

# VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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## JOSEPH DROUHIN'S EXCEPTIONAL MARQUIS DE LAGUICHE CHASSAGNE-MONTRACHET "MORGEOT"



The association of Maison Joseph Drouhin and the Marquis de Laguiche goes back to the closing years of the Second World War, and the Drouhin and Laguiche families have worked closely together ever since those eventful days of the mid-1940s. The Drouhin family and the Marquis de Laguiche first teamed up to produce wines together in the 1943 vintage. But, when Maurice Drouhin was forced into hiding in 1944, after the Nazis came to arrest him for a second time during the war and his having to make a midnight escape through the cellars under the domaine (eventually finding his way to the Hospices de Beaune, where he was hid for the duration of the war), the two families did not start to work together again until the 1947 vintage. The Drouhins have produced two exceptional wines from the Laguiche family vineyard holdings ever since then, with the most famous being their Montrachet “Marquis de Laguiche”. The Laguiche family is the single largest owner of vineyard land in the great grand cru of Montrachet, owning just over two *hectares* (which have been in the Laguiche family since 1361), with all of their vines situated on the Puligny side of this great grand cru vineyard. Less well known, but equally superb year in and year out, is the Marquis de Laguiche bottling of Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” that the Drouhins have also produced from the beginning of their association with the Laguiche family. This beautiful and very elegant rendition of Morgeot is produced from 2.26 *hectares* of vines in this large premier cru (it is actually a grouping of several different premier crus that can all be marketed under the better-known name of Morgeot), with the Laguiche vines situated in two parcels: les Grands Clos and les Vignes Blanches, both

of which lie in the absolute heart of the larger constellation of Morgeot. The ownership of these two parcels of Morgeot that the Laguiche family holds today also stretch far back into the past, as amazingly, they have owned these vineyards as well since 1361, which gives some idea of just how highly prized this part of Morgeot has been down through the centuries!

In the spring of this year, I met with Véronique Drouhin-Boss in the family's offices in the heart of Beaune to taste through a range of the Marquis de Laguiche Morgeot bottlings, as I have been a very big fan of this supremely elegant cuvée since I first had a chance to drink the wine in my early merchant days. The first vintage of Burgundy I ever sold as a young wine merchant was the 1985 vintage, and by luck or divine intervention, I had the good fortune to offer the 1985 Chassagne-Montrachet bottling from the Marquis de Laguiche in that first commercial vintage of my career. 1985 was certainly a pretty good vintage to start with in Burgundy, and perhaps my lifelong love affair with the wines of the Côte d'Or might have evolved differently if I had not been blessed with starting out with this beautiful vintage, which excelled for both red and white wines. The Laguiche bottling from Chassagne was labeled differently back in those days, as it was not then designated as hailing from Morgeot and was simply labeled as Chassagne-Montrachet "Marquis de Laguiche". It was not until several years later that I first learned that the wine was actually from two of the finest vineyards in the larger cru of Morgeot, and in those early days I used to marvel at just how beautiful the wine was, given that I thought it was a *villages* level bottling! It was not until the 2007 vintage that the Drouhin and Laguiche families decided to start putting the premier cru designation of Morgeot on the label, so it is only ten years since the wine has been labeled as hailing from Morgeot.

The premier cru of Morgeot is one of the anomalies in the Appellation Contrôlée system in Burgundy, as there are actually more than a dozen different *lieux à dits* here than can be sold as Morgeot. There are several other examples of this practice that can be found up and down the Côte d'Or and in Chablis, as for example, there are at least a half dozen different *lieux à dits* that are considered part of the grand cru of Clos de la Roche in Morey St. Denis. All of these smaller vineyards in the greater Morgeot are ranked as premier crus and a *vigneron* with a parcel of vines in one may sell the wine under either the name of that particular *lieu à dit* or under the name of Morgeot. This practice dates back to the centuries prior to the adoption of the AOC system in the 1930s, as the custom over time was for the wines from many of these other small vineyards to be sold under the better-known name of Morgeot prior to the regulations, and they were "grandfathered" in with the ability to still sell the wine under the name of Morgeot after the official classification was codified. However, there is a *lieu à dit* here that is actually named Morgeot, which is the absolute filet section of the greater vineyard and sits in the middle of the slope and gives its name to the expanded AOC of Morgeot. The Laguiche parcels of vines lie in two surrounding *lieux à dits* that abut this original Morgeot, with les Vignes Blanches lying contiguous on the slope with Morgeot proper, just to the north of the vineyard, and les Grands Clos found immediately above Morgeot on the slope. For hundreds of years, this has been considered the core white wine sector of the greater Morgeot, with the finest examples of the premier cru *blanc* hailing from these *lieux à dits*.

The Drouhin family's Marquis de Laguiche bottling of Morgeot is probably one of the very finest and most elegant expressions one can find of this large premier cru, which due to the variations of *terroir* from one side of the combined vineyard to the other, not to mention up and

down the slope, can vary quite a bit stylistically from domaine to domaine. Cuvées of Morgeot *blanc* in general can have a reputation as a slightly four-square example of Chassagne, without the cut and limestone mineral drive found in premier crus in the commune such as Caillerets, Virondot, la Romanée and Grands Ruchottes, and this can certainly be the case with some bottlings, as much of the *terroir* here has a fairly high clay content and is probably better-suited to pinot noir than it is to chardonnay. In fact, along with the premier cru of Clos St. Jean, certain sectors of the greater Morgeot are indeed the finest parcels for red wines in all of Chassagne-Montrachet, and it is only the market preference for Chassagne-Montrachet white wines today that finds these *lieux à dits* planted to chardonnay at all. For example, Alexandre Moreau's superb red Chassagne premier cru bottling of "la Cardeuse" hails from the far southern end of the greater Morgeot (close to the Santenay border), though Alex prefers to label the wine with the proper name of the *lieu à dit*, rather than as Morgeot *rouge*. But, he is fortunate to also have a fine parcel of vines in the best white wine sector of Morgeot, so there is no temptation to plant his plot in la Cardeuse to chardonnay. However, with many other producers, one can certainly understand if a *vigneron* decides to plant his parcel to chardonnay, no matter where in the greater Morgeot his parcel may lie and even if the *terroir* is better-suited for pinot noir, as Morgeot *blanc* sells for a higher price than Morgeot *rouge* today and is far more in demand by thirsty clients. In any case, the two Marquis de Laguiche parcels that make up this bottling *chez* Drouhin are in the central core section of the greater Morgeot, which has a higher chalk content in the underlying soil and is unequivocally best-suited for chardonnay.

