

Domaine de la Charbonnière

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Insider Special Report: 2007 Châteauneuf-du-Pape

THE bulk of the 2007 Châteauneuf-du-Pape reds from France's Southern Rhône Valley are now arriving, and the vintage is a hedonist's dream, offering opulent fruit and inviting textures. Most of the wines will provide immense pleasure right out of the gate and over the next decade. The top wines will have the stuffing to last past that, but this vintage is not at all like 2005, a year loaded with cellar-worthy backbone.

Yes, a few wines teeter on jammy and only the top tier display the full range of *terroir*-driven notes of iron, loam, graphite and more that Châteauneuf can offer. Instead, the 2007 vintage is all about fruit—plum, raspberry and fig—with remarkably silky textures that belie the sometimes heady power and alcohol of these wines. There are six classic-rated 2007s featured here, and Clos Des Papes, a domaine with a track record for collectible wines, earns this week's top score. You'll find it among the Hot Wines, on page 4.

With demand dampened by the economic situation, there are some buys to be had—12 wines in this report are priced at \$45 or less. La Bastide St.-Dominique, Domaine de la Côte de l'Ange, Domaine La Barroche, Mas de Boislauzon, Domaine des Pères de l'Église and Domaine Lafond all offer wines at very good prices for outstanding Châteauneuf these days. —James Molesworth

DOMAINE DE LA CHARBONNIÈRE

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée Mourre des Perdrix 2007

93 points | \$55 | 1,665 cases made | Red

Plush and enticing, with delicious layers of plum sauce, fig bread, black tea and mulled spice notes that pump through the velvety, dark finish. Fresh, well-embedded acidity stretches it all out. Drink now through 2027.—J.M.

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Châteauneuf-du-Pape Cuvée Vieilles Vignes 2007

92 points | \$55 | 750 cases made | Red

A very round, fresh style, with mouthwatering floral, red licorice, red cherry and plum notes all wrapped up by nice racy acidity. Pure and driven on the finish, with a nice lingering hint of roasted apple wood. Best from 2010 through 2024.—J.M.

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Châteauneuf-du-Pape Les Hautes Brusquières Cuvée Spéciale 2007

93 points | \$55 | 1,250 cases made | Red

Combines enticing plum, raspberry and blackberry fruit with alluring black tea, tobacco, mineral and sandalwood notes. The long, fine-grained finish lets everything hang together nicely. Should blossom in the cellar. Drink now through 2027.—J.M.

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Châteauneuf-du-Pape 2007

90 points | \$40 | 1,500 cases made | Red

Shows the vintage's typically juicy core of crushed plum and blackberry fruit, along with velvety tannins that carry the licorice- and spice-filled finish. This doesn't show huge range, but still offers delicious fruit and solid drive. Drink now through 2019.—J.M.

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