

En Primeur

BERRY BROS & RUDD

3, ST. JAMES'S STREET, LONDON

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WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANTS

## Burgundy 2019



**INTRODUCTION**.....03

**VINTAGE REPORT**.....06

**WHERE TO START**

    A Guide to En Primeur..... 10

    What is *Terroir*?.....14

    Understanding Burgundy Classifications..... 16

**BURGUNDY’S GRAPES**

    On Chardonnay.....18

    On Pinot Noir.....24

**KEY REGIONS**

    Chablis.....28

    Côte de Nuits.....42

    Côte de Beaune.....64

    Côte Chalonnaise.....78

    Mâconnais..... 88

**MEET THE PRODUCERS**

    Dominique Lafon.....34

    Domaine de la Vougeraie.....50

    Benjamin Leroux.....60

    Domaine Henri Rebourseau.....70

    Domaine Sébastien Magnien.....74

    Olivier Merlin..... 94

**OPINION**

    The Value of Patience.....38

    The Buyer’s Cellar..... 54

    Finding Value in Burgundy..... 82

    Why I Love Burgundy.....98

Welcome

Burgundy has the power to seduce; its wines to hold you in thrall; its complexity to pull you deeper. It is a region not just to like, but to love. Over the years that I've had the pleasure to drink and to buy from Burgundy, I've immersed myself in it, and the more I learn, the more I want to know.

This year, as we prepare to offer our 2019 En Primeur wines, we wanted to take the opportunity to share some of what makes the region so special. Over the coming pages, we'll explore the '19 vintage itself. We also delve deeper into Burgundy, taking a closer look at its winemakers, wines and appellations.

Those of you who are just beginning your journey into Burgundy should find all you need to immerse yourself in the region and breeze through its terminology. If you're more seasoned, then we hope we can bring Burgundy's pleasures a little closer. And there's no better way to do that than by telling its stories.

Starting on page 34, we talk to six brilliant winemakers. You'll hear their take on what makes Burgundy so mesmerising – and also how they found the '19 vintage. Those of you familiar with our range will notice a new producer, Domaine Henri

Rebourseau, which we are delighted to offer for the first time; you'll find an interview with Louis de Surrel on page 70.

You'll also hear from the team too – my colleagues Mark Pardoe MW and Will Heslop – who offer their advice and expertise on buying, cellaring and enjoying Burgundy. And, on page 98, you can catch up with our former colleague and wine critic Jasper Morris MW, who reflects on his 40-year love affair with the region.

If you are eagerly awaiting details of the '19 wines, tasting notes and prices then rest assured, this information will be included in our digital Price List, which will be sent out before Christmas. You may want to make a note of the '19 En Primeur launch date: 9am on 7th January '21.

But, for now, I should hand over to the vintage, which I discuss in depth on page 6. I am delighted to say that '19 is a year you should buy with total confidence – at whatever level best suits your cellar and your pocket. Its wines are remarkable and, as I hope you discover, will offer pleasure for years to come.

Should you have any questions, or if we can help in any way, please email us at [finewine@bbr.com](mailto:finewine@bbr.com) or get in touch with your Account Manager.

Burgundy 2019

Adam Bruntlett,

BURGUNDY BUYER





**ROUTE DES  
GRANDS CRUS**

**CÔTE-D'OR**

**D 122**

**MOREY-ST. DENIS**



**ROTISSERIE**

# 2019

## Vintage Report

Each vintage has its story. And 2019's is an exciting one, characterised by concentration, ripeness and acidity. Here, our Burgundy Buyer, Adam Bruntlett, gives his verdict

**B**efore the language of lockdowns and pandemics entered common parlance, the Burgundians were dealing with another unfamiliar phenomenon: a 2019 vintage with previously unseen levels of both ripeness and acidity. This drought year has produced wines with a baffling combination of searing freshness, perfect ripeness and crystalline purity. Our growers simply couldn't fathom how such a warm and dry vintage could produce such energetic wines – but they were delighted with the results.

In an uncertain world, the '19 vintage offers reassurance: you can buy it with confidence. Benjamin Leroux explains that it's a great vintage in both colours, with quality to be found across the region and at every level. There are, naturally, different styles of wine, and some growers and areas have been more successful than others – but there should be something to appeal to all budgets and palates. After the relatively generous crops of '17 and '18, volumes are smaller this year; they remind me of the period around the middle of the last decade. However, prices are generally stable: most growers understand the difficult economic conditions and have held their prices at '18 levels accordingly.

### THE GROWING SEASON

The vintage was characterised by greater than average sunlight. The harvest was relatively late by modern standards, beginning in September rather than August. The dry winter set the tone for the season; Chablis enjoyed slightly higher rainfall than the Côte d'Or and Mâconnais during this early part of the year.

Frost hit in early April, mostly affecting Chardonnay in the lower parts of the Côte de Beaune, particularly Chassagne-Montrachet. This would have a negative impact on volumes at the regional and village levels come harvest time. Cool, damp weather at flowering in June, again affecting the more precocious Chardonnay to a greater extent than Pinot Noir. This led to *coulure* and *millerandage*, which reduced the crop on the mid-slope Premier Cru vineyards.

This was shaping up to be a small vintage, and was exacerbated further by hot and dry weather in June and July. August was sunny but not excessively hot, and the Mâconnais received above-average rainfall as it had in June. The Côte d'Or had almost normal precipitation in August, while Chablis received just over 20 millimetres, less than half the average. The general lack of water caused drought stress and further diminished the crop, concentrating the juice in the grapes.



**HARVEST**

Picking began around 6th September in the Mâconnais and a few days later in the Côte d’Or and Chablis, corresponding to between 10 days and two weeks earlier than the traditional “100 days from flowering”. In the Côte de Nuits, a number of growers waited until mid to late September; they felt that the unusual weather conditions had blocked phenolic ripeness and the grapes needed a little more time – and possibly some rain. In the end, relatively little water arrived, but there doesn’t seem to be excessive alcohol or richness in later-picked wines.

The resulting berries were concentrated, with a high ratio of skins to juice, high acidity and higher than usual sugar levels – though without hitting the extremes occasionally encountered in ’18. Importantly, the pH of the wines was low, and there was a high proportion of stronger tartaric acid with lower levels of malic acid. The former remains in the wine unchanged, whereas the latter is converted into softer, creamy lactic acid during malolactic fermentation – this gives wines their creamy texture. The concentration of tartaric acid had given the wines plenty of freshness, which counterbalances the relatively high alcohol levels, ranging from 13.5% to 14.5%.

**DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS**

In contrast to ’18, this was a relatively easy vintage in the cellar, with straightforward fermentations. There are one or two exceptions, but many of the growers we work with are opting for either a short élevage or to transfer the wine from barrel to tank for the second winter; the aim is to preserve freshness in the wines and avoid drying them out with too much oak influence.

The trend for incorporating whole bunches persists, as do arguments over whether their inclusion adds or takes away freshness. Notably, some whole-bunch practitioners dialled the proportions back to avoid de-acidifying the wines in what is a ripe vintage. A recent development in the field of whole-bunch fermentation has been to remove the central trunk of the wood, keeping only the pedicels. Arnaud Mortet, Thibault Liger-Belair, Domaine de la Vougeraie and Jean-Pierre Guyon are all using this to a greater or lesser extent, arguing that removing the thicker trunk avoids extracting coarser tannins from the green wood.

More innovation seems to be taking place in the vineyards, with growers reacting to the challenges thrown up by warm and dry vintages. A recurring theme was the use of the vine’s canopy to shade grapes. Historically, vines were kept trimmed fairly low and leaves often removed during the ripening season to help achieve hard-won maturity. These days, the aim is to shade the grapes from sunburn and slow down the ripening process.

The wines were very approachable from barrel; their tremendous balance and concentrated fruit should ensure medium- to long-term ageing potential

In an uncertain world, the 2019 vintage offers reassurance: you can buy it with confidence. Benjamin Leroux explains that it’s a great vintage in both colours, with quality to be found across the region and at every level

**RED WINES**

The red wines are excellent, with slightly riper tannins than in ’18. Despite relatively elevated alcohol levels which generally sit half a degree either side of 14%, the low pH – and therefore high acidity – has ensured they retain plenty of freshness and classically Burgundian features. The wines were very approachable from barrel, but their tremendous balance and concentrated fruit should ensure they offer medium- to long-term ageing potential.

**WHITE WINES**

The whites are also fascinating, offering plenty of ripe fruit which is counterbalanced by acidity levels which are similar to those in the best recent Chardonnay vintages of ’17 and ’14. Growers were utterly bemused by the hitherto unseen combination of ripeness and freshness: with such a hot and dry season, achieving that balance is quite remarkable.

**VILLAGES TO LOOK OUT FOR**

Villages previously famed for their more rustic profiles, such as Santenay, Pommard and Aloxe-Corton, as well as the more renowned Nuits-Saint-Georges and Gevrey-Chambertin, have really overperformed: their sweet, juicy tannins give them a succulence and charm that makes them well worth considering. Equally, cooler areas such as the Hautes-Côtes, Auxey-Duresses, Saint-Romain and Saint-Aubin continue to impress in this warmer “new normal”. Morey-Saint-Denis, which was blessed with more rainfall in August than any other village in the Côte d’Or, appears to have really overachieved. ■



# A GUIDE TO

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# PRIMEUR

The idea of buying wine En Primeur can be baffling, but it's worth getting past the terminology: it's the key to accessing the best wines at the best price



# WHAT IS EN PRIMEUR?

Buying En Primeur means you are buying a wine before it has been bottled. It's a system that started in Bordeaux, and has become increasingly important in Burgundy, the Rhône and Italy.

# HOW DOES BUYING BURGUNDY EN PRIMEUR WORK?

First, our team taste and assess the wines from barrel. In January, we'll release these wines for sale, and you'll have a chance to make your purchase. Wines are sold In Bond (before Duty and VAT have been paid) and by the case.

Once the wines are ready, they are bottled and shipped to our warehouses. You can then ask us to deliver your wines, or we can store them for you. If you store your wines with us, you have the option to sell them at a later date using BBX, our online exchange. When wines are delivered, you'll need to pay Duty and VAT.

# WHY SHOULD I BUY EN PRIMEUR?

If you're interested in building a collection of fine wine, either for future enjoyment or investment, it makes sense to buy En Primeur.

The En Primeur release price is usually the best price for a wine; buying En Primeur is your best chance to secure highly sought-after wines for your collection. Securing allocations of the top wines can be frustrating, though the quality in Burgundy is such that there is something for everyone in our offer.

There's also the less practical and more emotional side of buying En Primeur: investing in a particular producer, and in a particular year, gives you a strong sense of connection with the wine, adding to its appeal. What's more, you're supporting the producer now, before they've bottled their wines: this lets them invest in their vineyards and winemaking, and in the next generation. ■





## SOIL

If there's one word you'll hear in conjunction with Burgundy, it's *terroir*. The region's wines have a wonderful ability to express their unique location: a recipe that combines soil, aspect, altitude and climate. It's this that makes each wine so distinctive, pure and seductive. Understanding a vineyard's soil – its combination of limestone, clay, gravel and sand – and the impact which this has on flavour is perhaps the key to unlocking *terroir*.

## CLIMATE

Burgundy's growers are seeing global warming's impact on climate: partly this manifests itself in higher temperatures, earlier ripening of fruit and August harvest dates; but winemakers are also seeing less predictable and more chaotic weather conditions. When it comes to *terroir*, the role of specific micro-climates is key: pockets of frost or prevalence of localised hailstorms for example can have critical effects on a vintage's performance.