During our tasting, Véronique Drouhin-Boss shared with me that of the two *lieux à dits* that compose the Marquis de Laguiche bottling of Morgeot, it is their parcel in les Vignes Blanches which is noteworthy for its very special vines, which year in and year out produce bunches with a significant percentage of tiny and very concentrated berries. These *selection massale* vines invariably suffer from *millerandage* each year, with the clusters composed of dramatically varying sizes of grapes in each bunch, and perhaps at least some of the credit for the extraordinary quality of this cuvée can be attributed to these vines and their preponderance of very small, intensely flavored berries which contribute a certain *je ne sais pas quoi* to the finished cuvée. The age of the vines in the two Laguiche parcels is quite similar (currently between thirty-five and forty years of age), but the Vignes Blanches section is almost always subject to *millerandage*. Whether or not this is a contributory reason, the Drouhins' bottling of Laguiche Morgeot is invariably one of the most elegant and refined examples of this premier cru, and this has been the case ever since the first bottle of the 1985 that I treated myself to in my mid-twenties. I have been drinking this wine with regularity ever since. The historical *Abbaye de Morgeot*, which was sacked during the French Revolution, sits in the middle of the slope here, just above the Laguiche parcel of vines in Les Grands Clos. The first vines in this section of Chassagne were originally planted by the Cistercian Monks around 1150, so this has been a very important part of the Burgundian landscape for almost as long as the Clos de Vougeot (which was only cleared and planted to vines *circa* 1110) and the well-connected Laguiche family's purchase of parcels here in 1361 is strong testimony to just how valued Morgeot was in the formative years of grape-growing in Burgundy.

Like all of the Drouhin family's premier and grand crus in the Côte d'Or, the Marquis de Laguiche bottling of Morgeot is barrel-fermented. The wine is raised in twenty percent new oak each year, so as not to allow the wood to dominate any of the *terroir* in the finished wine, with

the wine spending one year in cask prior to racking into *cuve* for harmonizing prior to bottling. Like many of the Joseph Drouhin white wines, the Laguiche Morgeot can occasionally be bottled fairly early after its *assemblage*, if the winemaking team at Maison Drouhin feels that the wine has gained all that it will from its *elevage* period and is ready to be bottled. Consequently, the wine can sometimes already be bottled when I am in Burgundy in mid-November to taste the previous year's vintage. Such was the case in November of 2011, when I arrived to taste the 2010 vintage *chez* Drouhin and found the Laguiche Morgeot, as well as several other top premier crus in the stable here, having just been bottled. This does not affect the quality of the wine in any case, as when the wine is ready for bottling, it will tell the team at Maison Drouhin by how it is showing out of cask and there is no point in delaying the *mise* once the wines have reached their optimal point of evolution in barrel and tank. In an average sized vintage, the Drouhin family produces about forty barrels of Marquis de Laguiche Morgeot, so this is one of the flagship white wines in the *maison's* portfolio and it can generally be found the world over. As the notes below will demonstrate, the Marquis de Laguiche cuvée of Morgeot ages long and gracefully in bottle, and this is typically one of the longest-lived premier cru white Burgundies (along with the Clos des Mouches Blanc) in the Joseph Drouhin stable. It is a great bottling of premier cru white Burgundy and often can fly just a bit below the radar, as the cru of Morgeot these days does not have quite the same *cachet* in the market as vineyards such as Ruchottes or Caillerets in the firmament of Chassagne-Montrachet. But, make no mistake, the Drouhins' Marquis de Laguiche Morgeot is one of the greatest premier crus to be found in the Côte de Beaune.



*Véronique Drouhin-Boss in the tasting room at Maison Joseph Drouhin.*

All of the following notes hail from our vertical tasting of the Marquis de Laguiche Morgeot in Beaune in early March of 2018, with the exception of the note on the 2016, which is from my report on the vintage in December of last year, and the note on the 2008, which was not in our lineup, but which I happily drank and reported on back in the summer of 2017 and have republished here for the sake of completeness. As the notes below will attest, all of our bottles in the vertical tasting were absolutely pristine in their evolutions, with the possible exception of the 2011, which seemed ever so slightly advanced to me and was showing just a touch of influence from premo. Véronique commented that at age seven, it is perhaps a bit late to be attributing this quickened evolution to premo, but I am convinced that there are other bottles of 2011 Laguiche Morgeot out there that would show even brighter, racier and less evolved than our slightly advanced bottle did in this tasting. But, as Véronique correctly pointed out, seven years out from the vintage and one is already into the realm of discussing individual bottles of a given wine, as they all take their own paths in the fullness of time.

