

FOOD & DRINK

Wine, etc.: Wines of the southern Rhone offer unadulterated fun | COMMENTARY

When it comes to blending grape varieties, no place is better known than Bordeaux. The five red varieties used here to make some of the most famous wines are called “noble” for historic reasons. But blending takes a far more interesting turn in the southern Rhone Valley where producers have more varieties from which to craft their delicious wines.

While the northern Rhone Valley is dominated by syrah because it grows best in its cooler temperatures, southern Rhone Valley’s Mediterranean climate means milder winters and warmer summers — conditions needed for varieties such as grenache. Although the wines from this region may not be as complex and full-bodied as their northern cousins, they represent better values and are far less pretentious. In recent years we have turned to the recognized appellations of southern Rhone for unabashed, unadulterated fun.

E. Guigal Cotes du Rhone 2017 (\$18). We’ve followed this wine for decades. Always a great buy, it bursts with fresh black fruit on the nose and adds spice notes to the flavors. Elegant, yet complex enough to complement pasta, pizza, burgers and similar food. Syrah dominates the blend.