## ASPECT

The direction a vineyard faces, and the steepness of the slope, has a huge impact on the vines. It will dictate the amount of sunlight and wind that the vines are exposed to. In Burgundy, tiny variations in aspect will alter the wine, and the way the vines are farmed. For example, vineyards with an easterly aspect benefit from morning sunlight which quickly dries dew and gently ripens fruit; westerly facing vineyards on the other hand, must endure hot afternoon sun.

## ALTITUDE

Burgundy's topography has significant hillsides and slopes. Generally, the best vineyards are to be found mid-slope, where the soils are well-drained and less fertile. Village wines tend to be grown in lower-altitude vineyards or those at the top of slopes. There's another element at play here too: with increasing global temperatures, higher altitudes can help winemakers keep freshness – and limit alcohol – in their wines, preserving Burgundy's characteristic style.■



# TERROIR



# UNDERSTANDING BURGUNDY CLASSIFICATIONS



## REGIONAL

The catch-all appellation here is Bourgogne: these red and white wines can be produced from vineyards throughout the region. They may be blends of multiple vineyards and growers. For the most part, these are fresh and fruity wines intended for early drinking, though there certainly are exceptions. Some regional appellations specialise in a given grape or style, such as Bourgogne Aligoté – dedicated to the Aligoté grape – and Crémant de Bourgogne, the local traditional method sparkling wine. Sub-regional appellations from more geographically specific areas – such as Bourgogne Hautes-Côte de Nuits and Bourgogne Côte d’Or – are also part of this tier.

## VILLAGE

Sometimes called “communal” appellations, these wines are named after the village in which they were grown, such as Meursault, Volnay and Pommard. A lot of villages have double-barrelled names, such as Puligny-Montrachet, Chambolle-Musigny and Gevrey-Chambertin. Here, the name of the village – Gevrey – has been combined with the name of its most famous vineyard, Chambertin. Village wines tend to be located either low or high on hillsides, while the superior mid-slope position is reserved for Premiers and Grands Crus.

## PREMIER CRU

Premier Cru wines come from specific vineyard sites – *climats* – within prized village-level vineyards. There are hundreds of individual Premier Cru sites, such as Clos St Jacques in Gevrey-Chambertin, Les Charmes in Meursault and Les Amoureuses in Chambolle-Musigny. Typically, wines are labelled with the name of the village followed by that of the *climat* and the Premier Cru status, such as Meursault Les Charmes Premier Cru. Where a wine is a blend of several different Premier Cru sites within the same village appellation, it can only be labelled with the village name and the Premier Cru designation, such as Meursault Premier Cru.

## GRAND CRU

The Grands Crus of Burgundy are its majestic top tier. They represent only a tiny proportion of overall production, but these names – the likes of Corton, Bâtard-Montrachet and Bonnes-Mares – are in perpetual demand among discerning collectors. Each Grand Cru vineyard has its own appellation, and the wines are labelled simply with that vineyard name and their Grand Cru status – such as Chambertin Grand Cru. There’s no mention of the surrounding village. These are fine wines produced in tiny quantities with long-term ageing potential. ■





# On Chardonnay

Across the world, Chardonnay may be considered a divisive “Marmite” grape, but in Burgundy, it reigns supreme

For anyone starting their Burgundy adventure, the region’s sheer complexity can be daunting. Thankfully, there’s at least one aspect which is really quite simple: the grape varieties. All the great wines of Burgundy are produced from either Chardonnay or Pinot Noir. Chardonnay is adaptable and malleable; it's responsible for many of the world's finest white wines. It's easy to see why it's so popular with winegrowers and winemakers in almost every wine region on earth.

Yet, Chardonnay is often misunderstood. Perhaps more than any other varietal, it suffers from a bad reputation in certain circles of wine drinkers. Overly oaky, buttery and alcoholic examples – an increasing rarity, it must be said – are enough to turn some people off for life. And that’s fair enough. But often what people dislike is this style of Chardonnay, not Chardonnay itself.

In fact, and particularly when it comes to Burgundy, novice drinkers may not even realise that the sublime wine they’re enjoying – a crisp, steely Chablis, for example – is even made from Chardonnay. This isn’t the drinker’s fault. European wine labels historically emphasise the place a wine has come from, rather than its grape variety. With the ingredients left largely oblique, it’s easy to understand why somebody might think that Chardonnay and Chablis are two completely different things.

The key thing to remember is this is a grape with myriad styles.





01



02

03



- 01 Hand-harvesting is the norm for Burgundy's best producers; it is skilled work, with teams of pickers working intensely once harvest starts
- 02 Chardonnay grapes are brought to the winery in small crates, giving the precious fruit the protection it needs
- 03 Once it is in the winery, fruit is carefully checked, sorted and – where required – destemmed



Chardonnay is adaptable and malleable; it's responsible for many of the world's finest white wines

When it comes to Chablis, Chardonnay takes on a pure, refreshing and lively style. Here in the northern part of Burgundy, growing conditions allow for a long, slow ripening: this lets the Chardonnay develop complexity while retaining its characteristically fresh acidity. The grape manifests itself with a lot of vibrancy, lively citrus and stony minerality. Most Chablis producers don't use any new oak, making this an exceptionally pure expression of fruit. It'll very likely appeal to even the most hardened Chardonnay sceptics — particularly alongside some simply prepared seafood. High-end examples can age for many years, starting to soften and taking on intriguing nutty and spicy notes.

For an entirely different style of Chardonnay, look to the Côte de Beaune. Its Chardonnay is nothing short of luxurious, notably when from the most famous villages of Puligny-Montrachet, Chassagne-Montrachet and Meursault. Chardonnay from Puligny has minerality and floral notes, coupled with rich

generosity. Chassagne boasts notes of orange and marmalade, with nuanced spiciness, depth and concentration. In Meursault, the classic description of butter and hazelnuts frequently rings true; it may not have a Grand Cru vineyard to append to its name, but these village wines often stand out among their neighbours. Further south, the Mâconnais has a style of its own, too: Pouilly-Fuissé remains the benchmark, with well-deserved and long-overdue Premiers Crus on the way.

The versatility of Chardonnay — in Burgundy alone — means that there's something here for every palate. There's endless interest in exploring the different wines produced even on a single hillside. To visit the region is a revelation: stand in one spot and have Grand Cru, Premier Cru and village-level vineyards all within a few paces, each responsible for wines which differ as much in style as they do in price. ■





# ON PINOT NOIR

“For me, there’s no better red wine on the planet than Pinot Noir. And there’s no better place for Pinot Noir than Burgundy”

– DOMINIQUE LAFON





The time-honoured combination of cool climate and clay-limestone soils, arranged over a meandering hillside, allow Pinot Noir to ripen slowly, preserving its finesse and balance

**T**he differences between Burgundy's two grape varieties go beyond mere physiology. It's a question of personality, really: Chardonnay is easy-going and adaptable, happy to make its home where it lays its hat. Pinot Noir, simply put, isn't – it's fussy, finicky and difficult to cultivate. For a *vigneron* to capture the essence of Pinot Noir in a wine is a balancing act, if not an outright dark art. Too ripe, and the fruit's delicate charms are lost. Not ripe enough, and it's lean and unforgiving.

It's perhaps because Pinot Noir is such a temperamental character that so many winemakers find themselves in thrall to it. Many have tried – with varying levels of success – to capture its essence in their own corner of the globe. Parts of California have proven their worth; Sébastien Magnien fondly remembers his time in the Sonoma Valley. Neighbouring Oregon has become a home-from-home for both the grape, and for some of Burgundy's most famous figures – Dominique Lafon chief among them. The Australians have found notable success in Victoria's cool Mornington Peninsula – and considerably less of it in the Barossa Valley. Under its Italian pseudonym, Pinot Nero, it's an important grape in Oltrepò Pavese and traditional method Franciacorta, among others.

Nowhere comes close to Burgundy, though. Here, the time-honoured combination of cool climate and clay-limestone soils, arranged over a meandering hillside, allow Pinot Noir to ripen slowly, preserving its finesse and balance. "There's no better place for Pinot Noir than Burgundy," Dominique Lafon tells us matter-of-factly.

Growing successfully in this climate is no cakewalk, however: Pinot Noir is prone to just about every blight which can beset grapes. Its thin skin gives its wines supple tannins, but it also leaves the grape vulnerable to the elements: spring frost, rot, viruses and hail all present real threats to its survival.

When the stars do align, a glass of Burgundian Pinot Noir which hits the right notes can be an experience like no other. You'll know it when it happens. You'll suddenly become aware that you've had your nose in the glass, inhaling the heavenly fruit and discovering its nuances, for 10 minutes – without having taken a single sip.

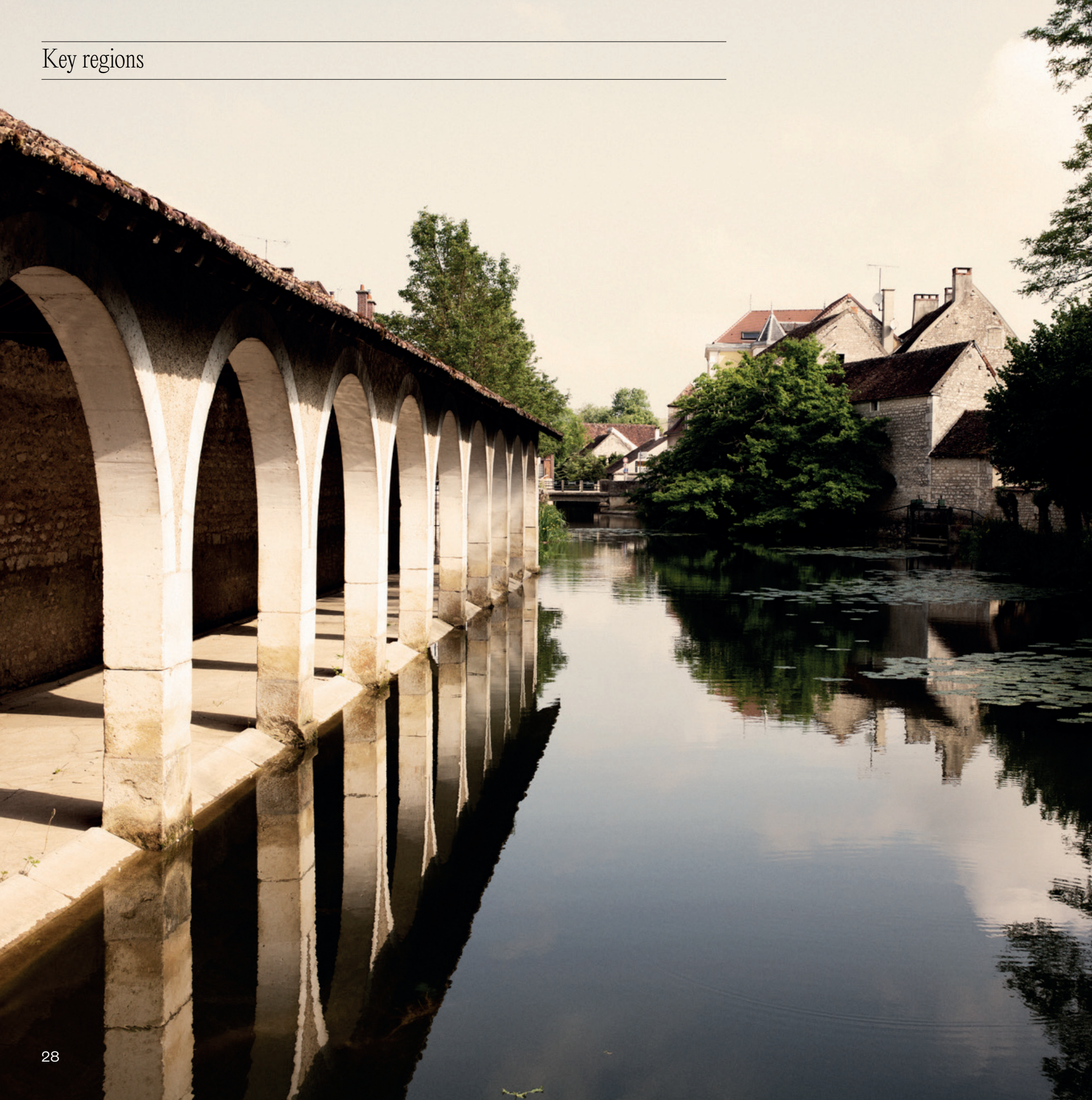
In their youth, the wines beguile with their bright red summer fruit and floral high notes, those trademark silky tannins making them temptingly drinkable even when young. The best, which can age for many years, can take on extraordinary complexity and esoteric character, with many a purist deeming them ready to drink only when the aromas start to evoke game and farmyard character.

