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Even after various European Union initiatives, the sprawling Languedoc still includes vast areas of vineyard acreage. And while at one time, the purpose of these vineyards was to simply satisfy French thirst for inexpensive *vin de table*, today, many producers have shifted focus to producing limited quantities of top-flight wines.

As I wrote last year, there's no reason to hold onto any antiquated notions of Languedoc wine quality. Or, indeed, of pricing. The best wines are increasingly priced according to the market and perceived value by the producers. Triple-digit pricing does indeed exist here.

For the most part, serious wine lovers can focus on the region's five crus: Corbières Boutenac, La Clape, Minervois La Livinière, Pic Saint Loup and Terrasses du Larzac, but many other appellations produce notable wines. Top options include Corbières, Faugères, Fitou, Minervois and Saint Chinian, but there are many estates outside these areas making excellent wines.

Producer is key. Is the producer committed to doing what needs to be done to make high-quality wines? Or are they content to pursue high yields, evaluate ripeness based on numbers rather than by flavor, not sort their fruit and fail to follow hygienic practices in the winery? Many of the most innovative producers increasingly produce wines outside the various AOP regulations, choosing to produce wines under the more permissive system of IGP or going even further and labeling their wines simply as Vin de France.

For the most part, vintages here are fairly consistent, with slight variations in style (of course, there are always exceptions based on geography and unique weather events). The 2015 reds, mostly reviewed in previous years, tend to be concentrated, tannic wines, many of which could still benefit from additional bottle age.

The 2016 reds, from a mostly warm, sunny year, are largely approachable already, while the 2017 reds, which saw crops reduced in many areas by spring frosts, are also ripe and rich, despite the cooler summer.

Deadlines being what they are, I'll have more reviews in an upcoming issue to cover the four days I spent in Languedoc, including the luxury wines from Gerard Bertrand and a vertical of Clos de l'Escandil, plus additional rosés tasted in New York. For now, 325 reviews will have to do.