### **2016 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2016 vintage of Marquis de Laguiche Morgeot has turned out utterly classical in profile and purity. The bouquet is a fine, elegant blend of pear, lemon zest, pastry cream, chalky minerality, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a rock solid core, impeccably soil signature, bright, zesty acids, and marvelous focus and grip on the very long, crisp and well-balanced finish. This will drink with great style from the moment it is released, but also has the depth and balance to age long and gracefully. 2018-2035. **93.**

### **2015 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

Like many of the top 2015 white Burgundies, the Laguiche Morgeot bottling is already drinking quite nicely, and it is far from a crime to be opening bottles of this wine today. The bouquet offers up a refined and vibrant blend of lemon, pear, a hint of pineapple, estery notes of bee pollen, chalky soil, citrus blossoms and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and focused, with a fine core, bright acids and a quite open, complex and bouncy finish. This is beautifully zesty on the backend and is already drinking very well. It is not quite as classically proportioned as the 2016 version, but for at least the next ten years, it will be every bit as enjoyable. 2018-2035+. **93.**

### **2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I love how the 2014 Laguiche bottling of Morgeot from the Drouhin family is evolving, and this is destined to be one of the very finest recent vintages of this iconic wine. The pure and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of lemon, pear, complex chalky minerality, the first hints of *crème patissière*, lemon blossoms and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, racy and electric in personality, with a lovely core, superb transparency and grip, laser-like focus and great cut and grip on the very long and classy finish. A beautiful bottle in the making, which is approachable today, but still in the midst of blossoming and will be even more complete with a few more years in the cellar. This is even better today than it was when I first tasted it out of barrel! 2018-2040. **94+.**

### **2013 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The nice touch of orange zest that the 2013 Laguiche Morgeot displayed in its youth has morphed into an exotic range of citric elements that are found in certain vintages of this wine, but are hardly typical. The combination really makes for a stunning aromatic constellation today, offering up scents of pear, a touch of sweet grapefruit, lemon, a hint of pineapple and magnolia

blossoms, to augment the classic notes of limestone minerality, pastry cream and discreet vanillin oak. On the palate the 2013 Morgeot is racy and elegant, with a full-bodied format, very good mid-palate depth, lovely *nervosité* and a long, complex and focused finish that closes with a note of citrus peel. This is quite different in personality from the utterly classic 2014 version, but it is not far off of the same superb quality level. Fine, fine juice with just a touch of the exotic. 2018-2035. **94.**

**2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2012 vintage for white Burgundy has its share of super concentrated (albeit, very pure) wines, due to the extremely short yields of the vintage. Out of cask, this wine was noteworthy for its youthful power, very much in the style of the vintage, coupled with the customary elegance of the Laguiche bottling *chez* Drouhin. Today, six years out from the vintage, the wine is drinking beautifully and seems a bit less notably concentrated than it was in its youth. The bouquet is pure and wide open, offering up scents of pear, lemon, *crème patissière*, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and a lovely floral topnote redolent of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and into its apogee, with a deep core, fine focus and complexity and a long, zesty and well-balanced finish. This is a very good moment to be drinking the 2012 Laguiche Morgeot, but it still has plenty of life ahead of it. My gut instinct would be to drink it up over the next seven or eight years though, as it may get a bit top heavy with long aging, due to the very, very small yields of the 2012 vintage. 2018-2025+. **92.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I had absolutely loved the 2011 Marquis de Laguiche Morgeot from Maison Drouhin when the wine was first released, but our bottle in this vertical tasting was the sole bottle in the broad lineup of vintages that seemed just a touch more advanced in its evolutionary process than I expected. It was probably just this particular bottle, and I would expect other examples to be a bit more youthful in development and even better. This particular bottle, though maturing in aromatic and flavor profile, was still very, very enjoyable to drink, offering up a complex and *à point* bouquet of candied lemon, chalky soil tones, a nice touch of brioche, dried flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and crisp on the attack, with a fine core, lovely soil inflection and a long, complex and ever so slightly linear finish. All of the other vintages of Laguiche Morgeot in our lineup, with the exception of the fully mature 1993, still had that lovely sense of lift on the backend that defines classic white Burgundy in its prime, but this bottle of 2011 was a bit more even keel on the finish. This was one of the reasons I thought it might be just a touch evolved. In any case, as with all white Burgundies at age seven, your individual bottles may vary, but this bottle of the 2011 was at its apogee and probably best drunk up in the next half dozen years or so. That said, I would be very, very surprised if most bottles still out there were not even more vibrant and snappy, as this wine was magical in its youth! 2018-2025. **90.**

**2010 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

When I had first tasted the 2010 version of the Drouhins’ Laguiche Morgeot, back in November of 2011, the wine had just been recently bottled. I thought it was an absolute classic in the making, but I had not seen another bottle since that time, so I was delighted to find it drinking beautifully in March of this year. The wine is deep, complex, and shares a touch of aromatic exotica with the 2013 version, but with its additional three years of bottle age now offering up a very complex bouquet of pear, blood orange, pastry cream, a touch of citrus peel, salty soil tones, vanillin oak and lovely orange blossom elements in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and impeccably balanced, with a fine core,

excellent cut and grip and a long, classy and vibrant finish. This is a superb vintage of Laguiche that is currently at the height of its powers. 2018-2040. **94.**

**2009 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

2009 white Burgundies can sometimes be a bit top heavy these days, but this is most assuredly not the case with this excellent Laguiche Morgeot from Maison Drouhin. The bouquet remains pure and vibrant, wafting from the glass in a refined mix of pear, *crème patissière*, a touch of hazelnut, the first hints of the buttery elements to come, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and a bit of lemon peel. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and focused, with a lovely core, fine soil signature, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the generous and zesty finish. A lovely example of 2009 white Burgundy. 2018-2030. **92.**

**2008 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2008 Marquis de Laguiche bottling of Morgeot from Joseph Drouhin is fully mature at age nine and drinking with great style and grace. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a bright and wide open constellation of pear, tangerine, chalky soil tones, pastry cream and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine acidity, lovely focus and grip and a long, complex and *à point* finish. This has the structure to cruise along nicely for another eight to ten years (at the least) and is drinking with great beauty today. 2017-2027. **93.**

**2006 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I had loved the 2006 Laguiche Morgeot out of the blocks, but the wine was such a precocious beauty that I had wondered out loud how long it would last in bottle. So, I was very happy to see it cruising along at its absolute summit and showing no signs of slowing down anytime soon. Clearly my early concerns that it would not stand the test of time were unfounded! The beautiful bouquet offers up an *à point* and classic blend of baked pear and apple, *crème patissière*, hazelnut, butter, spring flowers and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and at its peak, with a lovely core, excellent complexity and grip and a very long, very refined finish. Great juice. 2018-2028+. **93.**