It's not uncommon to hear Burgundian winemakers explain that they don't really make wine; they simply use Pinot Noir as a way to express *terroir*. If that sounds rather far-fetched, it's worth testing. When you compare wines from each village, side-by-side, you might just see what they mean. ■



Chardonnay is easy-going and adaptable, happy to make its home where it lays its hat. Pinot Noir, simply put, isn't. It's fussy, finicky and difficult to cultivate





# CHABLIS

*Most white-wine lovers are well-versed in Chablis, with its familiar lick of minerality, taut acidity and steely freshness. Here, you'll discover more about the region and its wines*



Chablis lies further north than the rest of Burgundy, located about halfway between Beaune and Paris; it's actually not all that far from Champagne. The wines here – exclusively whites from Chardonnay – differ in style from other white Burgundies: they tend towards steeliness and flintiness.

The Chablis region is an island of vines lying amid the forests and pastures of the Yonne *département*. In the heart of Chablis, the soils are marl (clay-limestone) of a particular kind – Kimmeridgian – containing traces of marine fossils. For many, the classic aroma and flavour profile of Chablis is built around seashell and an iodine, marine character imparted by the soil.

As elsewhere in Burgundy, there's a hierarchy in Chablis. Grand Cru represents the top tier, although it accounts for just one percent of overall Chablis production. The Grand Cru vineyards rise above the eponymous town in an impressive sweep, sloping south. These are sunny sites, ranging in elevation from 100 to 250 metres above sea level. The wines are deep and powerful, benefitting hugely from bottle age after release. The best examples can age for up to 20 years. Over time, their colour evolves from greenish gold to a light yellow, and they develop real aromatic complexity.

Unlike the other tiers, it's not uncommon for Grand Cru Chablis to see new oak. As a result, its flavour profile is perhaps

more comparable to the Côte d'Or than the rest of Chablis. For something more classically "Chablis", there's the Premiers Crus. Style and quality can vary, depending on the *climat* and the producer. Whether floral or more mineral, the best examples are seriously impressive and represent the hallmark style of the region – they can also offer real value for money. These are structured wines with the capacity to age for 10 to 15 years.

The next tier – accounting for most of the region's output – is labelled simply as "Chablis". These are steely, clean and lean whites with aromas of green apples and lemon, intended for early drinking. As ever in Burgundy, there are exceptions: well-made examples by top growers from vineyards abutting the Premiers Crus can be age-worthy.

Finally, there's Petit Chablis: every-day wines, generally from vineyards planted on higher slopes. Petit Chablis accounts for around one-fifth of all Chablis produced. These wines typically come from Portlandian limestone, known to produce a fruitier, simpler wine than Chablis. ■

# CHABLIS

- Chablis Grand Cru
- Chablis Premier Cru
- Chablis
- Petit Chablis







01

- 01 A sweeping view across vineyards in Chablis; these undulating hills are prime for growing Chardonnay; the best vineyards here occupy a mid-slope position
- 02 Traditional buildings in a Chablis village centre lend it an old-world charm
- 03 As the ample provisions in this local shop show, good, fresh produce is part of the way of life here



02



03



# DOMINIQUE LAFON



We catch up with Dominique Lafon, a leading *vigneron* in Burgundy for well over 30 years. He recalls starting out in the 1980s and explains why he did it all again in 2008

**CÔTE DE BEAUNE**



# “WHERE ELSE CAN YOU FIND WINES THAT HAVE DEPTH AND ELEGANCE, THAT ARE DRINKABLE WITHOUT BEING TOO FAT, AND WITH GREAT AGEING POTENTIAL, BUT IN BURGUNDY?”

**D**ominique Lafon joined his family business, Domaine des Comtes Lafon, in 1987. In 2008, he started making a few wines under his own eponymous label. “It was the right time,” he reflects. “At Comtes Lafon, I was just a shareholder. I felt the need to have my own company, something I could own 100%.”

Though the Dominique Lafon operation is officially a *négociant*, this is a *domaine* in all but name: almost all his wines are from vineyards which Dominique either owns or farms through long-term lease. There is some crossover between this and his family business. Notably, he employs one team to manage the vineyards at both. “The raw material is the same,” he says, “and it’s the same guy doing it, which counts. I haven’t applied for organic or biodynamic certification for Dominique Lafon but the vineyards are run that way.

“I don’t have as much history at Dominique Lafon, so there’s more freedom in what I can do,” he explains. “It’s also a lot smaller, so things can move faster.” He finds

some contrast between the wines, too: the Dominique Lafon wines are more focused, while those of Comtes Lafon are a little more complex. “I don’t intend to make them exactly the same way, but I don’t intend to make them different,” he says. “They end up being different, though. Sometimes it amazes me.”

Dominique’s first job was with Becky Wasserman, the pioneering American wine broker. Burgundy was a different place in the 1980s; it was a struggle to sell wines from what are now some of the most sought-after estates in the world. “We had the agency for Domaine de la Pousse d’Or, where Gérard Potel was making amazing wines. I really had to push to sell them. I had to say, ‘come on, take it: it’s good wine!’ Today, people would fight over those wines.”

Much has changed here since then. Dominique’s generation drove significant developments, notably towards greener viticulture. “When you stop using weed-killer, and move to organic – or biodynamic – farming,

you get better grapes,” he says. “You get sharper and more precise in the winemaking – and you can invest.”

Burgundians today don’t have too much difficulty in selling their wines. “It’s almost a crazy situation now with the price of wines – and vineyards,” Dominique says. “Vineyards are so expensive that you can’t buy them anymore.” Dominique has experienced both extremes. He recalls Pierre Ramonet, who founded his now-famous family estate in Chassagne-Montrachet in the ’20s: “He was a real *paysan*, with no money and nothing fancy. My generation had one foot in that era, too. When I took over at Comtes Lafon, we were broke. It was a fight to find the money to invest. Without those customers that started following us long ago, we wouldn’t be here.

“Maybe it’s because I’m from here,” Dominique admits, “but where else can you find wines that have depth and elegance, that are drinkable without being too fat, and with great ageing potential, but in Burgundy?” ■

## OUR FAVOURITES



### BOURGOGNE BLANC

A 50-50 blend of two vineyards, one in Puligny and one in Meursault, this is a beautifully pure, saline wine with wonderful freshness and energy. This represents the chance to buy an affordable white from one of the masters of Meursault.



### BEAUNE, VIGNES FRANCHES, 1ER CRU

Dominique is renowned for his wonderful Meursaults, but he also makes stunning red wines. These 60-year-old vines are next to the famous Clos des Mouches, the gnarled old plants giving plenty of rich, ripe fruit and tannins that simply melt in the mouth.



# THE VALUE OF PATIENCE

Will Heslop, our Burgundy specialist, knows patience is a virtue when it comes to Burgundy. Here, he shares the pleasures that come — in both the cellar and the wine glass — for those who wait

**B**urgundy: a land that time forgot, divided into minuscule plots of vines, perpetually shrouded in mist and tended with monastic devotion by crooked-backed *vignerons*. Through some alchemy passed down from generation to generation, their meagre crop is spun into wines so rare and so fragile that they can only be admired from afar by all but a select few privileged and deep-pocketed drinkers.

Such were my preconceptions before my first visit to Burgundy in autumn 2015. While some rang true — the devoted vineyard work; the tiny vineyards, each with its own identity; the importance of tradition and family ties — many others were blown apart. I was unprepared for the dynamism, forward-thinking and *joie de vivre* that prevail here; it's these things that keep me coming back. The best Burgundian winemakers have a healthy respect for the methods of their forebears, but constantly ask themselves how they can produce better wines; making tiny adjustments each vintage to make the most — in terms of quality, not quantity — of what nature serves up. If Sir Dave Brailsford ran a Burgundian *domaine*, he would speak of “marginal gains”.

It's also worth noting that while *vignerons* (masculine) continue to outnumber *vignerottes* (feminine), the balance in our portfolio is shifting: the likes of Léa Lafon, Cyrielle Rousseau and Mathilde Grivot are increasingly calling the shots at their families' *domaines*.

Our most important — and rewarding — tasting trip is in autumn. Although this year it was curtailed by a second *confinement* (lockdown), it provides our team with the first proper glimpse of the previous year's vintage. We taste the wines and, just as importantly, hear first-hand from the winemakers the story of the year: its climatic twists and turns, and how they played out across the different *terroirs* that make up each *domaine*. The winemaker will explain the choices they made in the vineyard and winery — even, in most cases, those that they come to regret.

As Adam writes in his vintage report, in '19 *terroir* speaks louder than the effects of the warm growing season. *Lisibilité* (readability) and *transparence* (transparency) were among the adjectives that Etienne Grivot used to describe his '19s. As usual, Etienne was spot on: in both colours, the wines of Burgundy should be an expression in your glass of the specific *terroir* that shaped them, with as little interference as possible. Buying En Primeur is an extension of this: from the moment a bottle is packed into its case at the *domaine*, it will remain untouched by human hands until you unpack it — years or perhaps decades later. In the meantime, it lies calmly at the *domaine* and then, following a swift voyage, in our temperature-controlled warehouse.

Having become accustomed to next-day delivery of virtually anything — particularly during lockdown — there is satisfaction to be had from having to wait for wines bought this way. That said, you won't have to wait a lifetime to start enjoying your '19s: our offer includes a host of wines, notably from the Mâconnais and village-level Chablis, that will be ready to drink as soon as they ship — as early as spring '21 for the whites.

In fact, like food and wine matching, the conventional wisdom about drinking windows is today often called into question. Aware that a proportion of his wine will be drunk young — above all in restaurants — Jean-Pierre Guyon makes all his wines, Echezeaux Grand Cru included, to provide pleasure at every stage of their lives.



“HOW THRILLING FOR MAXIME TO THINK OF HIS OWN SONS, OR EVEN HIS GRANDCHILDREN, UNCORKING BOTTLES OF HIS 2019S IN DECADES TO COME — AND HOW THRILLING FOR US THAT, HAVING BOUGHT THEM EN PRIMEUR, AND KNOWING THE VALUE OF PATIENCE, WE MIGHT DO THE SAME”

In winemaking terms, he says, this means gentler extraction — aided by whole-bunch fermentation — and less new oak, resulting in fresh, supple wines that will stand the test of time yet are seriously seductive, almost from the word go.

