

Decanter

Best Rhône 2017 wines: The top scorers

featuring Jean-Louis Chave
as reviewed by Matt Walls

October 2017

Matt Walls returned to the Rhône at the end of 2018 to taste the 2017 vintage en primeur.

Here's a preview of his top-scoring wines, in advance of his in-depth reports for northern and southern Rhône later this week on Decanter Premium.

Compared to the 2016 vintage, both northern and southern Rhône 2017 are better suited to those looking for ageworthy wines.

'Whereas 2016 in the Northern Rhône was the perfect vintage for those looking for detailed, refreshing wines with clear typicity that will drink well straight away, 2017 is more a vintage for the cellar,' says Walls in his Northern Rhone 2017 vintage report, coming this week.

Similarly in the south, '2017 doesn't have the effortless balance and joie de vivre of the 2016s, but will be enjoyed by those looking for structured, tannic, ageworthy wines,' according to Walls.

For those looking for value, St-Joseph 2017 'is home to some of the best value wine in France.'

2017 Hermitage Rouge

A fairly straightforward vintage for Jean-Louis. 'Everything was nice', he says about the growing season, which was very warm during the summer but with enough rain at the right times. A barrel tasting of the main constituents shows a powerful, lush but stately Beaumes; a fine, red-fruited and finessed Péléal; an extraordinary Ermite of serious acidity and svelte tannins; an opulent, solar Méal; and a straight, peppery Bessards. The overall impression is a lush, rich, almost jovial style of Hermitage, one with a good inner spine but generous, velvety, rich black fruit. **(98 points)**

2017 Hermitage Blanc

Jean-Louis' 2017 white Hermitage is a rich, almost buttered style with considerable fat and an opulent texture, but remains fresh. A tasting of four component parts - Péléal, Rocoules clay, Rocoules limestone and L'Ermite - shows an unusually rich and lush style. The Ermite component does however have a straight, lean, rising floral style to counterbalance the riper, rounder Péléal. Luxurious and cosy rather than focussed and dynamic. **(97 points)**