

BANDOL

Tasted at multiple venues – New York – Spring 2014

I have been an admirer of Bandol for some time, dating from an experience in the early 1980s when I drank a marvelous bottle of Château Pibarnon during a stay in the Southern Rhône at Hotel Le Prieuré, outside of Avignon. I suppose it helped that it was a dulcet Provençal summer eve, and I was dining on an entrancing terrace under a leafy canopy, surrounded by jasmine and wisteria! Bandol is a coastal vineyard first planted around 600 BC and situated east of Marseilles and the even less known appellation of Cassis. It comes in three colors and may be more familiar to many wine drinkers as a dry rosé – one with well above average intensity and dimension. The white, based on Clairette and other varieties, can be delicious, too, with intriguing, fragrant, spicy white fruits. It is the red, however, which deserves more attention than it receives. Bandol rouge is a style which, admittedly, demands time in bottle – requiring more patience perhaps than today’s wine drinkers are prepared to allow. Unless you know from experience how Bandol is transformed with cellaring, you may not find a young vintage convincing. It is not a flattering or forward wine as a rule, except for some young vine cuvees, but not, in my opinion, “bestial” as some have written. This is not to say that the best examples do not possess impressive concentration. Typically, however, young red Bandol reveals little of its innate quality and is usually framed by an assertive structure of acidity and especially tannin. This may seem counterintuitive since the Bandol vineyards are largely within sight of the Mediterranean and receive up to 3,000 hours of sunshine a year. Of note is that they are often placed on terraces called *restanques* along slopes at elevations up to 1,000 feet, and are further cooled by sea breezes. Bandol’s taste is seldom “baked” or “hot” as reds further north and inland can be. Moreover, the red is based on Mourvèdre, a reductive variety offering a scent of wild fruits and formidable structure. The appellation rules require at least 50% Mourvèdre in a Bandol rouge, but often the proportion is much higher. Yet, it is often overlooked that some examples include Grenache, Cinsault, Syrah and/or Carignan. By the way, I find that Bandol rouge of any stature is a wine to decant. I wouldn’t serve a Bandol less than ten years old without having put it aside in a carafe for a good hour; even older vintages show their best only if well aerated.

Domaine Le Galantin

Bandol rouge 2011 *(*)**

Moderately dense very dark red with purple. Aromatically, the Galantin Bandol is very clean and youthful, revealing fully mature dark fruits, still quite reserved. The palate similarly signals the youthfulness of the wine, showing restraint along with innate concentration and a firm frame. 95% Mourvèdre, 5% Grenache aged 22 months in oak.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich MW

Bandol rouge “Longue Garde” 2006 **(+)**

Moderately dense blackish red. Striking, focused aroma displaying wild dark fruits along with an inky overtone and flinty accents. Noteworthy concentration and only modest evolution. In the mouth, this “long keeping” cuvee has impressive intensity and concentration without any viscosity. The taste is layered and muscular, with an assertive finale delivering tremendous intensity and heightened expression. This comes from the estate’s oldest vines and is held back at least 5 years before release.

Domaine de la Tour du Bon

Bandol rosé 2013 ****

Pale peach currant. Very youthful, not fully expressive nose. Clean and fresh with varied and muted hints of red currant. The palate is still held back, intense and precise, with a chiseled ending leaving delicate inflections of small red fruits. Needs 6 months to express itself fully. 35% Grenache, 25% Mourvèdre, 30% Cinsault & 10% Clairette.



Bandol “Révolution” rouge 2011 ***

Moderately dense dark red with purple cast. Youthful dark berries to the nose, clean and fresh. The wine has a juicy, vibrant taste and is medium bodied and approachable, with a relatively soft finish. An attractive example for early drinking for its engaging fruit qualities. Relies on a base of Mourvèdre from younger vines and around one-third Grenache (providing a softening effect), with smaller amounts of Cinsault and Carignan.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich MW

Bandol rouge 2010 *(+)**

Moderately dense very dark red with purple rim. Engaging, spicy aroma, fresh and undeveloped. Has very good intensity and concentration together with a background of wild red fruits. The palate is backward, tightly wound and intensely focused. The finish is sinewy and incisive, leaving nuances of red fruits.