Nevertheless, our trips to Burgundy include glorious reminders that the region's finest wines do require time in bottle to reveal their full majesty. In autumn this year, Maxime Rion — at lunch with his wife, Sophie, and young

sons — treated us to a sublime 1969 Vosne-Romanée Premier Cru Les Chaumes, made by his grandfather. Delicate yet vibrant, it was impossible not to be moved by the wine, let alone the context. How thrilling for Maxime to think of his own sons, or even his grandchildren, uncorking bottles of his 2019s in decades to come — and how thrilling for us that, having bought them En Primeur, and knowing the value of patience, we might do the same. ■





# côte DE NUITS



# CÔTE DE NUITS



**THIS SLIM SLICE OF BURGUNDY IS HOME TO THE SOME OF THE WORLD’S GREATEST RED WINES AND MOST PRESTIGIOUS VINEYARDS. HERE, YOU’LL FIND STORIED GRANDS CRUS ALONGSIDE SUBLIME PREMIERS CRUS PLUS A GOOD DEAL OF MORE ACCESSIBLE WINES TOO. IN THE CÔTE DE NUITS, THE GLORIOUS POTENTIAL OF PINOT NOIR COMES INTO ITS OWN**

**T**he Côte de Nuits forms the northern half of the Côte d’Or, running south from Dijon to Nuits-Saint-Georges. This is, by and large, red wine country; it’s the northernmost European wine region making truly great red wines. Most of Burgundy’s red Grands Crus are here. These, along with the best Premiers Crus, sit halfway up the region’s slopes.

The key grape in the Côte de Nuits is the notoriously temperamental Pinot Noir. Growing conditions here make it especially tricky: the region is prone to vicious hail and heavy rains, risking dilution and rot. When things go right, the Côte de Nuits produces the

finest expression of Pinot — and some of the finest red wine — anywhere in the world.

The village of Marsannay overlaps with the suburbs of Dijon. It’s one of Burgundy’s most dynamic and exciting villages; a huge variety of soil types make for wines with plenty of character and individuality. Nearby, Fixin is a firm favourite with the locals and flies under the radar thanks to its somewhat undeserved reputation for rusticity. Both offer excellent value relative to some of the bigger names.

Driving south, the first major village you come to is Gevrey-Chambertin. Lower-lying vineyards produce wines ranging from fruity to earthy; those higher on the hill





01



02



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- 01 The bold 'Chambertin Clos de Beze' lettering, emblazoned on an old outbuilding wall, is an iconic marker on Burgundy's Route des Grands Crus
- 02 Views over Fixin at the northernmost point of the Côte de Nuits
- 03 Roses mark the end of the vineyard's perfectly tended rows
- 04 Burgundy's famous residents, Charolais cattle
- 05 Autumn colour arrives in the Côte de Nuits



yield spicy wines, often with a note of iron. The Premiers Crus offer finesse while the Grands Crus are dense and muscular. The best – such as Le Chambertin and Clos de Bèze – are powerful and perfumed.

Morey-Saint-Denis is not the most celebrated commune, but its wines are fresh and vivacious. They can also excel in warmer vintages. Notable Grands Crus here include Clos de Tart and Clos des Lambrays.

Chambolle-Musigny produces perfumed, delicate and graceful reds. These are relatively pale wines, without the power associated with some neighbouring villages. The best are light and fragrant, such as the hauntingly silky Les Amoureuses. Musigny is the only Grand Cru in the Côte de Nuits permitted to produce white wine – it’s scarce and exquisite.

Vougeot is dominated by its eponymous *clos*. The Grand Cru Clos de Vougeot is notable for its size – 51 hectares – and the considerable variation in its soils; the number of individual plots and owners is bewildering. The wines are solid, dense and tannic. The Premier Cru and village-level wines are crunchy and succulent.

Vosne-Romanée is home to some of the most famous Grands Crus and producers in all of Burgundy. The top wines reach the stratosphere in terms of both reputation and price; their hallmarks are intensity, richness and velvety refinement, simply unmatched elsewhere. The Premiers Crus and village wines can share some of these characteristics, the latter in particular exhibiting real quality for their status.

Furthest south is the commune of Nuits-Saint-Georges, and the eponymous town, which lends its name to the wider region. There are no Grands Crus here, though there are plenty of excellent wines. This is a long appellation, stretching from the northern border with Vosne-Romanée to Prémieux-Prissey in the south. It tends to be divided into three sections: the north produces silkier wines; the area around the town is the region’s heart, with Les Vaucrains and Les Saint-Georges being the pick of the vineyards; Prémieux produces spicy wines with a firm structure. ■



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- 01 Domaine Jacques-Frederic Mugnier’s Clos de la Marechale vineyard – home to one of Burgundy’s delectable Premier Cru reds
- 02 The dandelion flowers and an abundance of seed heads show how biodiversity is being encouraged in the vineyards



02



Sylvie Poillot leads the team at Domaine de la Vougeraie, whose vineyards run the length of the Côte d’Or. She tells us what it takes to run such an intricate operation

# Domaine de la Vougeraie

CÔTE D’OR





# The estate is a model for biodynamic viticulture: it's got its own herb garden and plants are dried on-site for biodynamic preparations

**D**omaine de la Vougeraie was established in 1999 by *négociant* Jean-Claude Boisset, bringing together three decades' worth of vineyard acquisitions across the Côte d'Or. Today, the *domaine* extends over 42 hectares, with holdings in no less than nine Grands Crus. "It's a big estate," says Sylvie Poillot, General Manager and leader of the winemaking team, "but we manage it like a family."

Since its inception, the *domaine* has been farmed organically. Vintage 2001 saw the first steps into biodynamics; the entire estate is now biodynamic in all but certification. "It would be great for us to be certified," Sylvie says. "The problem is that I don't have enough time to do the paperwork!" Third-party certification aside, the estate is a model for biodynamic viticulture: it's got its own herb garden and plants are dried on-site for biodynamic preparations. "We did the 500P [cow horn] infusion two weeks ago, and to prevent disease we spray an infusion of lavender and lemongrass." The lunar

calendar plays an important role, guiding the timing of practices in the vineyard and cellar. "We do *bâtonnage* (lees stirring) when the moon is ascending," she explains, "and we try to do our tastings on fruit days, when you get more expression."

Sylvie heads up a team of 30. Her role involves day-to-day management and administration as well as winemaking, vineyard management and plenty more besides. The *domaine* operates a rather flat management structure with a lot of team decision-making. "We're a little bit unusual," she admits. "I'm the General Manager, but I work with everybody. We make decisions together."

The *domaine* is expansive, with holdings running virtually the entire length of the Côte d'Or, from Gevrey-Chambertin to Chassagne-Montrachet. Two vineyard teams work in tandem: one works the Côte de Nuits from a base in Morey-Saint-Denis. The other, based in Beaune, covers the Côte de Beaune. "It requires a lot of organisation," Sylvie says. Things get even more complex at harvest.

"We have three teams for the harvest, and we organise it two months beforehand. With so many plots, maturity control is very important: it's vital to know which parcel needs to be harvested at what time."

With such an enviable swathe of prized vineyards, the estate naturally produces some remarkable wines. Sylvie and the team produce 37 individual *cuvées* each year. "It's not difficult, it's just about organisation." Among the most celebrated is the Clos Blanc de Vougeot, a Premier Cru *monopole* (solely owned by the *domaine*) producing the only white wine in Vougeot. "It's been Chardonnay-only since the Cistercian monks planted it – nine centuries ago." There's also a not-insubstantial 1.052-hectare holding in the neighbouring Clos de Vougeot Grand Cru. Another notable Grand Cru is their Musigny, where they have just over 0.2 hectares. "We make three barrels in a good year." With so many wines, has Sylvie got a favourite? "They're like our babies," she says, with more affection than diplomacy. "We love them all!" ■

## OUR FAVOURITES



**VOUGEOT, LE CLOS BLANC DE VOUGEOT, 1ER CRU, MONOPOLE**  
A jewel in the crown of La Vougeraie, this is a rare white wine from Vougeot. Sylvie calls it "*l'enfant terrible*" because of its mischievous character; the fruit is hedonistic, but there is a searing backbone of freshness.



**NUITS-SAINT-GEORGES, CLOS DE THOREY, 1ER CRU, MONOPOLE**  
Owned entirely by Domaine de la Vougeraie, the *clos* is at the very heart of Thorey vineyard. This is a beautifully perfumed wine with an intensely floral character and plenty of energy and vigour.



# THE BUYER'S CELLAR

Our Burgundy Buyer, Adam Bruntlett, spends his days sourcing wines destined for other peoples' cellars, but what fills his own? Here, he gives us an insider's look at his collection







**M**y relationship with Burgundy began 10 years ago, when I started visiting growers regularly to taste their wines from barrel. Some *vignerons* would follow the new vintage by pouring a more mature wine blind, inviting tasters to deduce the vintage and vineyard. My success on such occasions was limited, but they impressed upon me the incredible complexity of flavour that can characterise mature Burgundy. Being in my mid-20s at the time, my limited spending power initially restricted me to odd bottles, all too often consumed shortly after purchase. But I had a strong urge to cellar some of the wines I had tasted from barrel, to watch their evolution over time. Consequently, my journey into collecting only began relatively recently.

#### STARTING OUT

I first bought En Primeur with the 2012 vintage, and I still have my two purchases in my reserves: a case each of Chambolle-Musigny village and Premier Cru Les Cras from Domaine Barthod. Try as I might, I find it impossible to separate wines from the people who make them, and Ghislaine Barthod's friendly charm is reflected in her wines. I buy them as regularly as possible; her Bourgogne is a firm favourite, with its wonderful ability to age despite its modest classification.

#### BUYING BURGUNDY EN PRIMEUR

Buying wine En Primeur was initially a big step, but there are many reasons why it makes sense even on a modest budget.

First and foremost, it saves money. Buying En Primeur – even at Bourgogne or village level – can offer a substantial discount on the subsequent retail price. Early-drinking whites from the Mâconnais or Chablis tend to be shipped in the spring, so I think of buying those wines as placing an early order for my summer drinking. Many of Burgundy's wines are made in such small quantities that En Primeur is essential to avoid missing out on particular growers and vineyards. The parcellated nature of Burgundy's vineyards means that in many cases, just a few hundred bottles of certain wines are made. They can be hard to find later.

Buying En Primeur means buying by the case. Buying a full case of the same wine was a huge undertaking for me initially, but its great benefit is that you can enjoy the same wine over a period of months, years or even longer, carefully watching its evolution through its life.

For me, cellaring wine is an opportunity to leave a legacy for my children. As such, my spending increased considerably in '17, when my first daughter was born. Helpfully,

Buying wine En Primeur was initially a big step, but there are many reasons why it makes sense even on a modest budget



To my mind, any wine which is balanced in youth possesses the ability to age well



it's also one of my favourite vintages of the last decade; I hope I will be allowed to enjoy some of them with her.

I buy a range of styles and quality levels so that I can, for example, drink my Bourgogne after a few years, then the village wines and then the Premiers Crus. This means that I should always have something that is drinking well at any given moment. I buy almost exclusively for drinking, but it's undeniable that there can be an investment element to collecting wine – even if the aim of selling it is simply to fund more purchases.

#### AGE-WORTHY WINES

It's surprising how even modest wines can age: I distinctly remember Antoine Jobard pouring a half-bottle of Bourgogne Blanc 1996 in a blind tasting a couple of years ago. I'm proud to say I nailed the vintage – though not quite the vineyard.

To my mind, any wine which is balanced in youth possesses the ability to age well. The level of acidity and the quality of tannins, along with the concentration of fruit will determine just how long the wine can age for.

There is also an important distinction between ageing and improving: ageing in wine is rarely a linear process, and mature wines possess a completely different flavour profile to young wines. I love young Burgundy for its energy and crunchy fruit profile – typically small red berries in Pinot Noir and citrus and orchard

fruits in Chardonnay. With age, the reds gain mushroom, underbrush and wild strawberry flavours; the whites often take on white truffle notes and a nutty, honeyed complexity.

