



## FOCUS ON CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE The Excellent 2006s and Vintage of a Lifetime 2007s By Robert M. Parker, Jr.

**2007** – Throughout the southern Rhône, 2007 is the greatest vintage I have tasted in my thirty years working in that region. In a future issue, my enthusiastic notes about Gigondas, Vacqueras, and the other Côtes du Rhône will be published. Nearly every producer has attained largely unprecedented levels of quality. Moreover, the vintage is remarkably consistent from top to bottom.

As for Châteauneuf du Pape, that appellation has had an unprecedented succession of superlative vintages. Forgetting the historic washout in 2002, every vintage between 1998 and 2007 has had both high quality and something different to offer stylistically. Where does 2007 fit. Think of 2007 as a hypothetical blend of an opulent, powerful, sumptuous years such as 1990, and a cooler drought vintage such as 2001. The cool weather and the remarkable three weeks of Mistral in September that concentrated the grapes without any spikes of high heat appears to have given the 2007s an aromatic dimension and freshness that I have rarely witnessed. Combine that with wines that are substantial, powerful, and relatively high in alcohol, with super depth of fruit! These are very aromatic wines of great concentration, freshness, laser-like focus, and amazing purity as well as depth. **It is the vintage of my lifetime for this region**, and I don't say that lightly. These 2007s will also be very long-lived given their extraordinary balance.

In terms of climate, it was a cooler than normal vintage, and Châteauneuf du Pape experienced a severe drought between late spring and the end of september. This, plus the three weeks of Mistral, and the lack of any heat spells concentrated the grapes to extraordinary levels, and also provided the remarkable aromatic profiles and stunning freshness and vibrancy found in the 2007s.

CHATEAU DE BEAURENARD	2007	CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE	(not yet released)	RED	(88-91)
CHATEAU DE BEAURENARD	2006	CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE	(\$50.00)	RED	88
CHATEAU DE BEAURENARD	2007	CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE CUVÉE BOISRENARD	(not yet released)	RED	(90-94)
CHATEAU DE BEAURENARD	2006	CHATEAUNEUF DU PAPE CUVÉE BOISRENARD	(\$85.00)	RED	92
CHATEAU DE BEAURENARD	2007	COTES DU RHONE	(\$16.00)	RED	85
CHATEAU DE BEAURENARD	2007	COTES DU RHONE VILLAGES RASTEAU	(not yet released)	RED	88
CHATEAU DE BEAURENARD	2007	COTES DU RHONE VILLAGES RASTEAU ARGILES BLEUS	(\$28.00)	RED	90

One of the oldest estate bottlers of Châteauneuf du Pape, the Coulon family boasts an extraordinary track record of making wine. They were one of the first to offer a luxury cuvée, called Boisrenard.

The Châteauneuf du Pape (a blend of 70% Grenache, 10% Mourvèdre, 8%

Cinsault, and the rest various authorized varietals) spends time in both small barrel and foudre. The **2007 Châteauneuf du Pape** exhibits pure black raspberry and sweet fruit along with a supple texture, medium to full body, and gorgeous purity as well as length. It will be a lovely wine to drink at a surprisingly early age for a Bearenard. It should evolve for 10-12 years. The beefier, more modern-styled **2007 Châteauneuf du Pape Cuvée Boisrenard**, which comes from 60 to 100 years old vines, is meant to represent a symphony of the 13 différent varietals permitted by law in this appellation. Dominated by grenache, it is aged 18 months in small barrels, most of them old. The full-bodied 2007 is extremely elegant (no doubt because of the coolness of the vintage), exhibiting a deep ruby/purple hue in addition to exquisite aromas of graphite, vanilla, blackberries, and blueberries. I have been purchasing this cuvée for many vintages, and with 8-10 years of cellaring, it becomes a classic Provençal and Châteauneuf du Pape offering. The 2007 should evolve for 15 or more years.

The dark ruby/plum-tinged 2006 Châteauneuf du Pape's tarry, black currant-scented bouquet reveals notions of truffles and meaty/animal-like scents. Medium to full-bodied with good ripeness, an attractive texture, and spicy, heady finish, it can be consumed over the next 7-8 years.

The impressive **2006 Châteauneuf du Pape Boisrenard** offers up aromas of black cherries, licorice, tar, earth, and spicy oak in the background. It is full-bodied and dense, with outstanding concentration, sweet but noticeable tannin, and plenty of spice and earth notes. Anticipated maturity : 2010-2024.

The 2007 Côtes du Rhône is a straightforward, pleasant, attractive effort offering loads of fruit, but not much complexity. Readers looking for more earth, chocolate, and berry fruit characteristics should check out the fuller, deeper, slightly more rustic, but also more interesting, personality-filled, dark ruby/purple-tinged **2007 Côtes du Rhône Villages Rasteau**. A sleeper of the vintage (and usually one of the fine of the finest wines from this appellation) is the **2007 Côtes du Rhône Villages Rasteau Argiles Bleus**. This old vine Grenache from the appellation's famous blue clay soils exhibits an inky/plum/purple color as well as a highly extracted nose of black fruits, earth, vitamins, and chocolate. Deep, full-bodied, powerful, and rich, this wine will benefit from 1-2 years of bottle age, and should keep for a minimum of 7-8 years. At the time of writing, Domaine de Bearenard was in the process of changing importers, having lost nearly 250,000 euros when they were not paid for the sale of their 2005 s.