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- 31st Oct 2017 | [The Wine Advocate](#) | [233 \(Oct '17\)](#)

### **France, Southern Rhône: Châteauneuf du Pape - Elegance (2015) and Power (2016)**

After a couple of mixed vintages in 2013 and 2014, fine weather returned to the Southern Rhône in 2015. In places, it may have been too sunny and dry, but Châteauneuf-du-Pape was spared the worst of it, and overall, the red wines from 2015 marry ripe fruit with perfume and elegance.

At Domaine de la Janasse, Christophe Sabon summed up the 2015 vintage nicely. "It's well balanced and not as intense as 2016 or 2010, but very interesting."

At Clos des Papes, Paul-Vincent Avril compared 2015 to 2005 and 1978, both excellent vintages.

Readers will not find too many wines that reach into the stratosphere ratings-wise, but so many of the wines are excellent that it will prove hard to take a misstep. Despite that, I did encounter several subpar samples along the way, so wise consumers will not buy indiscriminately.

The primary grape variety in red Châteauneuf du Pape is Grenache, which, much like Pinot Noir, is unforgiving. In fact, a number of producers I visited either called it "The Pinot of the Rhône," or made other comparisons to Burgundy.

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|--------------------------|---|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <a href="#">2016 Le Cellier des Princes Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc</a>             | <a href="#">White</a> | <a href="#">91</a> | <a href="#">RP</a> | <a href="#">NA</a>      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <a href="#">2015 Le Cellier des Princes Chateaneuf du Pape</a>                    | <a href="#">Red</a>   | <a href="#">89</a> | <a href="#">RP</a> | <a href="#">\$24.99</a> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <a href="#">2015 Le Cellier des Princes Châteauneuf du Pape Domaine Le Mourre</a> | <a href="#">Red</a>   | <a href="#">92</a> | <a href="#">RP</a> | <a href="#">NA</a>      |

### **2016 Le Cellier des Princes • Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc**

The barrel-fermented 2016 Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc saw 30% new oak, giving its orange-scented aromas an attractive scorched note. This full-bodied blend of 50% Roussanne, 30% Clairette and 20% Grenache Blanc features a silky texture and a long, layered, Creamsicle-like finish. I wouldn't bet on it aging well, but for drinking now it's hugely seductive.

### **2015 Le Cellier des Princes • Châteauneuf du Pape Rouge**

I was encouraged to see the progress being made at Le Cellier des Princes, the local cooperative. The 2015 Chateaneuf du Pape displays exotic perfumes and ripe fruit, a plush, supple mouthfeel and easygoing finish. Drink it over the next 5-6 years.

### **2015 Le Cellier des Princes • Châteauneuf du Pape Domaine Le Mourre**

The pure-Grenache 2015 Châteauneuf du Pape Domaine Le Mourre was my favorite of the Cellier des Princes releases. Vinified in steel and matured in concrete, it reveals attractive notes of ripe cherries and stone fruit and hints of almond paste. It's full-bodied and supple, turning silky on the long, crisp finish. It should drink well for up to 10 years.