Despite my privileged position as a professional Burgundy buyer, my budget doesn't really stretch to Grands Crus. Luckily, even supposedly "modest" wines can age well, and even improve with a few years in bottle. Some of my favourites are Sébastien Magnien's Hautes-Côtes de Beaune Clos de la Perrière and the Bourgogne Passetoutgrains from Michel Lafarge or Jérôme Castagnier. I often try to buy large formats, which will improve the ageing capacity and limit the familiar temptation to open a bottle too young. I have quite a few magnums of Pouilly-Fuissé, Chablis and Bourgogne which I'm determined to keep for a decade before touching.

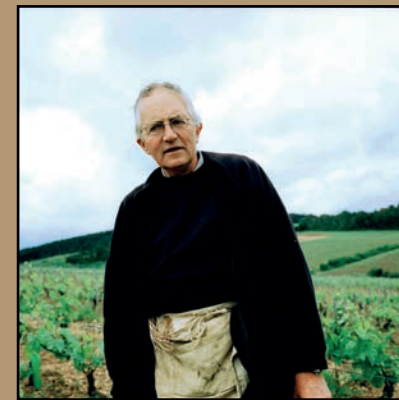
One of the most frustrating aspects of starting a cellar can be waiting for your wines to be ready. Thankfully, changing tastes and market forces mean that modern Burgundy has generally moved towards a more approachable, early-drinking style. The best winemakers – aided by recent, warm vintages which give ripe tannins and juicy fruit – can produce wines which give pleasure throughout their life. Consequently, cellaring does not just have to mean putting bottles away and forgetting about them for a decade. ■

## ADAM'S CELLAR



### DOMAINE CASTAGNIER

Fifth-generation winemaker Jérôme Castagnier returned to his family profession following a stint as a trumpeter. His wines, such as the Bourgogne Passetoutgrains, show how, in the right hands, even "modest" wines can give huge pleasure.



### DOMAINE MICHEL LAFARGE

Lafarge is a family *domaine* producing some of the greatest wines in Volnay. Until his death in January this year, legendary winemaker Michel Lafarge remained at the helm. His son, Frédéric (*above*), continues his legacy, and this remains one of Burgundy's most sought-after names.



### DOMAINE GHISLAINE BARTHOD

Ghislaine Barthod inherited her *domaine* from her father in 1999; since then, she has proved a worthy successor. Her elegant and expressive wines – some of the most appealing in Chambolle-Musigny – are, like their winemaker, utterly charming.



# BENJAMIN LEROUX



First-generation *vigneron* Benjamin Leroux is one of Burgundy's best-known figures. We talk to him about the logistical challenge of making over 50 wines a year, and how that inspires him

CÔTE D'OR

**“I’M NOT A WINEMAKER, I DON’T ‘MAKE’ THE WINE. I’M JUST HERE TO MAKE SURE THE FRUIT CAN EXPRESS THE BEST OF THE TERROIR”**

**“**I used to be offended when people would open my wines after a year or two,” says Benjamin Leroux — the 45-year-old *vigneron* who in the past decade or so has become one of the region's best-known talents. “I’m not anymore. The best time to open my wine is when you want to share — maybe with your friends, maybe with yourself.”

Benjamin started his eponymous *négociant* operation in 2007, having firmly established himself running Domaine Comte Armand in Pommard. In any given year, Benjamin works with up to 30 hectares of vines, scattered throughout the Côte d’Or. He leases some and owns others, such as plots in Meursault and Bâtard-Montrachet. His range includes around 50 individual *cuvées*, from generic Bourgogne to Grand Cru; many are single-barrel parcels sold on allocation.

The Côte d’Or is a patchwork of highly parcellated vineyard plots. “It’s a huge logistical challenge,” Benjamin explains, “but that’s how it is in Burgundy. We’re used to it here.” It would be simpler to work with larger and more homogeneous vineyards, or to make fewer wines, but Benjamin considers it a fair trade-off. “It takes more time and more energy to work these plots,” he acknowledges, “but it fills me with energy, too. Touching so many different *terroirs*, I don’t feel as though I’m losing my time. It’s a win-win exchange.”

Despite his clear winemaking talent, Benjamin doesn’t consider himself a winemaker per se. “I don’t like that term because I’m not a winemaker,” he says. “I don’t ‘make’ the wine.



“THE WORK I’M DOING – TAKING CARE OF VINEYARDS, REPLANTING THEM – I’M NOT DOING IT FOR MYSELF. I NEED TO THINK ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION, THE NEXT TWO GENERATIONS. WE’RE IN A WORLD WHERE EVERYTHING NEEDS TO BE DONE BY THE SECOND. I LIKE THE IDEA OF NOT BEING IN A RUSH. THIS IS A MULTIGENERATIONAL JOB; IT’S IMMATERIAL SOMEHOW”

I’m just here to make sure the fruit can express the best of the *terroir*.” Accordingly, Benjamin’s work in the cellar is with a light touch: he aims to let the fruit express itself rather than guide things in any particular direction. “I make all the wines almost the same way: I don’t have in mind that because this is a Vosne-Romanée, it should be made with whole bunches, or that this Nuits-Saint-Georges needs to be more earthy. My way of winemaking is very transparent.”

He may be a first-generation winegrower, but Benjamin has the long term firmly in mind. “The work I’m doing – taking care of vineyards, replanting them – I’m not doing it for myself. I need to think about the next generation, the next two generations.” The ability – or the necessity – to slow down and think ahead has a certain appeal for Benjamin: “We’re in a world where everything needs to be done by the second. I like the idea of not being in a rush. This is a multigenerational job; it’s immaterial somehow.”

The satisfaction that Benjamin gets from his work is unmistakable. “My job is to take care of this region, to leave it in better shape than I found it,” he says. “We’re a small team, and we have lots of fun. While it’s still a pleasure to do it – and we don’t feel like we’re ‘working’ – then there’s no reason to change.” Having travelled and worked elsewhere – stints in New Zealand, Oregon and in Bordeaux at Ch. Cos d’Estournel – Benjamin sees his future squarely in Burgundy. “We all travel too much, generally. Sometimes happiness is not further than the edge of your feet,” he says. “Burgundy is an easy place to realise that.” ■

## OUR FAVOURITES



### MEURSAULT, GENEVRIÈRES, 1ER CRU

Ben Leroux is something of a Meursault specialist, producing nine different wines from this village in 2019. Genevrières is one of the top sites and this is a benchmark example which offers plenty of the rich, buttery character for which Meursault is famed.



### VOLNAY, CLOS DE LA CAVE DES DUCS, 1ER CRU, MONOPOLE

Ben has been making this wine since the very early days of his project and it is a standout every year. This tiny walled vineyard, farmed using organic and biodynamic practices, gives beautiful, silky wines.



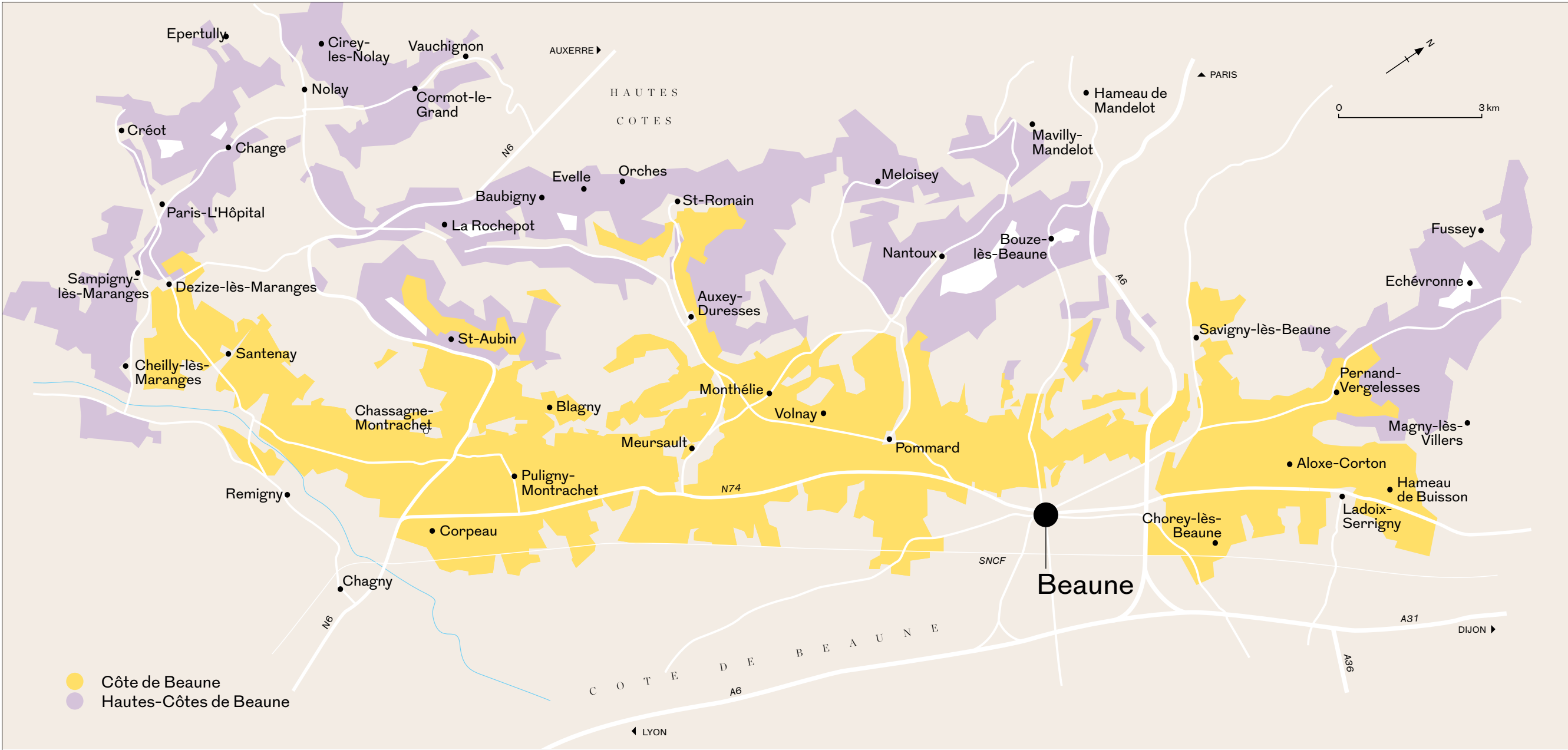
# CÔTE DE BEAUNE





The Côte de Beaune forms the southern half of the Côte d'Or. The villages of Meursault, Puligny and Chassagne, and the hill of Corton, are the heartland of Chardonnay – and home to most of Burgundy's white Grands Crus

CÔTE DE BEAUNE







01

**C**hardonnay is perfectly capable of growing – adequately to quite well – just about anywhere in the world where grapes will ripen. In Burgundy, and in Burgundian hands, it can and does express the subtle and exciting differences between vineyards, hillsides and villages – never mind vintages. But, despite all the fanfare for Chardonnay, there is actually more red wine than white produced in the Côte de Beaune.

The first landmark of the Côte de Beaune is the hill of Corton, and its Grands Crus of Corton and Corton-Charlemagne. Three villages share ownership of these Grands Crus: Aloxe-Corton, Pernand-Vergelesses and Ladoix-Serrigny. Chorey-lès-Beaune is a somewhat forgotten appellation, though it produces well-priced reds, made in a pleasurable, fruit-forward

style. Savigny-lès-Beaune can produce some excellent wines when made from old vines, carefully managed yields and gentle winemaking.

The town of Beaune itself is Burgundy’s capital. There are no Grands Crus here, though three-quarters of the vineyards are classified as Premier Cru. The best land is in the middle of the appellation on the slope; wines here are well-structured and age-worthy. White wines come from the southern part of the appellation; they’re easy and open-textured, with attractive stone-fruit notes. The main appeal of Beaune’s reds is their capacity to give pleasure: these are fruity, red berry-scented wines with soft tannins and gentle acidity.

