

Vins du Roussillon

## Rancio Sec de Roussillon

Roussillon is home to one of the oldest forms of winemaking, a tradition for aged dry wines that pre-dates modern viti-culture. Known throughout Catalonia (Catalunya) as Rancio Sec (or alternately Vi Ranci), these are dry, unfortified wines that are often kept in the sun in glass demijohns, then transferred to a partially filled old oak barrels for no less than 5 years. It is this oxidation process, further evolving over decades in soleras, that gives rise to the bouquet of unique tastes (fresh walnut, curry spices, cocoa, light bitterness) that characterizes Rancio Sec. Made in very small quantities, typically for the winemaker's family and guests, its historic if endangered status is recognized by Slow Food France.

### Mas Peyre "Le Démon de Midi"

100% Macabeu, aged a minimum of 4 years in cask after oxidation. Mas Peyre is a small estate in St.-Paul de Fenouillet in the Roussillon, known for red wines and for a small amount of rancio sec, which they sell mainly to local residents. The wine has the light, waxy characteristics of macabeu and the nutty, high-acid notes of a rancio wine. The lighter profile makes Le Démon perfect for use in place of fino sherry in cocktails, or with traditional foods, such as anchovies, hams, nuts or cheeses. Shelf-stable after opening.

### Abbe Rous "Matifoc"

100% Grenache Noir. From the Cave de l'Abbé Rous, a cooperative in Banyuls. This wine is oxidized in glass jugs out in the sun, then spends 7 years in casks previously used for rancio Banyuls. Occasionally, these casks also go out in the sun, to promote evaporation and concentration. Darkly nutty, with sweet earth notes and firm acidity; this wine smells sweet, but is bone-dry. Perfect for use in place of amontillado sherry in cocktails, or with hams or hard cheeses. Shelf-stable after opening.

### T. Templiers Terres des Templiers

Rancio of 100% Grenache Noir from a cooperative in Banyuls. Minimum 7 years in old rancio Banyuls casks after oxidation in glass under the hot Catalan sun. High-toned, with plenty of curry spice and almond skin, this wine works perfectly in place of fino or amontillado sherry in cocktails, or with anchovies, olives, escargots, or ham. Shelf-stable after opening.

### Vial-Magnères "Puits Aux Souhails" Tresmontaine

Rancio of Grenache Noir and Grenache Gris from one of the most famous terroirs and grower-producers, Bernard Saperas of Domaine Vial-Magnères. Sadly, this wine is Bernard's final rancio sec, due to his passing; the phrase "puits aux souhails" (wishing well) is an image from his own writings. Bernard was a fanatic for rancio sec, actually diverting grapes from Banyuls production (i.e., overripe grenache) to vinify dry, oxidize through heating in glass jugs, and raise for 7 years in old rancio Banyuls casks. Fabulously intricate, with just a hint of red fruit amongst the mouthwatering acidity and waxy, nutty complexity. Endless on the finish, and shelf-stable after opening.

### A. Villeneuve "Tabacal" Tresmontaine

Rancio of Grenache blanc, Grenache gris, and Grenache noir from Arnaud de Villeneuve, the acclaimed cooperative in Rivesaltes. This wine spent nine years in old Rivesaltes rancio casks, and then was blended with a small amount of old, sweet, Rivesaltes rancio to produce a wine of approximately 8g/L sugar. The blend was the result of the winemaker's desire to make a wine for cigar and pipe smokers; hence the name, "tabacal." Richly nutty, with lipsmacking acidity and a bit of a melon note,



this wine is extremely versatile in cocktails. It's acidic enough to add sweetness (herbal liqueurs are particularly nice), and just sweet enough to allow the addition of spirits (modern gins and lighter whiskeys work well). Use in place of brandy or amontillado sherry in cocktails, as well.

### Domaine Puig-Parahy "Pyror"

Rancio of Macabeu, Grenache blanc, and Grenache gris, from 6 barrels started by the winemaker's grandfather in the 1960s. Each barrel was maintained separately as its own "1-barrel solera," with small amounts of wine taken out or put in, but with the barrels never filled to the top. However, very little wine was ever taken from these barrels; the bulk of it is from the original 1960s winemaking. This extra age has led to incredible concentration of acidity and richness, even though the wine is barely off-dry (approximately 10 g/L sugar). Spicy, with sweet earth and a whiskey note, this is truly a wine for contemplation, or maybe mixing a sneaky Old-Fashioned.

### Domaine Jorel "La Garrigue"

Rancio of 100% Macabeu from a single, naturally-farmed site in St.-Paul de Fenouillet, in the heart of the Roussillon. The 2003 vintage was a massively difficult one, with searing temperatures across France, but particularly in the South. Manuel Jorel's Macabeu vines took a beating, with roasted skins and overripeness. The grapes were not suited for the normal light table wines that Macabeu usually offers, so Manuel decided to make an "orange" wine, by macerating the skins for 28 days during fermentation. Even still, the wine's overripeness and oxidation made it too intense for bottling right away. Manuel racked the wine into worn-out old Rivesaltes casks, which then developed voile (flor), which changed the way the wine evaporated over the next 10 years. Intense, super-dry, but honeyed, earthy, and a bit cheesy. A unicorn wine!

### Domaine Sau "Sao"

Rancio of 100% Grenache Gris from a small, single vineyard near Perpignan in the Roussillon. The tradition of rancio sec is very much a home-based tradition, and the 3 barrels of this wine were resting in the attic of a old farmhouse, concentrating and developing complexity over many years in old wood. Smoky, with clear whiskey-like notes, but still the classic acidity and nuttiness of great Rancio Sec. Use like whiskey or brandy in cocktails, or meditate on a bit of aged mountain cheese with this extremely small-production wine.