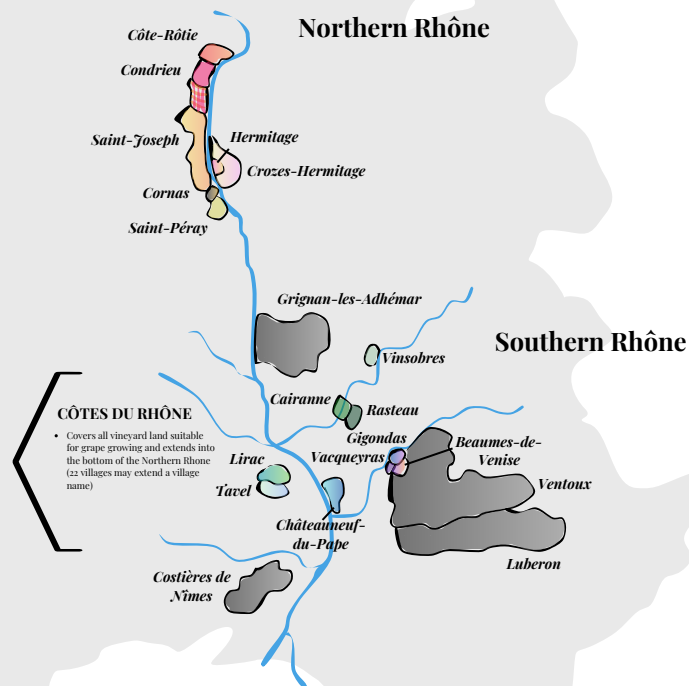
SYRAH

CLASSIFICATIONS

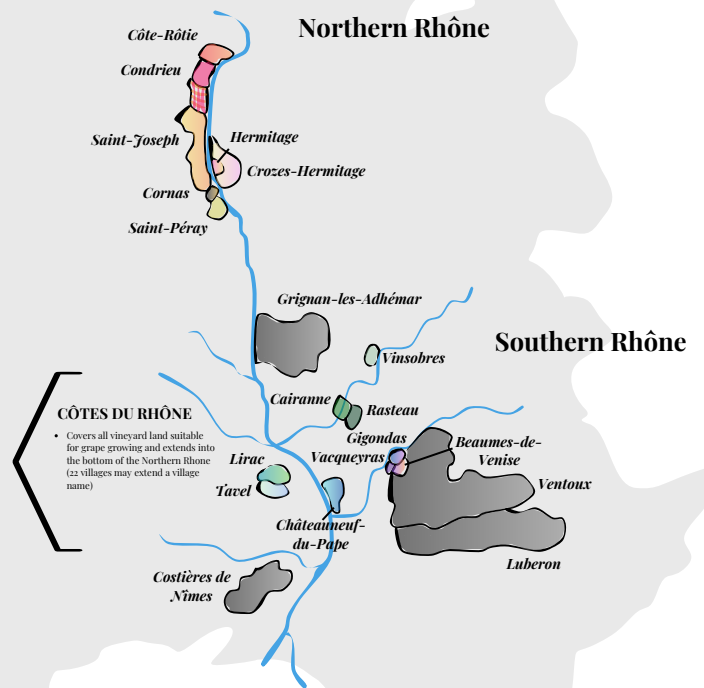
CLIMATE/LANDMARKS

WINEMAKING

GRENACHE



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