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Wine pick of the week: 2015 E. Guigal Côtes du Rhône



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2015 E. Guigal Côtes du Rhône

Overall score: 19 (9 for quality, 10 for value)

Our tasters: Gave it a unanimous recommendation with four scores of at least 9. “Earthy, ripe and juicy. Blackberries on the noses, black cherry flavors.”

My score: 9.1. I found the wine to be equal parts earthy and elegant with many layers of flavors — and I scored it a 10th of a point higher than the 2015 La Bernardine Châteauneuf-du-Pape that we also tasted, which sells for \$67.99.

Blend: Syrah (50 percent), grenache (40) and mourvèdre (10)

Vineyards: Guigal works with 80 growers in France's Southern Rhone Valley, most of them on the west side of the river, but the vineyards are similar with sedimentary, limestone and granite soils featuring pebbles and alluvial deposits. The vines average 35 years in age and yield about 2.1 tons per acre.

Vintage: It was the best in the Southern Rhone since 2010 with a good yield of healthy, ripe fruit, although the ripening season was long and very hot. Guigal predicts the wine will go down as one of its best-ever Côtes du Rhones, equal to the 1998 and 2005.

Winery/winemaking: The cellars are in Ampuis, 30 minutes from Lyon, France's gastronomic capital. Traditional harvesting is followed by temperature-controlled vinification, then a long maceration period. The wine is aged in oak barrels for 18 months.

Winemaker notes: "Deep and dark red, it's intensely aromatic on the nose with black fruits and spices. The palate is full, round and yet also racy. Round and smooth tannins present themselves throughout the full bodied, ample, complete wine, which has a long finish, with elegance and finesse accompanying the abundance of fruit and well-balanced tannins.