

Provence:

Heaven for the Senses



Beachfront restaurant in Nice (left); Domaines Ott Clos Mireille vineyard in La Londe-les-Maures (above); bouillabaisse (below).

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Sommeliers' choice

The quality of wine made in Provence today owes much to the pioneering spirit of Domaine Tempier's Peyraud, who helped organize a Bandol producers' syndicate and urged the AOC to require Mourvèdre as the basis of Bandol rouge. Peyraud had learned that most of the vineyards were planted to Mourvèdre before phylloxera wiped them out, and that the grape adds a hearty richness, a firm structure, and a flash of *sauvage* to the softer, prettier Grenache. Over the years, the Peyrauds have acquired three old-vine Mourvèdre vineyards—



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Tourtine, Migoua, and Cabassou—which they bottle individually to great acclaim. These are the unofficial grands crus of Provence.

Domaine Tempier Bandol 2006 \$38

Slightly hazy and a moderately saturated ruby-red, this wine offers aromas of black cherry, raspberry, mulberry, roses, and black and green peppercorns. It is moderately full-bodied, with pithy fruit tannins, dark fruit, and peppery spice. Although past releases have really shown their Mourvèdre meatiness, this version only hints at that, softened by layers of compote and black pepper. Despite its slight grip and spiciness, it's one of the more elegant bottlings I have tasted from Tempier.

Prices are estimated retail.

Domaine Tempier Bandol 2008 \$28

Vibrant salmon-pink, with aromas of sour cherry, strawberry, watermelon, lemon, and freshly ground and whole black peppercorns. On the palate, this full-bodied rosé offers bright watermelon, strawberry, apricot, and lemon notes; it's mouth-puckering and big-boned, with tart acids and gripping fruit tannins.