**2004 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2004 vintage has been one of my favorites for white Burgundy since its release, with the wine's fine chassis of acidity needing some time to unwind, but with all of the underlying components necessary for a fine life in bottle. The 2004 Drouhin Laguiche Morgeot is aging beautifully and is now quite magical on both the nose and palate. The slightly exotic and vibrant bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex blend of lemon, a touch of blood orange, pastry cream, chalky soil tones, lemon oil, a whisper of vanillin oak and a floral topnote that is also quite reminiscent of lemon blossoms. A lemon trifecta! On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully complex, with a fine core, vibrant acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and complex finish. A top flight vintage of Laguiche at its absolute apogee! 2018-2030+. **94+.**

**2000 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I have always liked the style and balance of the 2000 vintage of white Burgundy, and the Drouhins' Laguiche Morgeot is a classic example. This vintage did not produce particularly concentrated wines, but they have always been very transparent and true to their underlying *terroirs*. The bouquet of the 2000 Laguiche Morgeot today is pure, tertiary in its complexity and still vibrant, delivering scents of lemon, pear, orange zest, acacia blossoms, salty soil notes, fresh almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still shows off lovely mid-palate depth, with excellent complexity and focus, bright framing acids and impressive



length and grip on the beautifully balanced, fully mature finish. The 2000 Laguiche Morgeot is a lovely, lovely wine that continues to drink at its apogee and has plenty of life still ahead of it. 2018-2028. **93.**



**1993 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot” Marquis de Laguiche- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 1993 vintage of Marquis de Laguiche Morgeot has long been one of my favorites, and I drank this wine with great pleasure in its middle age, but the last couple of bottles I had sourced at auction were not spot on and were a bit more advanced than they should have been. Therefore, I was very happy to see the vintage in our tasting lineup and to find this particular bottle at the peak of its powers once again, albeit, now starting to approach the far side of its plateau and probably due for drinking up over the next several years. The deep, bright and tertiary bouquet delivers a blend of fresh apricot, pear, hazelnut, chalky soil nuances, butter, citrus peel and a whisper of vanilla. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and still quite vibrant, with mature flavors, good depth at the core and a long, complex finish. The acidity here, which was once almost tensile in its youth, is now playing a supporting role and this lovely wine, and after a great run, it is starting to lose just a bit of steam. It is still a very fine glass of mature Morgeot, but now with time in hand. 2018-2025. **92.**

**WEINGUT JOHANN JOSEPH PRÜM 2016ERS  
AND OTHER RECENTLY TASTED WINES FROM THE ESTATE**



*Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm, as seen from across the Mosel in the upper reaches of the Wehlener Sonnenuhr.*

As I have mentioned quite a bit over the last year, I was not able to travel to Germany in the spring of 2017 to taste the new 2016 vintage, as I had knee surgery on the calendar that prevented my annual visit. Over the last few issues, I have been able to report on a few top estates who sent along samples of their 2016ers for me to taste out of bottle, so my coverage of the vintage has not been completely non-existent, just extremely sparse. Right before my long trip to Burgundy, Beaujolais and Champagne this past spring, I was invited by Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm’s importer and New York distributor to attend a dinner of the estate’s fine wines, with the lineup billed as the “2016ers from Weingut J. J. Prüm”. The co-host for the evening was Grapes the Wine Company, one of New York’s finest retailers. However, when I arrived for the dinner, I saw that the New York distributor, Cazanove Opici, was being more than generous with our range of wines, and we had quite a few wines from the 2015 vintage and earlier included in the festivities, and not simply a range of young 2016ers. As almost all of the wines featured in the dinner tasting were wines I had not yet tasted, I decided that I would simply include everything from that lovely evening in the notes that follow, rather than just write about the superb handful of 2016ers we tasted from the estate. As I wrote a complete, historical feature on Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm back in the summer of 2015, I will only include a short synopsis of their history here and for those who are interested in more detail on this great middle Mosel producer, I refer you back to Issue Fifty-Seven.

Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm is one of Germany's greatest estates, and yet this Wehlen-based winery is not particularly old by Mosel standards, having only been founded in 1911. The estate was originally started by Johann Joseph Prüm in this year, as he was the oldest of seven children of Mathias Prüm, with each of Mathias' children inheriting one-seventh of the family vineyard patrimony upon their father's passing and starting out on their own. While the estate of Johann Joseph Prüm was founded in 1911, it was co-managed from the early 1920s onwards by his son, Sebastian Alois Prüm, who worked alongside of his father and under whose inspired guidance it quickly rose to the very pinnacle of German wine. Sebastian Prüm took over much of the responsibility for the management of the estate at a fairly young age, as his father's health had been seriously ill-affected by the First World War and Johann Joseph Prüm was never able to make a recovery to full health after the war. During his era at the estate, Sebastian Prüm carved out a place for the winery in the middle Mosel that would lay the foundation for today's undisputed excellence, adding important vineyard parcels as they became available in some of the finest *terroirs* in the region and the estate was soon one of the most important of the VDP estates in all of Germany. During his long career, Sebastian Prüm was aided by a small handful of cellar masters at the estate, but after his sudden passing in 1969, his third oldest son, Dr. Manfred Prüm, assumed the reins of this iconic estate and took over the winemaking responsibilities as well. Dr. Manfred Prüm has had a long and very storied career at the head of the family winery, and is one of the most famous and highly-regarded winemakers of his generation in Germany. Today, nearly fifty years after his first vintage, Dr. Prüm continues to still have a very active role in the direction and winemaking decisions at the estate, which he has shared with his equally-talented daughter, Dr. Katharina Prüm since 2003.

