



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
WINE MERCHANTS
CORNEY & BARROW LIMITED
LONDON



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HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES
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CORNEY & BARROW

INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS

Established 1780



TARDIEU-LAURENT
2008 VINTAGE

Rhône Valley

With such diversity of geography, climate, grape variety and above all, winemaking talent, it is incredibly difficult (some would say impossible), to make generalisations about any of the great wine regions. This is particularly true for the Rhône valley, where the diversity of *terroir* is so pronounced that any broad brush stroke would simply mislead.

Too often perceived as big, powerful, simplistic wines with little grace and aggressive tannins, the reality is that Châteauneuf-du-Pape can be as fine as any Burgundy, whilst Cornas or Hermitage can have the majestic complexity of the very best of Bordeaux. Today's Rhône valley winemakers understand their vines and their vineyards, they have travelled and experienced different winemaking techniques both in other regions of France and overseas as well. Indeed many of them now have their own interests and vineyards in foreign climes.

It is to individual growers and winemakers that one must turn to unearth the very best of the Rhône, particularly in a vintage as demanding and technical as 2008. Michel Tardieu is one such winemaker. There can be few people in the Rhône Valley with the intimate knowledge, understanding and access to such incredible parcels of old vines – to say nothing of the shameless talent – at his disposal. Our recent tasting of Michel's 2008 wines has only underlined and confirmed his total command of the Rhône in all its wonderful forms.

Tardieu-Laurent

Established in 1994, the Tardieu-Laurent wines turned heads from the outset. Michel Tardieu, now working independently, is free to pursue his philosophy to the maximum, without any impediment. Obsessive in his pursuit of the perfect translation of vintage and place, Michel refers to himself as a *terroirist*.

Provençal by birth, Michel settled in the Lubéron, in the Southern Rhône, with his charming wife Michelle. The family now all work in the Tardieu-Laurent business. Michel buys wine, selected according to the quality of the vineyard, and looks after the maturation process, blending and commercialisation of the wines. Logically, given that the accurate translation of *terroir* and vintage is fundamental to Michel's mindset, intervention is minimal. Top quality ingredients are absolutely essential. To that end, a huge part of Michel's work involves building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with a network of low-yield producers, who own specific, top quality parcels, largely of old vines. Michel works closely with them, in both the Northern and Southern Rhône, ensuring the very best possible vine husbandry. Many wines are organic and some are biodynamic.

Michel knows the vineyards and the specific parcels within those vineyards which are of interest to him, by heart. Most of the vines selected are naturally low-yielding old vines, over 50 years of age and often older. The naturally restricted volumes result in increased complexity and intensity.

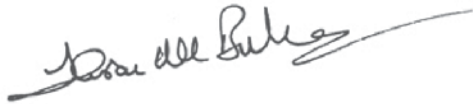
2008 Vintage Notes

The Rhône Valley has enjoyed a run of warm vintages which we have, rather complacently, taken to be the norm. 2008 was a brusque reminder that climate can never be taken for granted but also that sound vineyard practices can stack the odds in favour of the good grower. It also illustrates that heat is not a prerequisite for a successful vintage. 2008 was a cold year first and foremost, with some rain to add to the excitement. A wet spring resulted in a battle against mildew which, ultimately, limited the possible production. We had become rather used to warm summers, with heat waves encouraging maturation, but 2008 was cool. September then saw unseasonal rain, most marked in the north. The experienced growers found that their healthy grapes were better able to withstand the rains, see out the wet spell and maximise the benefits of a turnaround in mid-September. Dry, cool weather, with plenty of sun, allowed the grapes to mature fully whilst averting the risk of rot. At harvest the weather was fair and the quality looked good – a rather classical vintage, in fact.

There were challenges certainly, but with severe selection the best growers can be proud of their achievements, whilst lamenting the very reduced size of the crop. The ingredients having been assembled, Michel Tardieu then had to work his magic. The *élevage* will now determine how the wines realise their potential.

Michel has had thirteen vintages in which to get under the skin of his wines. His respect for *terroir* is fundamental to his philosophy and his challenge every year is how best to translate this *terroir* within the context of the vintage.

The hallmark of 2008 is that these are *vins de garde* – wines which will best reward the patient. They are well-balanced and intensely coloured with impressive tannins which will need time to become integrated. The whites are stunning, electric, vibrant and intense.



