

Chapter 19

The Northern Rhône



Climate and Grape Growing

Climate: **Moderate and continental**

- Narrow/steep valley - vineyards planted along river - steep slopes/S-facing aspect.
- Lateral valleys = feeds into the Rhône - protects vines from the **Mistral** (cold, north wind)
- Vines = supported by individual stake or tepee-like arrangement of stakes

Grape Varieties and Wine Making

Black grapes

Syrah

- Only black grape variety permitted in the N. Rhône
- Most northerly latitude grape can grow
- Steep vineyards/s-facing vineyards - most prized
- Deeply-coloured/ med-high tannin/ black fruits/ black pepper/ floral
- Oak use = dependent on WM
- Ferm Syrah with white grapes (Crus) now an outdated tradition
 - White grapes = stabilise colour extraction and add aromatic intensity

White grapes

Viognier

- Full-bodied/ low acid/ high alcohol/ blossom/ apricot/ stone fruit
- Aromas developed late in season = grapes high in sugar when harvested = high alcohol
- Grapes handled carefully - avoid overtly oily character
- Oak = some new oak, WM careful not to overwhelm aromas
- Some late-harvested styles - off-dry

Marsanne and Roussanne

- Blended together
 - Marsanne = richness + weight
 - Roussanne = acidity + perfumed fruit
- Not as aromatic as Viognier
- Hazelnut in bottle

Regions and Wines

Côte Rôtie

- Near the town of Ampuis - most Northern appellation
- 'Roasted slope' = good sun exposure
- Up to 20% Viognier can be blended (rare)
- Deeply coloured/ full-bodied/ aromatic/ floral freshness/ textural elegance

Condrieu

- *Solely white wine*
- Growing region
- Best wines from sites with low yielding, steep slope, well-exposed, terraced vineyards
- **Chateau-Grillet** - single property appellation within Condrieu

Saint Joseph

- Runs along western bank (Condrieu N → Tournon S)
- Majority red (Syrah) or white (Rous/Mars)
- Best wines from sites with terraced vineyards near Tournon
- Similar flavour/structure to Hermitage (S of Condrieu)
- Large volume wines = fertile, flat soil + plains above slopes - some CM used - light-bodied, pepper, perfumed aspects of Syrah

Hermitage

- Steep, S-Facing slopes - behind the town of Tain-l'Hermitage
- Lieux-dits - named sites (not appellations)
 - Tradition - blend of wines from different Lieux-dits sites - now some single Lieux-dits wines.
- Rous/Mars allowed to ferment with Syrah (rare)
 - 15% of production now white wine

Crozes-Hermitage

- High-vol appellation
- Around hill of Hermitage - N is slopes/S is plains
 - North = more concentrated/complex/tannic
 - South = Lighter style
- More expensive wines - oak aged
- Up to 15% Rous/Mars allowed in blend
- Some white production

Cornas

- Most southernly/warmest
 - Sheltered, well exposed, sunny S-facing slopes with lateral valleys
 - Must be 100% Syrah
 - Deep, full-bodied (similar to Hermitage)
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Multiple Choice Practice Questions

1) Which Northern Rhône appellation is famous for its white wines made exclusively from the Viognier grape, known for its aromatic intensity and richness?

- a) Condrieu
- b) Côte-Rôtie
- c) Saint-Joseph
- d) Hermitage

2) The Northern Rhône appellation of Cornas is known for producing robust red wines exclusively from which grape variety?

- a) Grenache
- b) Syrah
- c) Mourvèdre
- d) Merlot

3) The white wines produced in the Northern Rhône are predominantly made from which grape variety?

- a) Chardonnay
- b) Sauvignon Blanc
- c) Roussanne
- d) Viognier

4) In which area would you find the single appellation of Chateau-Grillet?

- a) Saint Joseph
- b) Cornas
- c) Condrieu
- d) Hermitage

5) Which of the following regions is the most southern in the Northern Rhône?

- a) Hermitage
- b) Condrieu
- c) Cornas
- d) Côte Rôtie

Answers

1. a) Condrieu

2. b) Syrah

3. d) Viognier

4. c) Condrieu

5. c) Cornas