As readers may recall from my piece on Weingut Willi Schaefer's lovely 2016ers back at the end of last year, the 2016 growing season was not an easy one in the middle Mosel. The first half of the year was one of the wettest on record, with persistent rainfall and seemingly rather dim prospects for a top flight vintage. Temperatures were also quite volatile, with unseasonably cool weather followed by hot temperatures only a few days later, and then back to lower temperatures again. It was truly a roller coaster ride for the first half of the growing season of 2016. However, from mid-summer on, the skies cleared and it was sunny and very dry, with drought as much a concern in the back half of the vintage as the rain had been in the first half. Temperatures continued to be unpredictable though, as for example, it was 10 degrees Celsius on July 15<sup>th</sup> and all the way up to 35 degrees Celsius by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month! It was not until October that a normal, seasonal range of temperatures settled over the middle Mosel. There were also two hailstorms in the middle Mosel in 2016, both centered around the village of Graach, with the heavier one at the end of May and a milder blast coming through at the start of August, which ended up cutting back the crop in vineyards affected by the hail, but not adversely affecting the quality of the resulting wine. The drought conditions of the latter half of the summer were no doubt beneficial in this respect, as the hail-damaged berries dried up and fell off the vines as August unfolded, which allowed for better concentration of ripeness in these vineyards that were hit by the hail and eventually allowed for some Auslese to be produced in 2016. September was very warm, which helped push up the sugar levels ahead of the harvest and picking in this section of the Mosel got started in mid-October and finished up in mid-November. As it was very dry on the middle Mosel right through to the end of the harvest of 2016, there is very little botrytis to be found in the vintage and the small percentage of Auslesen produced are

generally made from concentrated and golden berries, with only a handful made from the last grapes to be brought in adding a glaze of botrytis to the proceedings.

Katharina Prüm and her team at the winery started making their passes through the vineyard for the harvest of 2016 on October 10<sup>th</sup> and continued at a leisurely pace through the fine Indian Summer weather, with the last bunches brought in on November 14<sup>th</sup>. This patience and ability to keep the picking team in harness for an extended period of time this autumn paid dividends, as the estate was able to produce a wider range of Prädikat wines than some of their neighbors in 2016, with small quantities made of several different Auslesen in this year. In general terms, the 2016 vintage is strongest in the Kabinett and Spätlese Prädikats and most middle Mosel estates have only a single Auslese bottling from each of their top vineyard sites (if any were produced), but the Prüms were able to do a bit better. Katharina Prüm noted their success at this level, as she observes that “we produced Auslesen in the Graacher Himmelreich, Wehlener Sonnenuhr and Zeltinger Sonnenuhr,” as well as “Auslesen Goldkapseln in the Bernkasteler Lay, Graacher Himmelreich and Wehlener Sonnenuhr.” None of the upper Prädikat 2016ers were served at our tasting in February, which I assume was because the wines were not yet ready for showing. Katharina mentioned that in the vintage of 2016, “there developed a bit of botrytis in the last phase of the harvest“, but it is generally not a botrytis year. The Goldkapsel bottlings that were produced at the estate were the only ones here made with some botrytis-concentrated grapes. The remainder of the Weingut Prüm lineup in 2016 is quite a complete range, as their were 2016 Kabinetten produced here from the Badstube vineyard in Bernkastel and the Wehlener Sonnenuhr (in addition to the Himmelreich Kabinett reported on below), as well as the full lineup of Spätlesen that were featured at our tasting. However, there are no wines at Prädikat levels above the Gold Kaps at Weingut Prüm in 2016.

The following wines were tasted at a dinner in the middle of February of this year. We had the pleasure to be led in our tasting by Katharina Prüm’s charming husband, Wilhelm Steifensand, as Katharina remained at home taking care of the couple’s new baby! In the tasting notes below, I have listed the wines in the order that they were served. It is obviously not a complete lineup of the 2016ers from Weingut Prüm, as all of the Kabinetten had already been sold out at the estate other than the Himmelreich and the Auslesen were not yet ready, but it was a very nice cross section of the vintage. No one in attendance was about to complain that we had a few less 2016ers on this evening, so that we could dip our toes into the very, very deep waters of Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm’s older vintages! A couple of the 2016ers that we tasted on this evening were remarkable for their relative generosity at such a young age and really were quite expressive and detailed already, which I think is a very fine reflection on the quality and style of the 2016 vintage in the middle Mosel. As the Prüm family has made their wines in a very reductive style for generations, with the goal to produce extremely long-lived wines that take their time reaching peak drinkability, a tasting of young Weingut J. J. Prüm wines often speaks mostly to the future greatness of these wines and they are customarily quite closed when young. However, on this evening, the 2016 Graacher Himmelreich and Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Spätlesen both showed beautifully and uncharacteristically, quite generously out of the blocks and were very, very easy to drink in their youthful phases. In their cases, I suspect that this portends that these wines will prove to be particularly elegant expressions of their respective *terroirs* and Prädikat levels when they are fully mature, and that they will be true cellar treasures in the fullness of time.

**2016 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett AP #7- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

The 2016 Himmelreich Kabinett AP #7 is a beautiful wine in the making. The nose wafts from the glass in a youthfully classic blend of pear, green apple, complex minerality, lime peel, a touch of petrol and a salty topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, medium-bodied and still quite reserved on the palate, with ripe acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and very nicely balanced finish. This will be excellent, but like all J. J. Prüm wines, it will need some more bottle age before it starts to stir. 2024-2055+. **93.**

**2016 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Spätlese AP #4- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

The 2016 Spätlese AP #4 from the Badstube is a very good wine in the making, but it was pretty closed and reductive at the time of our tasting. With some rather extended swirling in the glass for encouragement, the wine eventually offers up a promising bouquet of green apple, pink grapefruit, petrol, slate, lime zest and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, medium-full and delicate in profile, with a nice mid-palate, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the primary and zesty finish. This is a very, very young wine today and will need at least a decade of bottle age to really start to blossom, but it should prove to be a fine drink once it is ready to go. 2026-2055+. **91+.**

**2016 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #8- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

The 2016 AP #8 Spätlese from the Himmelreich is a classic example of this great *terroir* in the making. This is less shut down than the Badstube at the present time, and though it is still a young wine, its fine detail is already very much apparent. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a superb blend of pear, a touch of white cherry, slate, violets, bee pollen and a lovely topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and already beautifully filigreed, with a good core, dancing backend balance and a very long, zesty and nascently complex finish. In my experience, it is quite rare that a young Himmelreich Spätlese from the Prüm family will be so expressive early, and I think this speaks well of its future elegance and refinement at maturity. Lovely juice. 2025-2060. **94.**