Alison Buchanan
Associate Director, Buying
November 2009



Michel Tardieu

White – Southern Rhône

Côtes-du-Rhône Blanc, Guy Louis

60% Marsanne (over 50 years), 15% Roussanne,
15% Grenache Blanc (over 60 years), 10% Viognier
Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus to 18

This is a blend from the north and south. Only 500 cases were produced, bottled just one week before we tasted in July. Pale golden straw in colour, this presents a rather decadent, leesy richness on the nose with breezy orchard and stone fruit aromatics. Richly-textured and silky, there is a sensual marriage of peach and apricot, complemented by both refreshing acidity and a very focussed minerality – lovely wine.

Recommended drinking from 2010 to 2017 plus
£125/case of 12, in bond UK

Saint-Péray Vieilles Vignes

60% Marsanne (over 100 years), 40% Roussanne (over 35 years)
Corney & Barrow Score 18 plus

There were just 250 cases produced of this insider's wine. Relatively unknown as an appellation, there are signs that the secret may have leaked. We sold out almost immediately last year. Shimmering yellow-gold in colour, this presents very pure fresh fruit on the nose. The palate is surprisingly opulent with a silky texture, impressive purity and focus and a lifted freshness on the prolonged finish.

Recommended drinking from 2010 to 2018 plus
£150/case of 12, in bond UK

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc, Vieilles Vignes

50% Grenache Blanc (over 60 years), 50% Roussanne (over 20 years)
Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus to 18

With only 250 cases produced, for the whole world, this is once again extremely rare. Pale green-gold in colour, this has a very noble nose, a lovely, layered marriage of stone and orchard fruit, gently understated, all complemented by refined mineral notes. This is wonderfully seductive in texture, with perfectly poised balance. Michel has fashioned an admirable ambassador for the vintage – very attractive.

Recommended drinking from 2010 to 2015 plus
£270/case of 12, in bond UK

White – Northern Rhône

Hermitage Blanc

80% Marsanne (over 50 years), 20% Roussanne (over 35 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 18 plus to 19 plus

With just 425 cases produced, this tends to sell out immediately. A lustrous gold in colour, it is immediately attractive. The nose is inviting and evocative, reminiscent of warm pastry shops, with hints of brioche, vanilla and caramel, allied to ripe, orchard fruit compote, cream and nuts. The palate is utterly decadent, opulent and ripe, yet elegantly poised throughout. This is a really fine Hermitage – possibly Michel's best ever.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2020 plus

£330/case of 12, in bond UK

Condrieu

100% Viognier (over 40 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 18 to 19

There are only 225 cases for the world, of this benchmark Viognier. Shimmering gold in colour, this wears its heart on its sleeve. It does not whisper Viognier from the wings but boldly declares it, centre-stage and firmly in the limelight. A profusion of fresh and dried peaches and apricots dominate the nose and palate, laced with acacia honey. The texture is silky and opulent yet there is a focus and precision throughout. This is a must for all devotees of this very particular grape variety.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2016 plus

£330/case of 12, in bond UK

Red – Southern Rhône

Les Becs Fins, Côtes-du-Rhône Villages

50% Grenache (over 60 years), 50% Syrah (over 20 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 18

We welcome back an old friend this year in Les Becs Fins – stunning quality and value for money and the presentation has had a makeover to boot. We are delighted with this return to the portfolio. Very deeply coloured, the grapes for Les Becs Fins were sorted to within an inch of their lives – an almost ridiculous level of severity for a wine of such a humble appellation. The integrity of the AC comes so far behind Michel Tardieu's personal standards that in the end it is not so surprising. The nose is glorious, rich in seductive, red and black fruit. We had overlooked Les Becs Fins in the tasting initially and actually tasted it after the Hermitage – yet it held its own, meeting gravitas with exuberance. This sees no wood, so it is all about preserving the purity of fruit. Sweet, ripe, beautifully balanced and with an earthy minerality – a great buy.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2016 plus

£89/case of 12, in bond UK

Bandol 2008

100% Mourvèdre (over 50 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus

Only 200 cases were produced of this 100% Mourvèdre Bandol. This variety really delivered well in 2008, the vintage conditions serving to soften down its more rustic character, which often dominates tastings of the young wine. Bandol is an exciting coastal appellation within Provence, delivering individual, characterful wines. Deeply coloured, this has immediate appeal. The nose provides an alluring combination of sweet cherry fruit and spice, citrus freshness and darker earthy, sedate undertones. This is really good value – a level of surprising complexity for an often over-looked appellation.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2016 plus

£190/case of 12, in bond UK

Côtes-du-Rhône, Guy Louis

60% Grenache (over 50 years), 40% Syrah (over 35 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus to 18

Named after Michel's father and uncle – family is wonderfully important here – this is now 85% biodynamic/organic, from different growers with whom Michel has worked for many years. Intensely coloured, a lustrous, jet-cherry, initially when we tasted this was rather restrained on the nose. The explosion of fruit on attack on the palate was therefore a wonderful surprise – a blend of pomegranate, berry fruit compote and minerals, with a dash of spice. This appears to have a purity and intensity which is on a par with the excellent 2007, at this stage – thanks largely, we feel, to the deeply-rooted, very, very old vines – bravo Michel!

