

1970 Domaine de Rancy Rivesaltes Ambre

A Proprietary Blend Sweet White Dessert wine from Rivesaltes, Languedoc Roussillon, France

Source Reviewer Rating Maturity Current (Release) Cost

The Rancy 1970 Rivesaltes Ambre is among the most haunting and rarified, yet paradoxically among the most succulent and fruit-filled examples of Jean-Hubert Verdaguer's father's artistry that I have tasted. The secret here lies in the wine's inhabiting these two parallel and equally compelling universes. Smoldering autumn leaves, Burley tobacco, peat and toasted hickory lend a dark, decadent cast while high-toned suggestions of distilled fruit essences exert ethereal fascination. At the same time, plum preserves, sultana, and caramel lend already multi-layered senses of sweetness to a wine that is lusciously full of sap. Saliva-inducing salinity and fruit pit piquancy perfectly compliment the sweetness and ensure that the long finish encourages return sips. This profound success will be virtually ageless, subject only to the vicissitudes of cork.

If fame depended solely on quality, Jean-Hubert Verdaguer ought to be famous for his trove of ancient Rivesaltes. His younger Rivesaltes can be outstanding, too (see for example the 1996 about which I wrote in issue 184) - I just don't happen to have tasted any new examples of those in the past three years. Nor - on the basis of recent experience (though I have still not visited him) - ought Verdaguer's dry wines to be overlooked, either.

A Connie and Patrick Allen Selection, United Estates Wine Imports