**2016 Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese AP #6- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

As the Prüm family has such a small slice of the Sonnenuhr vineyard in Zeltingen, it is seldom included in tastings such as this, where clients of the distributor and one of their top retailers have been invited to taste the new vintage, and it was quite generous of both to include the wine at our dinner tasting. This too is surprisingly expressive today, delivering a superb aromatic constellation of apple, lime zest, a touch of tangerine, complex slate minerality, wild yeasts and both fruit blossoms and lilacs in the upper register. On the palate the wine refined, medium-full and dancing, with lovely interplay of pristine fruit, plenty of floral tones and a great base of slate. The finish is long, precise and filigreed, with fine focus and grip on the very long finish. A beautiful wine in the making. 2026-2060. **94.**

**2016 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese AP #12- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

The 2016 Wehlener “Sonnenuhr” Spätlese AP #12 is also a simply outstanding bottle in the making, and though it shares a bit of an expressive nature with the last two wines, it is a bit more buttoned up today behind its structural elements and will need just a bit more time in the cellar to blossom. But, this is typical of this vineyard! The bouquet is lovely and will be very complex in the fullness of time, as today it offers up scents of pear, delicious apple, vanilla bean, a marvelous undertow of slate, wild yeasts, a touch of citrus zest and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and racy, with a lovely core, superb backend energy and laser-like focus on the very long and seamless finish. A classic. 2028-2060. **94+.**



*Dr. Katharina Prüm, the fourth generation to head the iconic Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm.*

### ***Older Vintages***

#### **2015 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #12- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

The 2015 Himmelreich Spätlese AP #12 is a riper wine than its 2016 counterpart, but this is neither better nor worse, just a different expression of this same magical *terroir*. The bouquet offers up a beautiful constellation of apple, tangerine, crystalline minerality, citrus zest, lilacs and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and racy, with a gorgeous core of fruit, great mineral drive, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2023-2060. **94.**

#### **2012 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #3- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

With the cool and classic 2012 vintage, we have a glimpse of the Himmelreich Spätlese that is probably a bit more akin to where the 2016 will be headed stylistically. This is a beautiful wine already, but I would try to give it at least a few more years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers to emerge more emphatically. The bouquet is complex and vibrant, offering up scents of pear, green apple, lilacs, petrol, slate and a floral topnote redolent of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and opening up beautifully, with lovely depth and complexity, superb mineral drive on the very long backend and really lovely acidity and grip. Just a beauty. 2020-2050+. **94.**

#### **2015 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese AP #32- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

2015 is a really lovely Auslesen vintage and the Sonnenuhr AP #32 is a classic example in training. The bouquet is youthful, but already beautiful in its combination of pear, a touch of

tangerine, superb slate undertow, a hint of the honeycomb to come, vanilla bean and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and nascently complex, with great cut and grip, zesty acids and great cut, grip and mineral drive on the long and perfectly balanced finish. Marvelous wine. 2027-2075+. **94+**.

**2009 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese AP #6- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

The 2009 Auslese AP #6 from the Himmelreich is starting to drink beautifully as it closes in on its second decade of life. The bouquet is wide open, deep and complex, jumping from the glass in a fine blaze of apple, a touch of pineapple, lovely wild yeasts elements, slate, bee pollen and a topnote of lilacs. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, open and light on its feet, with great detail and focus, bright acids and great bounce and minerality on the backend. The finish here is long, zesty and complex and this wine is just starting to reach a plateau of fine drinkability, where it will reside for the next half century or more. 2028-2070+. **95**.

**1997 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese AP #3- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

Ironically, I had tasted and written up this particular wine in my profile of the domaine a couple of years ago, but learned a bit more about it on this particular evening. It turns out that the AP #3 Auslese from the Himmelreich spent a long time in tank prior to bottling, for this wine was not bottled until 2003! This information was, of course, readily available on the side of the label as part of the AP number for the wine, but I had missed that detail back in 2015. The wine is even more beautiful to drink today than it was a couple of years ago, offering up a beautiful and nicely mature bouquet of pear, apple, gentle honey tones, bee pollen, a lovely range of white flowers and that inimitable middle Mosel saltiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and at one of its peaks, with superb intensity of flavor, zesty acids and great focus and grip on the very, very long and very complex finish. 2018-2050. **95**.

**2003 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese AP #3- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

The AP #3 Auslese from the Sonnenuhr in 2003 was bottled a bit later than one might imagine, as this did not go into the bottle until 2005, but it spent nowhere near as long in tank as the 1997 Himmelreich mentioned above. This is a very good 2003er, though more typical of the vintage than the vineyard, offering up a deep bouquet of backed apple and peach, fresh yellow plum, hints of the leather to come with further bottle age, honey, salty soil tones and bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, full, crisp and complex with lovely focus and grip and very good length on the finish. I do not have a sense that there is a lot in reserve here, but the balance is impeccable (even with fairly low acidity) and this seems likely to keep cruising along in the bottle for many decades to come. 2018-2050. **92**.

**2003 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel AP #9- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

This 2003 Goldkapsel Auslese from the Wehlener Sonnenuhr, AP #9, spent three and a half to four years in tank prior to its bottling in 2007. This is a beautiful wine, showing more complexity and refinement than the regular Auslese from this year. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a sophisticated mix of apple, pear, peach, bee pollen, violets, salty minerality and just a touch of honeycomb. On the palate the wine is crisp, fullish and focused, with lovely acids (particularly for 2003), a sense of filigree that is not particularly emblematic of the vintage and lovely length and grip on the complex and light on its feet finish. 2020-2060. **94**.

