

NOTES FOR A SPRING PICNIC

by Gary Podesto

This month's wines suggest open air and a blanket spread beneath early spring sun. One bottle is quiet and lifted; the other speaks clearly and with warmth. Together, they make a strong case for an Easter picnic with friends built with intention rather than excess.

From Thillardon in Chénas, the smallest cru of Beaujolais, comes a wine shaped by flinty, alluvial soils and old quarry sites—Les Carrières. Aged a year before release and resting at a sessionable 11% alcohol, it carries the lineage of the Gang of Four. There's a smoky impression here with a stony, mineral edge. The fruit is bright red with a Poulsard-like delicacy. This is pig-centric country wine, well suited to charcuterie and a wedge of cheese cut thick with a pocket knife.

On the other end of the blanket sits Mégaphone, from the Brunier family in the southern Rhône, grown on the edge of Gigondas. Eighty percent Grenache, twenty percent Syrah, raised in large neutral barrels, and intended for drinking now. It announces itself, as the name suggests, but without bluster. At \$29, it is generous in both spirit and structure.

THE MENU

For the Beaujolais, think cured ham or *saucisson*. Radishes with salted butter. A simple terrine. Some young sheep's milk cheese and bread that prefers to be torn. Let the wine's cool mineral edge balance the salt and fat. Serve it chilled while the fire builds.

For the Rhône, grilled lamb chops with garlic and rosemary. White beans warmed on the grill in a cast-iron pan, finished with olive oil, chopped herbs, and lemon. The Grenache brings fruit and roundness; the Syrah adds a subtle smoky note that works well with the char. A salad of rocket and olive oil would be most welcome.

THE METHOD

Cook food that travels well and improves with a little rest. Dress beans while warm so they absorb seasoning. Grill lamb to medium and let it rest fully; it can be enjoyed at ambient temperature. Season assertively; food can taste less vibrant outdoors.

Chill the Thillardon more than you think necessary; it will warm quickly. Consider decanting the Rhône before leaving home to soften its edges. Bring one sharp knife, a small board, and a proper cloth. A good picnic feels simple because it's organized. Outdoor meals reward planning and restraint. With thoughtful preparation and the right bottles, very little else is required.



Gary Podesto is a cook at Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, California, and is the chief culinary collaborator for the Climate Farm School. His work aims to revitalize the ritual of gathering around the hearth and table while promoting the values of edible education and regenerative agriculture. Learn more at www.garypodesto.net.

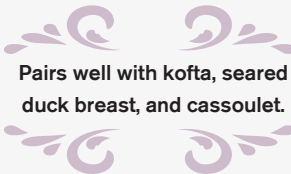
APRIL 2026

ROUGE









2024 VENTOUX ROUGE “MÉGAPHONE”
FAMILLE BRUNIER

A LITTLE OVER A DECADE AGO, on the verge of integrating the newest generation of the Brunier family—Edouard, Nicolas, and Manon—brothers Daniel and Frédéric Brunier launched their latest cuvée, Mégaphone, from the slopes of the Dentelles de Montmirail in the Ventoux appellation. In the years since, Mégaphone has served as an ideal entry point, both for the younger generation to cut its teeth and for wine lovers to become acquainted with the magic of the Bruniers’ wines. But just as it would be a mistake to underestimate the younger generation, do not mistake this for just another easygoing Rhône *rouge*. Blending 80% Grenache with 20% Syrah, Mégaphone represents the pinnacle of what a regional Rhône blend can be. At once fun, deep, soulful, and savory, this will pair brilliantly with roast lamb or a hearty tagine, but it is also a meal unto itself! —Tom Wolf



Pairs well with kofta, seared duck breast, and cassoulet.

\$29.00 PER BOTTLE \$313.20 PER CASE

					
2024 Ventoux Rouge “Mégaphone” Famille Brunier	80% Grenache, 20% Syrah	25-year-old vines, on average Rocky clay and sand	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62°F Decant optional	Sweet cherries, <i>réglisse</i> , dusty earth Deep, soulful, savory	Drink now through 2030
2024 Chénas “Les Carrières” Domaine Thillardon	Gamay	Vines planted in 1964, 1980, 2001 Alluvial, silex	Serve <i>cool</i> 56–60°F Decant optional	Raspberry, rhubarb, earth Silky, high-toned, expressive	Drink now

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2024 CHÉNAS “LES CARRIÈRES”
DOMAINE THILLARDON

IT’S NO SECRET THAT THE Beaujolais has been at the center of the “natural” wine movement over the last four decades. Its leading growers—Lapierre and Foillard, among others—have inspired countless vigneronns throughout France and beyond to experiment more, especially when it comes to using less sulfur in the cellar, without sacrificing pure deliciousness. But while those growers who came up in the ’90s are widely known and beloved, you can still find fresh, new, and inspired interpretations of the Beaujolais by rising stars in the region, who carry on that early, adventurous, and experimental spirit. Our latest discovery, Domaine Thillardon, is run by a quartet of homesteading siblings who live off their land: they raise livestock, grow their own vegetables, and make wine from the gnarled, untrained Gamay vines that grow behind their home. All of their Chénas are silky and high-toned, but Les Carrières is their most featherweight cuvée—a real springtime treat. —Tom Wolf

\$42.00 PER BOTTLE \$453.60 PER CASE



ABOVE Charly and Paul-Henri Thillardon. © Joanie Bonfiglio

COVER The Bruniers’ vines in the shadow of Mont Ventoux. © Joanie Bonfiglio