



The Beat Goes On

By Mary Ewing-Mulligan

Domaine Philippe & Vincent Jaboulet, Crozes-Hermitage (Rhône Valley, France)

2007 (Wilson Daniels, \$31): For the many American writers and wine buyers who were fond of the Rhône Valley's large, affable Jaboulet family, it was a sad day when the family sold its very successful Paul Jaboulet Aîné winery. And it was a happy day two years later when the wines of Domaine Philippe et

Vincent Jaboulet became available in the U.S. For 30 years, Philippe Jaboulet had been the director of production at Paul Jaboulet Aîné, a member of the fourth generation of winemaking Jaboulets. Now he and his son, a trained enologist, run the small Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet, producing only about 6,500 cases of mainly Northern Rhône reds and whites.



At Paul Jaboulet Aîné, the Hermitage "La Chappelle" has long been the flagship wine and the "Parallèle 45" Côtes du Rhône, a perennial top seller; but the family's red Crozes-Hermitage wines, particularly the exquisite Domaine Thalabert Crozes-Hermitage, were favorites for some wine professionals. As I taste this 2007 Crozes from the Domaine, memories of wonderful, older Jaboulet Crozes-Hermitages come to mind and enrich my experience of this young wine.

But enough sentimentality. This is a new wine made by a new Domaine, only the third vintage of Crozes-Hermitage Rouge released by the winery. (The Domaine also makes some white Crozes-Hermitage.) It is one of two red Crozes that the Domaine produces. This wine comes from 25 acres of Syrah grapes in three vineyards, mainly the vineyard surrounding the winery itself, with vines varying from 22 to 33 years in age. The other comes from a vineyard called Nouvelère, formerly known as Thalabert, which Philippe was able to retain when the family winery was sold; its vines up to 60 years old.

In its aromas and flavors, this 2007 Crozes-Hermitage is a quintessential Syrah. It is plenty fruity, with suggestions of ripe dark plum and dark berry, but it also offers the complexities of herbal, earthy, spicy and smoky notes, overlaid with a delicate, sophisticated vanilla perfume. In your mouth, the wine is dry and nearly full-bodied, with silky texture that gradually gives way to fine-grained tannins. The wine's flavors show good concentration and they persist across the whole length of your mouth, and onto the finish. Flavorful, fruity, nuanced, complex -- this wine is all that but, unlike many elite Syrah-based wines from around the world, it is not "powerful." In that, it is true to its terroir, which makes a lighter and earlier-drinking wine than Hermitage itself, and wines that certainly are a far cry from the world's ripest, most extracted Syrahs. It is also true to Philippe Jaboulet's style of refined Crozes-Hermitages -- here with more vivid fruitiness than in the past.

The grapes for this wine underwent a cold soaking prior to fermentation, which could account for the wine's explicit fruit expression. The Jaboulets also use very little new wood for aging this wine.

This wine has many years of delicious life ahead of it. Right now it is perfectly enjoyable (and for those who favor fruitiness, perhaps in its best stage) but I believe that I will enjoy it even more in about four or five years. I prefer it in a large but not oversized Bordeaux-style glass; you can use a narrower glass if you want to accentuate the wine's fruitiness.

91 Points

copyright 2010, winereviewonline.com