*And One More Weingut Johann Joseph Prüm Wine Tasted Recently*

**2001 Zeltinger Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese AP #5- Weingut Joh. Jos. Prüm**

I last drank a bottle of the 2001 Zeltinger “Sonnenuhr” Auslese four or five years ago, when it was still pretty shut down and in its phase of hibernation. Happily, this bottle, drunk in December of 2017, was starting to blossom nicely and was a superb glass of wine. The beautiful nose offers up a very expressive blend of white cherry, apple, a dollop of fresh pineapple, petrol, a lovely and complex base of soil and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and filigreed, with lovely intensity of flavor and complexity, bright, zesty acids and exquisite balance on the very long, vibrant finish. A lovely wine that is now starting to drink nicely, but will continue to blossom and will probably be an even better drink a decade down the road. 2018-2045. **93+**.



**CHAMPAGNE LOUIS ROEDERER**  
**THE MOST DYNAMIC AND FORWARD-THINKING GRANDE MARQUE**



Champagne Louis Roederer was founded in 1776, which should make this America's favorite Champagne house, no, as we share birthdays? Champagne Louis Roederer is one of the very few *Grandes Marques* today that continues to be family-owned and has not been purchased by a large corporation. It is one of the greatest of the *Grandes Marques*, with a very clear-cut house style that is brought about by its retention of great stocks of reserve wines to maintain a consistent style for its non-vintage bottlings through growing season variations, and a long-standing policy of barrel aging of these reserve wines. Unlike many of the other *Grandes Marques*, the foundation of Louis Roederer's exceptional quality is based firmly on an extraordinary vineyard patrimony, as the *maison* owns fully two hundred and forty *hectares* of vineyards in the Champagne region, with the vast majority of these rated either premier or grand cru. In fact, these very substantial vineyard holdings gives Louis Roederer an almost unique position amongst the *Grandes Marques*, as their estate vineyards are enough to provide more than seventy percent of the house's needs and in fact, the only wine in the Louis Roederer portfolio that is not made entirely from estate-grown fruit today is their flagship non-vintage bottling of Brut Premier. Every other single bottling at Maison Roederer is produced entirely from grapes grown by the vineyard team here. It seems to me that this has nicely insulated the

house from some of the dislocations in the grape markets in Champagne that have occurred over the last couple of decades and allowed for admirable consistency of both quality and style.

This great family Champagne house was first created by Pierre Joseph Dubois in 1776 and originally named Dubois Père et Fils. Monsieur Dubois' son, Pierre Etienne, worked alongside of his father at the *maison* for many years and eventually succeeded his father at the head of the business. In 1818, he decided to sell Dubois Père et Fils to his Alsatian distributor of a few years, Nicolas Henri Shreider, who was the uncle of Louis Roederer. In 1825, Monsieur Shreider took his then sixteen year-old nephew under his wing in Reims and Louis Roederer began working at the *maison* while still a teenager, eventually inheriting the business and succeeding his uncle as the head of this important property upon his passing in 1832. The following year, the name of the *maison* was officially changed to Champagne Louis Roederer and the modern chapters of this *Grande Marque* began. His son, Louis Roederer II was born in 1845 and started working at the house alongside of his father in 1869, at the age of twenty-four. He would ascend to the head of Champagne Roederer the following year, when his father passed away, but his tenure would be quite short-lived, as he died at the tender age of thirty-five, leaving behind no children to take his place as the director of the estate. The *maison* passed on to the hands of his sister, Madame Louise Henriette Léonie Roederer, who owned the property until she could hand over the direction of the business in due course to her son, Léon Olry Roederer, who became the head of the Champagne house in 1903. Madame Roederer's tenure as owner was the first of what would be two significant periods when Champagne Louis Roederer would be in the hands of women, which has similar parallels at a few other *Grandes Marques* such as Veuve Clicquot and Bollinger as well, but was pretty much unheard of in the wine business of this era outside of the Champagne region.

Léon Olry Roederer's period at the head of the family estate was a very important moment for the *maison*, as he oversaw the transition from Champagne supplier to the royal family and Czars of the Russian empire, who had been the business' largest customer and whose orders had very much sustained the vibrant growth of this house from the second half of the nineteenth century until the Russian Revolution in 1917, to an internationally recognized Champagne house ranked in the very top division in the region. Monsieur Roederer passed away in 1932, in his thirtieth year at the helm of the house, but his younger wife, Camille Olry Roederer, who was twenty-three years his junior, took over the direction of the business and was one of the most dynamic leaders in the history of the Champagne house during her long tenure. Madame Olry Roederer ran Champagne Roederer from 1932 until 1975, and was a strong administrator and tireless promoter who worked energetically to continue the vision of her departed husband to place Champagne Roederer at the very summit of the constellation of *grandes marques* in Reims. This second chapter of feminine ownership and direction at Louis Roederer was one of its most vibrant periods in the history of the family estate. *Veuve* Camille Olry Roederer was a very capable and popular figure in the firmament of Champagne from the 1930s forwards, continuing to insist on great quality in the wines and throwing lavish *soirées* in Reims for clients to build a new commercial foundation for Louis Roederer, which had lost its most important market when the Russian revolution occurred in 1917. *Veuve* Olry Roederer was truly one of the *Grandes Dames* of Champagne. With Madame Olry Roederer's passing in 1975, at the age of eighty-three, she left the *maison* to her only daughter, Marcelle, and Marcelle's son, Jean-Claude Rouzaud, who had already been working at Champagne Roederer since 1967 and

had been groomed to eventually succeed his grandmother at the head of the *maison*. Monsieur Rouzaud was the first technically-trained head of the property. In turn, he has been succeeded by his son, Frédéric Rouzaud, who was appointed President of the family *maison* in 2006. We will go into the very important accomplishments of Messieurs Rouzaud during their time at the head of the property below.