La Bastide Blanche

Bandol blanc 2012 **+**

Light gold straw. Ultraclean nose with youthful reserve. Distinctive aromatics of star fruit, dried white fruits and a suggestion of wild flora. In the mouth, this white Bandol is beautiful, so perfectly clean, with very expressive and persistent bright fruit notes. There is a sweet, warm undertone and, at the end, a gripping chalky aftertaste with racy acidity. Clairette and Ugni Blanc in the main plus a minority of Bourboulenc and Sauvignon Blanc. They block the malo-lactic to retain freshness.

Bandol rouge 2011 **(+)**

Moderately dense very dark red purple. There is an initial clean impression in the reticent, undeveloped nose along with hidden strength and submerged dark fruit. The wine is mostly reserved on the palate as well and displays noteworthy concentration and controlled, ripe dark fruit at its core. The conclusion is taut with an assertive backbone holding the wine tightly together.

Domaine du Gros 'Noré

Bandol rosé 2013 ****

Very pale red currant. Very clean, still primary nose revealing delicate highlights of small red fruits. In the mouth, this young rosé is particularly focused, finely tuned and exceptionally intense. There is a fine spine of acidity and surprisingly lasting albeit subtle youthful red fruit notes. Needs a year in bottle to show. 40% Mourvèdre, 40% Cinsault & 20% Grenache.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich MW

Bandol rouge 2011 **(+)**

Nearly dense very dark red with purple. For a young Bandol, the aroma seems surprisingly soft and forthcoming with generous, mature dark fruits and berries. The taste aligns with the nose and is ripe and fleshy with an embedded frame. Black fruits, spice and flinty accents linger in the aftertaste. 80% Mourvèdre, 15% Grenache & 5% Cinsault.

Bandol rouge 2010 **(*)**

Moderately dense very dark red with purple rim. Engaging, ample nose marked by rich, warm black berries and black fruits and a complicating inkiness. The palate is ripe and chewy, with very generous fruit. The finish, wonderful and long, gains in strength and ends with balancing sinew and grip. A blend similar to the 2011.

Bandol rouge “Cuvee Antoinette” 2009 **(*)**

Nearly dense very dark red with clear purple edge. The enticing, full aroma is particularly spicy and boasts mature black berries. There is evident substance, confirmed on the palate, which is endowed with ripe, sweet fruit. Chewy, warm and quite powerful as well as lasting. This 2009 has plenty of potential for development and is still in an early phase of life.



Domaine Tempier

Bandol blanc 2012 *+**

Transparent gold. Clean, ripe and softly warm aroma, rather full yet non-expressive except for faint white fruit nuances. The palate similarly exhibits fruit maturity and reveals somewhat more fruit expression and spice highlights. Well-made but somewhat lacking in personality. 55% Clairette, 19% Ugni Blanc & 19% Bourboulenc with Marsanne and Rolle.

Bandol rosé 2013 **(*)**

Very pale red currant. Inviting, attention-grabbing and extremely youthful aroma with underlying generosity. There are delicate accents of small red fruits and berries. In the mouth, this excellent wine is focused and intense as well as highly inflected. Very long in its textural presence and structured with racy acidity. This benchmark Bandol rosé needs some months in bottle to show more of its inherent quality. 55% Mourvèdre, 25% Cinsault & 20% Grenache.

Bandol rouge 2011 *(*)**

Moderately dense dark red purple. At first, the nose appears somewhat reduced. Then there are hidden black fruits and an irony quality. The taste is focused and very tightly wound, clearly in an early stage of life and backward. Firm, gripping backbone. Somewhat difficult to judge. Patience needed. 75% Mourvèdre, 14% Grenache, 9% Cinsault & 2% Carignan.