Next comes Pommard. Only red wines are made here, and these can be the longest-

lived reds of the Côte de Beaune. Pommard is sometimes characterised as sturdy, which is true to an extent but doesn’t tell the whole story: there are two different soil types here, with white limestone towards the north of the appellation and red, ferrous clay in the south. The limestone gives rise to wines of greater finesse and elegance, with Les Epenots a notable example. The clay soils – such as those found in Les Rugiens – favour the more muscular style which gives Pommard its “sturdy” reputation.

Meursault produces mostly white wines, which tend to be broad, nutty and rounded. The finest Meursaults come from the band of Premiers Crus at the south of the appellation. The quality of village-level Meursault is outstanding, with some sites sharing the geology and altitude of the Premiers Crus while facing east.

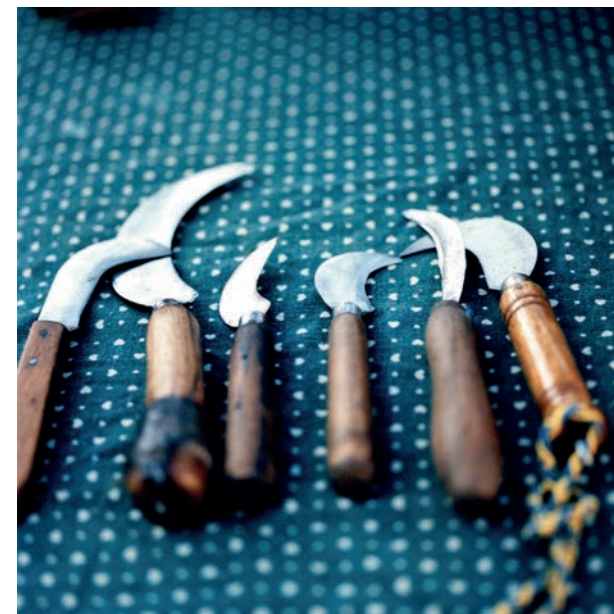
The landscape of Puligny-Montrachet is dominated by its majestic Grands Crus, especially Le Montrachet and Chevalier-Montrachet. These set the tone for the commune’s style: white wines with a precise, steely framework, overlaid by haunting notes of blossom and white fruit.

Chassagne-Montrachet has a share of the Grands Crus Le Montrachet and Bâtard-Montrachet, as well as one of its own in Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet. The best whites are full-bodied with a creamy, almost opulent, texture.

There are other appellations here to seek out. Saint-Aubin sits behind Puligny and Chassagne; a number of dynamic estates are making wines which now rival those of the commune’s more illustrious neighbours. South of Chassagne, Santenay is an underrated source of Pinot Noir; soils here are similar to those of the Côte de Nuits. Maranges, further south, is sometimes overlooked but is undergoing something of a revival, with an increase in *domaine* bottlings.

Elsewhere: Auxey-Duresses is situated down the valley to the west of Meursault. Its red wines have a firm tannic structure while its whites are markedly fresh. The vineyards of Saint-Romain are between 350 and 400 metres above sea level, notably higher – and therefore cooler – than the Côte de Beaune proper. These wines are noted for retaining freshness even in warm vintages. Monthélie borders Volnay, and produces undervalued reds that can share some of the charm and perfume of that prized neighbour. ■

02



01 The unusual church steeple rises over Saint Aubin  
02 Antique winemaking tools on sale in Beaune market



# DOMAINE HENRI REBOURSEAU



A new addition to this year’s offer, Domaine Henri Rebourseau is one of the largest estates in Gevrey-Chambertin. We meet Louis de Surrel, whose family have made wine here for seven generations

**CÔTE DE NUITS**



“Honestly, every time I step into the vineyard, it’s like a *mise-en-abîme*: I can’t help thinking about all the generations that have come before, and the 1,400 years of practice. That responsibility haunts me sometimes”

“It’s very frightening to make wine from a Grand Cru like Clos de Bèze,” admits Louis de Surret, seventh generation at the helm of Domaine Henri Rebourseau in Gevrey-Chambertin. “Honestly, every time I step into the vineyard, it’s like a *mise-en-abîme*: I can’t help thinking about all the generations that have come before, and the 1,400 years of practice. That responsibility haunts me sometimes. “Personally, 2019 was a very important vintage for us,” Louis explains. This was the first vintage with which brothers Louis and Bénigne succeeded their father, Jean, at the family estate. “We have worked here since ’16, but this was the first time we were fully responsible for the results.” The growing season was favourable, with local records broken for sunlight hours, peak temperatures and (low) rainfall. “It was a great vintage to start with: the wines are perfectly balanced. I think it’s a tremendous vintage that we’ll remember for decades.” The *domaine* covers 13.5 hectares in the Côte de Nuits, with exactly 5.28 hectares of that

classified as Grand Cru. Theirs is one of the largest holdings in Gevrey-Chambertin, and they go back a long way here: Louis’s great-great-grandfather, Henri Rebourseau, created the winegrowers’ *syndicat* in Chambertin. Louis speaks fondly of Henri’s impact on the *domaine* from the 1920s to the ’40s: he was among the first *vignerons* of the era to estate-bottle his own wine rather than sell it to *négociants*. “It was a new idea at the time,” Louis says. “Dealing directly with customers and collectors made the estate very famous.” Henri’s successors reverted, for a time, to selling their wines to *négociants*. Louis has mixed feelings about this: “We worked with some amazing wine merchants,” he says. “In fact, it was thanks to Anne-Claude Leflaive that we switched from organic to biodynamic farming.” On the other hand, those close ties with collectors were weakened somewhat by the decreased visibility of the Rebourseau name. Today, everything is estate-bottled once again, and Louis and Bénigne are on a mission to restore that link. “It’s a new chapter,” he says. “We are proud to make these wines ourselves, to bottle them once

again under our label. We’re trying to renew that connection that we once had.” The team feels duty-bound to make wines deserving of the lofty appellations from which they’ve come. “We try to have the best vinification techniques,” Louis says, “but our first and foremost priority is the vineyard.” The estate has been farmed organically since 2006, and biodynamically since ’08. “We are wine growers, not winemakers. Our purpose is to express the identity of these plots in the glass.” Louis seems genuinely fascinated by the intricacies and wonder of Burgundian *terroir*. Armed with maps, charts and statistics, he’s all too happy to illustrate. “In Gevrey-Chambertin, there are 69 *climats* and every one of them is different,” he says. Expression of *terroir* is by no means limited to the Grands Crus, however: “Even at village level, these wines have their own identities. In front of the *domaine*, we have two plots: Aux Corvées and La Brunelle. They almost touch each other, separated by a three-metre path; they are totally different wines. That, for me, is the magic of *terroir*.” ■

## OUR FAVOURITES



**GEVREY-CHAMBERTIN**  
This is the Rebourseau calling card: an archetypal Gevrey with crunchy red fruit and sweet spice. It’s a blend of the La Brunelle and Aux Corvées plots outside the domaine, along with Sylvie and the excellent Champs-Chenys, just below Charmes-Chambertin.



**CLOS DE VOUGEOT, GRAND CRU**  
Rebourseau is one of the biggest owners of Clos Vougeot, with 2.2 hectares in the heart of the vineyard. Theirs is a supremely elegant Clos Vougeot with charming and creamy red berry fruit laid over the broad shoulders of the *clos*.



# SÉBASTIEN MAGNIEN

A champion of the Hautes-Côtes de Beaune, fourth-generation *vigneron* Sébastien Magnien talks to us about *terroir*, experience over education and the 2019 vintage

CÔTE DE BEAUNE

“I’ve been in the vineyard and the cellar since birth,” says Sébastien Magnien, fourth-generation winegrower from the small village of Meloisey in the Hautes-Côtes de Beaune. “Both of my grandfathers were winegrowers.”

Sébastien has made a name for himself as a champion of the Hautes-Côtes de Beaune sub-region. It’s not far from the Côte de Beaune proper, but it can feel quite different. “We’re at a higher elevation in the Hautes-Côtes,” he explains. “Vineyards reach as much as 480 metres above sea level here, while the Côtes de Beaune is between 200 and 350 metres.” The cooling

effect of the higher altitude has a clear influence on the wines: “You can maintain acidity a lot more easily here. You can get one or two percent less alcohol, fresher aromas and good phenolic and tannic ripeness, too.”

Sébastien has built up his range by identifying vineyard sites with the potential to outperform their status. “Take the Clos de la Perrière in the Hautes-Côtes,” he says. “It’s only a regional appellation, but it’s got the character and the potential of a village-level wine, if not a Premier Cru.” Before taking over the family estate, Sébastien studied both viticulture and oenology. “I studied a lot,” he reflects,





# “I studied a lot but I think the most important thing is experience”

“but I think the most important thing is experience.” He trained at Domaine Rossignol-Trapet in Gevrey-Chambertin and with Olivier Leflaive in Puligny-Montrachet. Like many young French winegrowers and winemakers of his generation, he also gained international experience. “I worked for three months at Hartford Family Wines in Sonoma Valley,” he says. One of California’s cooler regions, Sonoma is known for its Pinot Noir and Chardonnay – Burgundy’s signature grapes. “I really wanted to learn as much as I could about these varieties before I came back home to start working at the estate,” he says.

The 2019 vintage was Sébastien’s 17th, and he is clearly comfortable in his craft. “I know all my different *terroirs* very well now,” he says. “You have to have confidence in your *terroir*. We’re working with only two grapes here so the unique identity of the wines has to come from the *terroir*. To understand it, we need to think about the soil: there’s white soil, brown soil, red soil. Sometimes there’s more limestone, or more clay. Our wines reflect those differences.”

01 The leaf canopy is carefully managed to help the fruits' development; here, a worker is carrying out *rognage*, trimming the tops of the vines

The growing season in '19 was not without its challenges, notably an early frost on 5th April. “We thought at the time that the frost wouldn’t have much of an impact,” Sébastien recalls. Unfortunately, it had a direct impact on yields: “I produced only half my normal quantity of white wines, and about two-thirds of my reds.”

Low yields aside, the quality of the '19s is clear. Sébastien describes it as a warm vintage, without a lot of rain and with a particularly dry summer. “I’ve never seen alcohol levels like it,” he says. “But there’s a nice level of acidity too. The aromas aren’t too ripe. The wines are elegant, fresh and well-balanced. It’s a very Burgundian vintage.” ■

## OUR FAVOURITES



**HAUTES-CÔTES DE BEAUNE, CLOS DE LA PERRIÈRE**  
From one of the very best sites in the Hautes-Côtes: as the name suggests, this is a walled vineyard which produces mineral wines with surprising ageing potential.



**POMMARD, PETITS NOIZONS**  
This vineyard is high on the slope, just above the Premiers Crus. The shallow topsoil and slightly cooler temperatures here give a fresh and elegant expression of Pommard, packed with crunchy red berries, delicate flowers and a chalky finish.



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# CÔTE Chalonnaise

*One of Burgundy's lesser-known regions, the Côte Chalonnaise has much to offer: Premiers Crus, well-priced village wines, traditional method Crémant de Bourgogne and whites made from the "other" grape, Aligoté*



The vineyards are interspersed with other forms of agriculture, notably orchards and pasture; only the most favoured southeast-facing slopes are given over to viticulture

**T**he Côte Chalonnaise lies to the south of the Côte de Beaune. The region offers a choice of attractive reds and whites at affordable prices, although these are generally not wines for long ageing.

Its vineyards are interspersed with other forms of agriculture, notably orchards and pasture; only the most favoured southeast-facing slopes are given over to viticulture. Soils are similar to those of its more famous neighbour, and hot summers and dry autumns aid ripening.

In addition to producing regional wines – labelled as Bourgogne Côte Chalonnaise – there are five key communes here.