Recommended drinking from 2010 to 2017 plus

£120/case of 12, in bond UK

Rasteau Vieilles Vignes

80% Grenache (over 80 years), 20% Syrah (over 35 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus to 18

Just 375 cases are likely to be released this year, from three vineyards planted on clay-limestone and blue clay slopes. This is intense, jet-plum in colour, richly textured and inviting. As ever, Michel has forged an extraordinarily characterful Rasteau, which punches well above its weight, delivering a complex blend of vivacious freshness and a dark, serious structure. The old – vine fruit reveals its presence from a hedonistic, sweet berried nose through a layered palate, supported by fine-grained tannins, and on into a sustained, focussed finish.

Recommended drinking from 2011 to 2016 plus

£139/case of 12, in bond UK

“2008 is a vintage where work in the vineyards – specifically with the soil and the vines – played an essential part.”

Michel Tardieu

Vacqueyras Vieilles Vignes

90% Grenache (over 65 years), 10% Syrah (over 35 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 17

Only 450 cases of Vacqueyras were produced – not much for the whole world. This is from three great *terroirs*, including the revered Plateau de Sarrians. Jet-plum-cherry in appearance, this is fathomless and firm, to a bright, tight rim. The nose is hearty and robust, with lots of personality, rich, concentrated and headily perfumed. Succulent dark fruit, reminiscent of warm Eccles cakes and cherry compote, are complemented by hints of spice. Michel, as ever, has produced really serious wine from an often overlooked appellation – very impressive.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2018 plus

£175/case of 12, in bond UK

Gigondas Vieilles Vignes

85% Grenache (over 60 years), 15% Syrah (over 35 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus to 18 plus

Deep purple-ruby in colour, this presents extraordinarily ripe, fresh black and red berry fruit on the nose, wild herbs and smoky spice. This is very fine *terroir* translated into a very fine rendition of the 2008 vintage – layered and complex on the palate, with surprisingly generous, accessible fruit. Rich and pure, with a layered, extended finish, this is very fine – but with only 400 cases in total, rather rare.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2016 plus

£195/case of 12, in bond UK

Châteauneuf-du-Pape Vieilles Vignes

90% Grenache (over 80 years), 10% Syrah (over 30 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus to 18

This is jet-shot plum in colour, richly-textured. The nose presents a blend of fresh and cocktail cherries, with hints of blackberry crumble. The nose is rather noble, intense and concentrated with delectable sweet old vine fruit to the fore, lightly peppered. This is an extraordinary wine, rich and supple with beautifully-integrated ripe tannins and a well-pitched balance – a very fine result.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2018 plus

£360/case of 12, in bond UK

Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Cuvée Spéciale

100% Grenache (80 to 100 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 18 plus

Intensely coloured, this is produced from extremely old vines, grown on soils with the celebrated, typical galets stones. The nose is sweet and enticing, a blend of pomegranate and candied cherries, with a delicate citrus lift. The palate echoes these aromatics, completing a heady, perfumed translation of the appellation and the vintage – appetising, generous and long – very attractive.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2020 plus

£375/case of 12, in bond UK

Red – Northern Rhône

Crozes-Hermitage, Vieilles Vignes

100% Syrah (50 years and older)

Corney & Barrow Score 16 plus to 17

A gorgeous jet-plum in colour with a cerise rim, offering very rich, pure fruit on the nose, suffused with violets and roses. The palate is similarly aromatic, adroit and focussed with an attractive freshness. This owes its success to being planted on the slopes and to the old Syrah vines. The plateau fared less well in 2008. This is lovely, wonderfully pure wine, with a fine mineral backbone.