Bandol rouge “La Migoua” 2011 **(+)**

Moderately dense very dark red purple. Warm, ample aroma, quite forthcoming (especially compared to the 2011 estate blend), with appealing dark and wild fruits. The wine has a soft initial feel and delivers fabulous fruit with a sweet undertone. Expansive and very long with a fine etched ending. A beautiful Bandol likely softened and made more flattering by the relatively large Grenache and Cinsault components. Single vineyard at 886 ft. on lime-rich clay. 50% Mourvèdre, 20% Grenache, 26% Cinsault & 4% Syrah.

Tasting Notes of Roger C. Bohmrich MW

Bandol rouge “La Tourtine” 2011 **(*)**

Moderately dense very dark red purple. At first reduced, concealing its evident concentration and depth. The palate conveys a layered and sinewy impression, masking ample dark wild fruits along with irony and flinty highlights. Elevated acidity creates a stiff backbone, and there is a final saline note. Entirely different from La Migoua, this classic single vineyard Bandol, on heavier calcareous clay, has excellent keeping potential. 80% Mourvèdre, 10% each Grenache & Cinsault.

Bandol rouge “Cabassaou” 2011 **(*)**

Moderately dense very dark red purple. A bit reduced to the nose as well as highly concentrated, with deep if latent black fruits and berries and a flinty accent. The palate explodes from the attack with black fruits and black berries, filling the mouth and imparting a ripe, sweet underpinning. All is wonderfully defined by a firm, dry frame. Terrific volume and youthful vitality. A single vineyard placed lower on slope than the two other vineyards: warmer with optimum sun radiation and shelter from the Mistral wind. Nearly all Mourvèdre with a splash of Syrah and Cinsault.



Château de Pibarnon

(Wines tasted in early 2012)

Bandol rouge “Les Restanques de Pibarnon” 2009 *+**

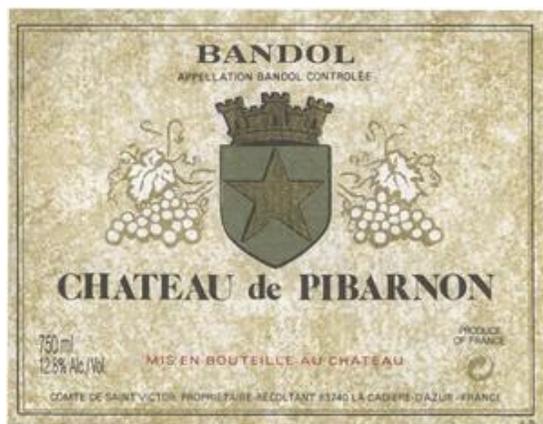
Nearly moderately dense dark red purple. Faintly reduced nose with wild berries and dark fruits underneath. Young, fresh taste. Attractive mature sweet fruit, somewhat hidden. Fresh, dry conclusion. Young vines around 10 years of age. 70% Mourvèdre & 30% Grenache aged in Burgundian pièces and foudres.

Bandol rouge 2007 *(*)**

Nearly moderately dense dark red with purple rim. Closed impression at first followed by obvious concentration and wild red fruits. Very young and reserved, but has excellent concentration and underlying fruit. Intense, sinewy finish. Not ready, keep to 2017-2020. 90% Mourvèdre & 10% Grenache aged 20 months in foudres, with 15% in new Burgundian barrels.

Bandol rouge 2001 ****

Somewhat less than moderately dense brick red. Sweet nose, somewhat muted, with subtle indications of bottle evolution including suggestions of spice and leather. In the mouth, the 2001 is delicious, quite rich yet still well defined by fresh acidity. Ready now. I can imagine this wine with Chinese barbecued or smoked duck and, more classically, with daube à la provençale, beef stew with a rich, dark red wine sauce.



The magnificent vineyards of Château de Pibarnon, with the Mediterranean in the distance.