Furthest north is Bouzeron, a unique appellation dedicated entirely to white wines from the Aligoté grape. Burgundy's "other" white grape performs particularly well here on higher slopes; sites at lower elevation tend to be planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and sold under the regional appellation.

The commune of Rully produces more white than red wine. Soils here are light and sandy, yielding wines that are fresh, fruity and attractive in youth – though not generally intended for long ageing. The white wines are typically high in acidity, making them suitable for use in sparkling wine production. Consequently, Rully is a major source of fruit for traditional

method Crémant de Bourgogne. Some of the best Premiers Crus sites here are Clos St Jacques, Grésgny and Rabourcé.

Mercurey is the largest appellation here, its production not far off that of Rully, Givry and Montagny put together. The wines of Mercurey represent the high end of the Côte Chalonnaise, in terms of both quality and price. Whites – a minority of the production – are flavoursome, with a touch of flint and spice. Reds here have good ageing potential, developing from fresh red fruits into spicier tobacco, cocoa and underbrush notes. Notable Premiers Crus include Le Clos du Roy, Le Clos l'Evêque and Les Naugues.

Givry produces mostly red wine. These wines are more structured and age-worthy than those of Rully, though they generally lack the depth and density of Mercurey. Among the best Premier Cru sites are Clos Salomon and Clos Jus.

Montagny lies at the southern tip of the Côte Chalonnaise, producing only white wine. These are good value wines that, at their best, are junior versions of the whites of the Côte de Beaune. They are a little more structured than the whites of Rully. The Premiers Crus of Les Coères and Les Jardins are particularly impressive. ■



# FINDING VALUE IN BURGUNDY

There's more to Burgundy than collectable and unattainable Grands Crus of the Côte d'Or. Our Wine Director, Mark Pardoe MW, knows where to find real value in Burgundy

**T**he wines of Burgundy can be as frustrating as they are alluring. The finest are beguiling wines of unmatched grace and sensuality, but are also infuriatingly rare, often expensive and hidden behind layers of complexity. But there are ways to explore Burgundy for the beginner, and tips that will also reward an existing devotee.

Modern-day Burgundy is more reliable than ever before: the demand for these wines has ensured that every leading producer is maximising the potential of all their vineyards. This means that quality and reward are no longer focused solely around the top sites. Add in the influence of warmer summers from climate change, and now every corner of Burgundy can make wine that delivers quality and pleasure.

## **GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH "BASIC" BURGUNDY**

Let's begin with the Burgundian hierarchy. At the top sit the Grands and Premiers Crus, then the village-level wines and, finally, generic Bourgogne. The last can be made by blending across all of Burgundy's appellations; if solely from the Côte d'Or, the wines can now be identified as such. However, many producers only have vines at this level around their own villages so blending across the region is usually the preserve of larger producers. If a producer has a reputation for high quality from a particular village — especially if their range extends to the top wines — and they make a generic Bourgogne, it's usually a good bet. This is an accessible way in to discover some of Burgundy's most desirable names.

Though most generic Bourgognes are not built for the long term and should be drunk within two or three years of the vintage, there





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are other, more complex, examples. If wines from different levels are blended, the wine must be labelled as the lowest of the options. Some producers use generic Bourgogne to accommodate smaller parcels from young vines in better vineyards: they may have a proportion of village or even Premier Cru, and have the capacity to improve with some bottle age. Conversely, some Bourgogne-level vineyards have a lot of old vines, yielding concentrated wines, often silkier in texture. A *vieilles vignes* (old-vine) *cuvée* often has more textural detail.

### OUTLYING VILLAGES OF THE CÔTE D'OR

If global warming has brought earlier harvests and riper fruit to the famous villages, it has also enhanced the potential quality of wines from the outlying villages – those that have historically been considered a bit too cold to produce reliably fine wine, even though their geology may have the potential. This has already happened to St Aubin, a village up a valley behind Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet: its best white wines have come to match those of its better-known neighbours. Other white wine villages to watch include St Romain and its neighbours Auxey-Duresses and Monthélie: all sit side-by-side above and behind Meursault. In cool years, these wines are austere; in our current sunny times, they have a succulent generosity as well.

Wherever you look for your Burgundy, the most important words on any label are the name of the producer



02

The interesting options for red wines sit at opposite ends of the Côte d'Or. At the far southern end, past white wine villages Meursault, Puligny and Chassagne, are Santenay and Maranges. Santenay was long considered a source of inexpensive wines for blending into generic Bourgogne and much has been planted with higher-yielding vines. A greater understanding of its potential has come about more recently, however; it has some of the most complex geology of the region. Its wines, whilst already good and improving, will surely get better still. Maranges offers the same potential in a simpler style.

At the far northern end, towards the suburbs of Dijon, we find Marsannay and Fixin. The former is enjoying a similar renaissance to Santenay, with moves nearly complete to award the appellation its first Premiers Crus. The wines have historically shown a muscular side but better understanding of the geology has softened that edge and made the wines more accessible. Fixin borders Gevrey-Chambertin, the only difference being lower slopes and deeper soils. These wines can age beautifully; in the hands of a skilled winemaker, Fixin can deliver the complexity and pleasure of its better-known neighbour.

### BEYOND THE CÔTE D'OR

The Côte d'Or is the heart of Burgundy, but the region is bigger than that: it encompasses Chablis to the north and, by some definitions, Beaujolais to the south, via the Côte Chalonnaise and Mâconnais. Pouilly-Fuissé is the famous white wine appellation of the Mâconnais, and the best sites have just been recognised with elevation to the region's newly created Premier Cru status, justifying the growing interest from producers based in the Côte d'Or.

For reds, look to the vineyards above the Côte d'Or to the west. The Hautes-Côtes, assisted by the warmer climate, are demanding more of our attention. Here, you will find juicy, sapid Pinot Noir – real *vins de plaisir*. There should be an honorary mention for Beaujolais. The top Crus, such as Moulin-à-Vent and Morgon, can make complex, age-worthy wines, and standards are rising quickly in line with increases in interest and investment.

Wherever you look for your Burgundy, the most important words on any label are the name of the producer. Fine Burgundy is a fickle taskmaster: making the best examples requires dedication, skill and intuition. The top names of the Côte d'Or have these qualities and, as their wines are in great demand, many have expanded their horizons to the once-overlooked regions to increase their offering. Their names and reputations are valuable signposts, adding their skills to those of winemakers already resident in these fascinating, evolving appellations and regions. ■



03

- 01 Pickers' tools ready for the harvest
- 02 Dark overalls are *de rigueur* come harvest time at Domaine Vougeraie
- 03 From weather-worn doorways to ancient stone houses, there's an old-world charm everywhere you turn



GRANDS

NS FINS

DEBOUR COGNAC

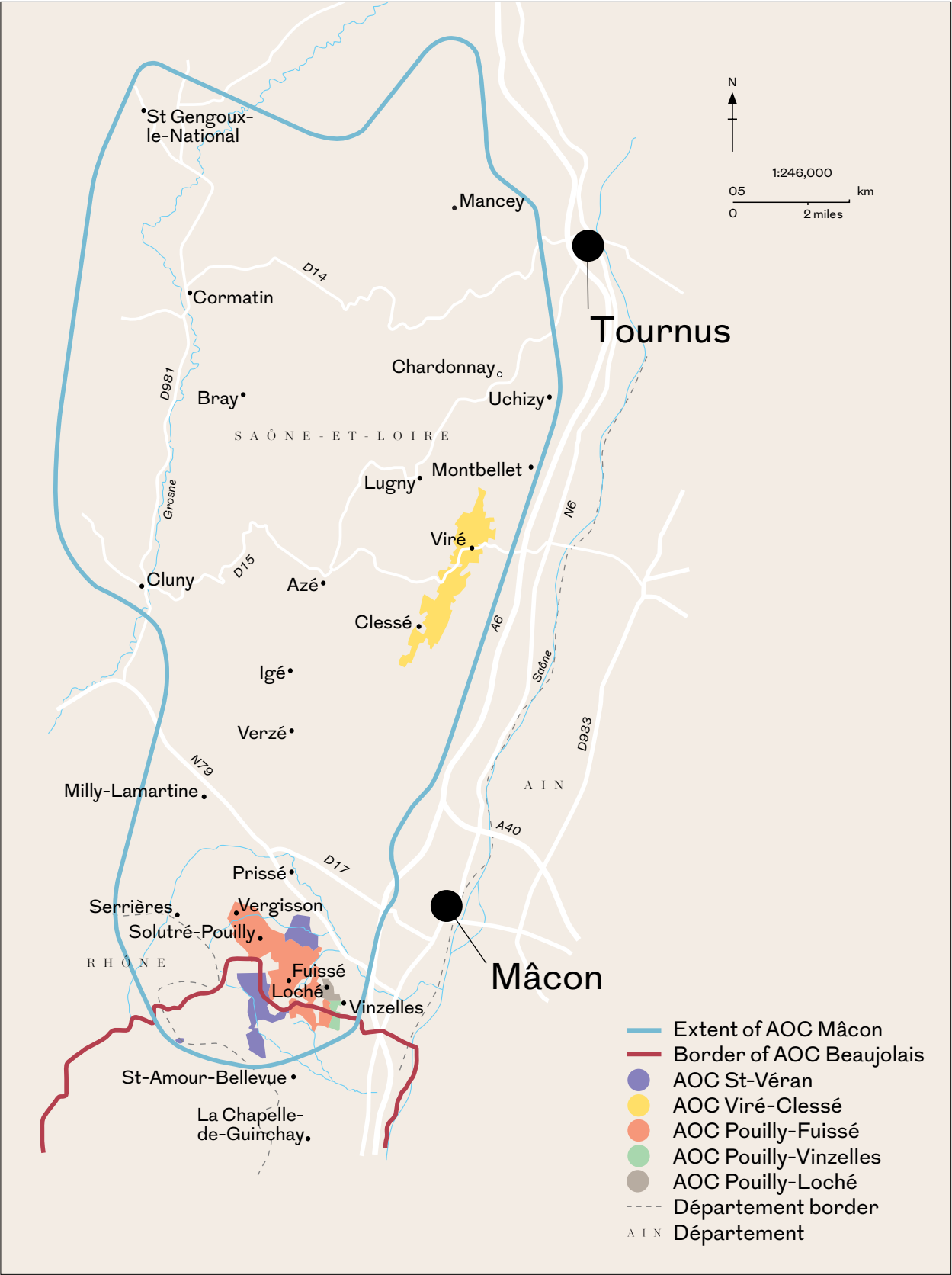


# MÂCONNAIS





# MÂCONNAIS



Thanks to the work of brilliant and progressive producers, the Mâconnais has shrugged off its reputation for inexpensive, uncomplicated and uninspired wines. There's still value to be had here — and a whole lot more besides

The Mâconnais region lies south of the Côte Chalonnaise, overlapping with the northern part of Beaujolais. This is, by some majority, white wine country: Chardonnay accounts for around 80% of overall production and most of the best wines. The region is now among Burgundy's most dynamic, but that wasn't always the case: in the past, these wines were considered cheap, simple and short-lived.

Pouilly-Fuissé is the most celebrated region in the Mâconnais, and the most acclaimed white Burgundy outside of the Côte d'Or and Chablis. The appellation covers the communes of Fuissé, Solutré-Pouilly, Vergisson and Chaintré. The wines are elegant and opulent; they're softer and richer than Chablis, though the best have a nervous energy to balance the intense fruit flavours. Vineyards here are set against the backdrop of the most distinctive landmarks

of the Mâconnais — the twin rocky escarpments of Vergisson and Solutré. Excitingly, Pouilly-Fuissé will have Premier Cru status for its top vineyards as of the 2020 vintage. Note that Pouilly-Fuissé shouldn't be confused with Pouilly-Fumé, a Sauvignon Blanc-based white wine appellation in the Loire Valley.

