

Domaine Georges Vernay

By [Josh Raynolds](#)

Christine Vernay believes the 2012 white wines in the north benefited from early harvesting because it helped to preserve acidity that would have been lost due to the late-season warm weather--which, by contrast, helped push up the quality of the syrah. Growers who waited too long got greater ripeness but at the expense of freshness, she added, and those wines will need to be drunk young. Freshness is also the operative word for 2011 in Condrieu, she said, adding that the balance of the wines should ensure a graceful evolution in bottle.

As I've noted before, the red wines here have been on a serious quality upswing in recent years. Vernay admitted that because she's by nature and nurture a white wine maker, her red wine path "goes the Burgundian way, toward finesse, not extraction." She thinks that syrah has a natural tendency toward wildness and that if one isn't careful "that can go even further, to rustic," which she wants to avoid like the plague.

[2012 Domaine Georges Vernay Condrieu Les Terrasses de l'Empire](#) 91 Pts

(\$78) Pale gold. Powerful, mineral-drenched aromas of lime zest, pear skin, violet and quinine, with a suave, smoky overtone. Juicy, intense and dense, offering chewy orchard and citrus fruit flavors, building spiciness and strong minerality. Penetrating acidity energizes the smoky, strikingly persistent finish, with the pear and quinine notes repeating. No excess fat here.

[2011 Domaine Georges Vernay Condrieu Les Chaillees de L'Enfer](#) 92 Pts

(\$150) (made from younger vines in the Terrasses vineyard and aged in 225-liter *barrisques*, 25% of them new): Green-tinged yellow. High-pitched citrus and orchard fruit aromas are complemented by violet and smoky minerals. Juicy, penetrating and pure, offering incisive pear skin and white peach flavors and a touch of anise. Becomes spicier and chewier with air and finish with excellent clarity, power and length.

[2011 Domaine Georges Vernay Condrieu Coteau de Vernon](#) 94 Pts.

(\$170) Light, bright yellow. Heady, mineral-tinged aromas of tangerine, poached pear, nectarine and violet, with a sexy floral topnote gaining strength with aeration. Palate-staining citrus and orchard fruit flavors show outstanding clarity and power but come off as lithe and nervy, with a hint of anise on the back half. Sappy, spicy and chewy on the finish, which lingers with superb energy and mineral-driven persistence.

[2011 Domaine Georges Vernay Saint-Joseph Terres d'Encre](#) 91 Pts

(\$49) (sourced from vines growing on granitic soils): Bright violet color. Perfumed scents of red and dark berries, Asian spices and smoky herbs. Raspberry and bitter cherry flavors are sharply focused and pure, picking up a spicy character with aeration. This precise, distinctly elegant wine is balanced to age but is already delicious.

2011 Domaine Georges Vernay Cote-Rotie Blonde du Seigneur 92 Pts

(\$90) (includes 5% viognier): Inky ruby. Mineral-tinged aromas of blackberry, cherry compote, licorice and violet, plus an exotic apricot nuance. At once weighty and energetic, offering sappy dark fruit flavors and hints of candied violet and spicecake. Smoothly blends power and vivacity, finishing pure, spicy and long, with a bright mineral note.

2010 Domaine Georges Vernay Saint-Joseph La Dame Brune 92 Pts

(\$82) Brilliant ruby-red. Heady, spice-accented aromas of black raspberry, floral pastilles and cola, with a smoky topnote. Intense red berry liqueur and spicecake flavors show appealing sweetness while maintaining vivacity thanks to tangy acidity and a building mineral element. The long finish features sweet red fruit and anise qualities, silky tannins and excellent focus.

2010 Domaine Georges Vernay Cote-Rotie Maison Rouge 94 Pts

(\$170) (all syrah, from vines that are over 50 years old): Deep ruby. Exuberant, highly fragrant scents of black raspberry, blueberry, potpourri and floral oils, along with a zesty mineral nuance. Fine-grained, expansive red and dark berry flavors are complicated by floral pastille and Asian spice notes that build with aeration. A sexy, palate-staining, velvety wine that finishes sappy, spicy and extremely long. This wine's exotic perfume made me think that it was vinified mostly with whole clusters but Christine Vernay told me that she destemmed all but 20% of the fruit.