Recommended drinking from 2010 to 2018 plus

£155/case of 12, in bond UK

Saint-Joseph Les Roches, Vieilles Vignes

100% Syrah, including Sérine (50 years and older)

Corney & Barrow Score 17 plus

Deeply coloured, this has a very classical Rhône nose, darkly fruited with floral notes, hints of iodine and wild herbs. The palate reflects these aromatics with really obvious, supple fruit and an understated mineral layer. This is a wonderfully crafted Saint-Joseph. The vineyard's proximity to Côte-Rôtie is reflected in the style of the wine, which represents excellent value.

Recommended drinking from 2012 to 2018 plus

£185/case of 12, in bond UK

Cornas Coteaux

100% Syrah, including Sérine (50 years and older)

Corney & Barrow Score 16 plus to 17

This is an intense jet-shot cherry in colour, with a bright, cerise rim. The wine was just finishing its malolactic fermentation when we tasted but the nose, though slightly disturbed, revealed red and black fruits, tobacco notes and dried violets – a complex blend of primary perfume and earthy notes. The palate is both opulent and fresh, with a firm, well-integrated tannic structure. The overall balance in 2008 warrants a degree of patience as all of the ingredients are there for a beautifully classical wine, over time.

Recommended drinking from 2014 to 2019 plus

£259/case of 12, in bond UK

Côte-Rôtie

100% Sérine and Syrah (50 years and older)

Corney & Barrow Score 16 plus to 17

Only 300 cases were produced for the world – a victim of Michel's severe sorting. A lovely rich colour, the nose here is a little more sedate and restrained, offering a blend of violets, roses, spice and pot pourri. The palate is rich and rounded, with a breezy, aromatic lift. Structured and serious, there is also a very pretty, fresh-berried dimension, complemented by wild herbs. Mineral throughout, this is a fine, complex Côte-Rôtie, rich, pure and very long.

Recommended drinking from 2018 to 2022 plus

£420/case of 12, in bond UK

Hermitage

100% Syrah, including Sérine (60 years and older)

Corney & Barrow Score 18 to 19

A beautiful, intense, jet-cherry in colour, this was just finishing malolactic when we tasted and so had a slightly disturbed nose, though it still showed hints of ripe cherries, and nuances of liquorice, iodine and tobacco. Michel delayed harvest here, eager to gain the intensity and complexity borne of an extended growing period. Picking was a full three weeks later than in 2007 – and this has really paid off. The palate presents accessible, ripe, black and red fruit, allied to a savoury layer. This is a very fine translation of the vintage with beautifully-integrated, ripe, noble tannins – an exceptionally fine result!

Recommended drinking from 2019 to 2022 plus

£495/case of 12, in bond UK

Vin Doux Naturel Rasteau Vieilles Vignes – 2006 Vintage

100% Grenache (over 80 years)

Corney & Barrow Score 17.5 plus

Tasting over, about to convene with our respective Blackberries before dinner, Oliver Hartley questioned whether, by chance, Michel makes a vin doux naturel. These are sweet wines made similarly to Port, fermentation stopped prematurely by the addition of alcohol. This produces full-bodied wines, with some residual sugar. We must thank Oliver for bringing this little find. Jet-plum in colour, peppery and fresh, this has a very attractive, inviting, sweet nose, exuberant and berried initially, developing rich, heady old vine fruit with nuances of dark chocolate and a marmalade intrigue. This is much more wine-like than Port-like, less spiritry at 16.5% as opposed to 20% alcohol. This is one of the few wines which will complement mocha and chocolate desserts, festive puddings and blue cheese. Drinking beautifully already, this will age well under the correct cellar conditions.

Recommended drinking from 2009 to 2025 plus

£160/case of 12, in bond UK



Tasting Guide

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

14–16 A very good to excellent wine.

16–18 An excellent to outstanding wine.

18–20 An outstanding to legendary wine.

- *Wines are judged within their peer group.*
- *A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a 'spread' (e.g. 14–16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A 'plus' adds further to that potential.*
- *A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.*

TO ORDER, PLEASE CONTACT:

CORNEY & BARROW HEAD OFFICE

1 Thomas More Street, London E1W 1YZ

Tel: 020 7265 2430 Fax: 020 7265 2444

sales@corneyandbarrow.com

CORNEY & BARROW EAST ANGLIA

Belvoir House, High Street, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 8DH

Tel: 01638 600 000 Fax: 01638 600 860

newmarket@corneyandbarrow.com

CORNEY & BARROW WITH WHIGHAMS OF AYR

Oxenfoord Castle, Pathhead, Midlothian EH37 5UB

Tel: 01875 321 921 Fax: 01875 321 922

scotland@corneyandbarrow.com

www.corneyandbarrow.com