Previously, only Pouilly-Fuissé stood out around here; now, other appellations are coming to the attention of discerning buyers and collectors. Increasingly ambitious growers are making complex and concentrated wines, aged in oak and with good ageing potential. Village appellations like Pouilly-Vinzelles, Pouilly-Loché, Viré-Clessé and Saint-Véran are all worth exploring. Saint-Véran comes from a number of communes, one of which is somewhat confusingly called Saint-Vérand. It can also come from Châne, Chasselas, Davayé, Leynes, Prissé and Solutré-Pouilly.





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Also worth knowing are the white wines of the Mâcon-Villages appellation – and especially those permitted to attach the name of a specific commune, for example Mâcon-La Roche Vineuse or Mâcon-Milly-Lamartine. Another such village is Chardonnay, a humble commune considered the birthplace of its namesake grape variety. Each village has its own identity, but these are fresh and fruity wines with sufficient concentration and acidity to enable some bottle ageing.

The southern borders of the Mâconnais overlap with the Beaujolais winegrowing region, itself sometimes considered a part of Burgundy proper. Some Mâconnais vineyards are planted with the red Gamay grape, with some also entitled to use the Beaujolais-Villages appellation. ■

- 01 The impressive, steep limestone cliff of Roche de Solutré presides over southern Burgundy
- 02 Some producers favour vast open wooden vats for fermentation
- 03 Many, but not all, producers here opt to ferment their wines predominantly in steel tanks to preserve their minerality and freshness



02



03



# OLIVIER MERLIN



Dubbed “the magician of the Mâcon,” Olivier Merlin has helped transform the reputation of Burgundy’s most southerly *terroir*. Here, he talks 2019, climate change and the next generation

MÂCONNAIS

**“We might apply modern technology, but we make our wines in the same way as they were made 200 years ago”**

Olivier Merlin is at a tipping point in his career. In his three-plus decades as a winemaker, he has diligently and dynamically worked to help the Mâconnais shrug off its reputation for producing humble wine; he has built up his holdings from 4.5 hectares to around 29, and he has come to produce a range of exceptional quality. But now, he is gradually handing over the reins to his sons, Paul and Théo – the next generation.

“When you have 35 vintages behind you, it’s easy to approach the next,” Olivier says. “To me, it’s not complicated – but it takes time to learn. My son Théo has three vintages behind him so for now, I am still involved in the complex parts of the process.”

There are, Olivier suggests, two points which really draw down on his skill as a winemaker. The first is when to start picking. “The 2019 vintage was very early – it is almost every year now,” he explains. “The choice of the date when we start picking is crucial, so we sample a lot before the harvest.

“When you pick in August you are dealing with completely different weather to the more traditional harvest month of September. You have to react quickly; if you start too late, you can end up with 15.5% or 16% alcohol and we don’t want that style of wine. In Burgundy, you want freshness and here in the Mâconnais we want to preserve the minerality too.” Olivier’s experience is

also required when it comes to pressing: “This is because we change the pressing system every year according to the quality of the grapes.”

Elsewhere, though, Paul and Théo follow a well-honed winemaking technique. “The style is very classic,” Olivier says. “Unlike my colleagues in the Mâconnais, we pick entirely by hand using small crates for the fruit; we don’t crush and we don’t destem; we use a vertical press and we don’t ferment before the juice goes into the barrel. We might apply modern technology, but we make our wines in the same way as they were made 200 years ago.”

It is these refined techniques, and meticulous vineyard practices, that have marked Olivier’s wines out as exceptional. These are wines which, like the finest Burgundies, truly express their *terroir*. “If you take any of the wines in our range and compare them, they’re totally different,” Olivier says. “But the process used to make each one is the same; this is very important to me – it means my technique shows the *terroir*. The wines express the difference of the soil, of the slope and of the altitude.”

Confident in his technique, and in his sons’ abilities, Olivier has a positive outlook. Even when it comes to unpredictable weather patterns, he can see advantage. “We are almost 100 metres higher than Meursault, which means we can keep the freshness, minerality and that slight saltiness you can feel in our wines.” It also means that achieving good ripeness in fruit is possible now, where historically it hasn’t been, for example in Clos de France (Paul and Théo’s recently leased vineyard in Vergisson). “When I started making wine, people said Vergisson had good *terroir* but it was very difficult to have a good maturation – but now that part is easy.”

This, though, is a short-term benefit, and Olivier is keen to impress the impact of global warming. “The virus is a problem for us now; it will pass and people will still drink wine. But, for my children, and for the future, global warming will be the most significant problem we face. We must take our responsibilities seriously.” ■





## OUR FAVOURITES



### **MÂCON-LA ROCHE VINEUSE, VIEILLES VIGNES**

La Roche Vineuse is between the famous escarpments of Solutré and Vergisson. This cuvée is exclusively from old vines which give small bunches of concentrated grapes, and – somewhat unusually for a Mâcon – it is all fermented and aged in oak.



### **POUILLY-FUISSÉ, CLOS DE FRANCE**

Olivier could barely contain his excitement at having taken on this vineyard on in 2018. It is one of the very top Pouilly-Fuissé sites and will be promoted to Premier Cru status from 20, so get in now.



# WHY I LOVE BURGUNDY

JASPER MORRIS MW

Jasper Morris MW, one of Burgundy’s leading critics and fine wine voices, explains the enduring allure of this remarkable region





**M**y 40-year love affair with Burgundy shows no signs of dwindling. As I — and some of the wines in my cellar — grow older, I'm mindful that age, in wine at least, can be a good thing.

When I first came to Burgundy, the leading producers were dangerously complacent, leaning on the past and the elements of pageantry that went with Burgundy's glorious history rooted in the medieval duchy. For most people, Burgundy meant either a colour (in fact, much too deep a red to be true to Pinot Noir) or a reference to Good Hearty Burgundy — a wholly inaccurate image.

Then came the renaissance of the late 1980s through the '90s. This saw the establishment of many more *domaines* bottling their own wine. There was also significant refinement in production techniques, which came about through a mixture of professional training and far better social interaction. At last, producers started to visit their neighbours' cellars to taste each other's wines. Welcome to the Golden Age of Burgundy.

**T**wo main grapes, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir; two main soil types, clay and limestone; two main groups of producers, *négociants* and *domaines*: Burgundy is so simple isn't it? Sadly not. Burgundy is wonderfully, wickedly complicated.

Partly it is the interlinked network of families who keep marrying each other, Moreys and Colins and Coffinets and Gagnards in Chassagne-Montrachet, Rossignols in Volnay, Mugnerets and Noellats in the Côte de Nuits. It is hard to keep up with the Morey family where you may find wines labelled Albert, Bernard, Caroline, Jean-Marc, Marc, Michel, Pierre, Sylvain, Thomas, Vincent, and probably a few more I don't know about. The Colin family could probably raise an XI to play against them (Michel, Marc, Bernard, Pierre-Yves, Damien, Joseph, Philippe, Bruno and Simon for starters).

Partly, too, it is the vinous landscape, with the patchwork mosaic of small plots, each farmed in its own individual style by the owner, such that you can easily tell where one plot ends and another starts through subtle differences in the height of the trellising or the vigour and colouring of the foliage.

But don't let Burgundy's complexity deter you — because, for me at least, it's part of its charm: it is here, after all, that the nuance and subtleties are to be found.

**T**he range, too, is wonderful. For those with disposable income to match what are undoubtedly high prices these days, there are some glorious Grands Crus to choose from, each of them offering a distinct flavour profile that makes that vineyard worth separating out and labelling on its own. These vineyards represent more than the quintessence of their appellations: they are each of them unique characterisations of a particular strand of Burgundy. To my mind, there's no other region that can hit the pinnacle of brilliance so evenly in both colours.

**TWO MAIN GRAPES,  
CHARDONNAY AND PINOT  
NOIR; TWO MAIN SOIL TYPES,  
CLAY AND LIMESTONE; TWO  
MAIN GROUPS OF PRODUCERS,  
NÉGOCIANTS AND DOMAINES;  
BURGUNDY IS SO SIMPLE  
ISN'T IT? SADLY NOT.  
BURGUNDY IS WONDERFULLY,  
WICKEDLY COMPLICATED**



THERE'S ANOTHER ELEMENT TO  
BURGUNDY'S APPEAL WHICH IS LESS  
OBVIOUS: I CANNOT HELP BUT ADMIRE  
THE DOWNRIGHT, INDEFATIGABLE  
RESILIENCE OF ITS WINEMAKERS



But we cannot all afford the Grands Crus and the top Premiers Crus; I certainly cannot. Thankfully, Burgundy also offers a wealth of wines at more manageable prices – whether they be generic Bourgognes from famous producers, gems from the Mâconnais or the Hautes-Côtes, or relatively under-the-radar appellations such as St Romain and Marsannay. These are the wines I choose for my cellar.

What gives me the most pleasure is opening a bottle of wine at any level and, on tasting, realising that it could not have been made any better – that it has realised its full potential. That is what brings the satisfied Burgundy smile to my face.

There's another element to Burgundy's appeal which is less obvious: I cannot help but admire the downright, indefatigable resilience of its winemakers. With problems such as *flavescence dorée*, a new disease; the fact that one of the stalwart root-stocks, 161-49C, has suddenly stopped working; the challenges of global warming and, of course, Covid, many would have stumbled. But the *sangfroid* of the *vignerons* remains impressive.

I'm privileged to call Burgundy home for most of the year, but I've never lost sight of the fact it is a deeply rewarding place to visit. Those who know Bordeaux well and are used to the 20-minute drive between Margaux and St Julien, are amazed, on visiting Burgundy, to be able to stand on the hill alongside one of the famous villages and to be able to see the church spires of three or four more household names. I love to walk in the vines and from the top of the Beaune hillside, just above the Clos des Mouches vineyard, I can see Pommard, Volnay, Monthélie and Meursault with a hint of Chassagne-Montrachet in the far distance.

It is the combination of the wine, the people and the place that makes Burgundy so magical. To me, Michel Lafarge, who left us after 70 vintages at his family domaine, was the embodiment of all that is most wonderful in Burgundy. One of the most emotionally charged moments that I will treasure, was dinner at Michel's house to celebrate his 86th birthday in 2014. His son Frederic showed the next bottle in the line-up to his father before he served it: a beatific smile lit up Michel's face: "That's a wine that my grandfather made..." It was in fact the 1915 Volnay 1er Cru Clos de la Cave des Ducs.

I am sure that the 2019 will last as long.■

*Jasper Morris is the author of Inside Burgundy, published by Berry Bros. & Rudd Press*







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## Burgundy 2019 – our producers

The campaign will launch at 9am on 7th January 2021 and will feature the producers below. A digital price list will be sent out before Christmas by your Account Manager. If you would like to receive a copy but don't have an Account Manager, please email us at [finewine@bbr.com](mailto:finewine@bbr.com) and we will be in touch.

## CHABLIS

Samuel Billaud  
Domaine Louis Michel & Fils  
Domaine Jean-Paul & Benoît Droin  
Le Domaine d'Henri  
Domaine Pinson Frères  
Domaine William Fèvre  
Domaine Sébastien Damp  
Domaine Eleni & Edouard Vocoret  
Jean-Claude & Romain Bessin

## MÂCONNAIS

Domaine de la Soufrandière  
Les Héritiers du Comte Lafon  
Olivier Merlin  
Château des Quarts

## CÔTE CHALONNAISE

## Domaine Berthenet

## CÔTE DE BEAUNE

*Jean-Yves Devevey*  
*Domaine David Moreau*

**CÔTE DE BEAUNE**  
*St Aubin*

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