The house realized early on in its history that owning its own vineyards would give it a natural advantage over competitors who relied on purchased grapes from small vineyard owners for their needs, and Louis Roederer himself was the first to purchase vineyards for the *maison*. In 1841 he orchestrated the acquisition of fifteen *hectares* of vineyards on the Montagne de Reims, in the superb grand cru village of Verzenay. This would become the cornerstone of the great vineyard portfolio at Maison Roederer. By 1880, under the direction of Louis Roederer II this had already grown to one hundred and twenty-six *hectares* of vines owned by the *maison*, with holdings in the finest cru villages of Aÿ, Mareuil-sur-Aÿ, Avize, Cramant, Chouilly, Cuis, Mesnil-sur-Oger, Vertus, Verzenay, Verzy, Beaumont sur Vesle and Villers Marmery. Messieurs Roederer was quick to recognize that the quality of the *maison's* wines now and far into the future would be firmly based on the quality of the vineyards that they were able to cultivate. Vineyard purchases at the time were focused on these finest villages, seeking a consistency of quality for the grapes that would make up the Louis Roederer wines, but also with an eye towards diversity of both *terroir* and grape variety, so that chardonnay vineyards were purchased in the Côte des Blancs and pinot noir vineyards were bought in the Vallée de la Marne and on the Montagne de Reims. Interestingly, pinot meunier was not part of their vineyard foundation, and even today, this variety only amounts to six percent of their holdings and does not occupy a significant role in the vineyards owned by the *maison*. Louis Roederer, *Père et Fils*, were both far ahead of their time in aspiring to make the house a great grape grower, so that the *maison* could control the quality of every step of the winegrowing process and produce the finest wines possible on a consistent basis. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, this was a revolutionary concept in Champagne, as grape prices were quite strictly controlled at low prices (primarily for the benefit of the large *négociant* firms) and far more emphasis was placed at most of the finest *Grandes Marques* of this era on building brand identification for their wines, rather than focusing on their vineyard foundations.

However, even more important today than the great vision that Louis Roederer displayed in buying his own vineyards, (as well as the future generations of his family who have later headed the *Grande Marque* and have expanded upon his efforts to purchase further top vineyards to keep pace with the needs of the *maison*), is the budding commitment of Champagne Roederer in the twenty-first century to farm their two hundred and forty *hectares* of vines increasingly by organic and biodynamic principles. Given the size of the Roederer holdings and the historical importance of this great *maison*, the decision to farm their vineyards in a healthy and renewable manner would be monumental news in Champagne, even if the wines here were not exceptional in quality (but, of course, they are brilliant up and down their range), as the last half century of viticultural history in this region is not happy reading. As I have written about in the past, the last fifty years of Champagne's questionable viticultural practices are now just beginning to be looked at more closely by some vineyard owners in the region, and profound changes are afoot, with one of the absolute leaders in this regard being Maison Louis Roederer. Starting in 2000, the house began experimenting with biodynamic viticultural methods in some of their vineyards

and having been eventually quite happy with the results, they have plunged headfirst into a conversion of all of their vineyards over to organic and (eventually) biodynamic farming practices. By the close of 2017, fully one hundred and fifteen *hectares* of their vineyards are now farmed under *biodynamique* principals and most of the remainder of their vineyards are farmed organically and are in the process of conversion to biodynamics. Thirty *hectares* here are also ploughed exclusively by horse. There is little doubt that Louis Roederer, in the not too distant future, will be farming all two hundred and forty *hectares* under *biodynamique* methods.

Of the two hundred and forty *hectares* of vineyards presently owned by Maison Louis Roederer, eighty-four *hectares* are in the Côte des Blancs (principally in Avize, Cramant, Vertus, Chouilly, Oiry and Mesnil-sur-Oger), sixty-eight *hectares* are in the Marne Valley, in villages such as Aÿ, Mareuil-sur-Aÿ, Hautvillers and Cumières (the village where all of the fruit for the new Roederer Brut Nature bottling finds its origin) and sixty-nine *hectares* are on the Montagne de Reims, based primarily in the superb grand cru villages of Verzenay and Verzy. Interestingly, of all these vineyards, just over fourteen *hectares* are planted with pinot meunier, as the house has long relied on pinot noir and chardonnay as the backbone for the vast majority of their bottlings. The vineyard patrimony here includes one hundred-thirty *hectares* of grand cru and seventy-three *hectares* of premier crus. All of the vineyards owned by Louis Roederer are replanted when the time comes by *selection massale*, ensuring that there is consistency of genetic material in the vineyards and as a full range as possible of aromatic and flavor complexities in the finished wines. The *maison* even goes so far as to maintain its own nursery of young plants, produced from cuttings taken from their best vineyard stocks, so that nothing is left to chance when it comes to planting first class vine material when the time for replanting comes along. Louis Roederer is also admirable in its far greater reliance on older vines than is typical in Champagne, as the house will generally not consider replanting any of its vineyards until a parcel starts to approach sixty years of age (in many Champagne vineyards, twenty-five years of age is considered already too old and replanting takes place). Unlike some well-known Champagne houses, at Louis Roederer, viticulture is taken very, very seriously and is correctly seen as the foundation on which all of the resulting quality is firmly based.

When the *maison's* namesake, Louis Roederer, was succeeded by his son, Louis Roederer II in 1865, another important milestone in the history of both the house and the Champagne region in general took place. It was during Louis Roederer II's tenure that the firm crafted its first release of its cuvée Cristal in the 1876 vintage, which was the very first luxury cuvée of Champagne to be produced by any *maison* in the region. The wine was made at the behest of Czar Alexandre II of Russia, who was then the company's largest customer and requested that the *maison* reserve its finest cuvée for him every year. To meet the Czar's request, Louis Roederer II and his cellar team created Cristal. Up until the revolution in Russia in 1917, one hundred percent of the production of Cristal was reserved exclusively for the Emperor and royal court of Russia and no one else in the world was able to buy a bottle. It is easy to imagine that the news coming out of St. Petersburg and Moscow in October of 1917 was not greeted happily by the team at Louis Roederer! The profound commercial changes at Champagne Roederer brought about by the Russian revolution were not the only stormy seas that had to be navigated by the *maison* at this time, as the mass destruction of the First World War hit many *vignerons* particularly hard in Champagne, and the prolonged fighting in the area wiped out fully a third of Louis Roederer's vineyards, with their vines in the villages of Verzenay, Verzy and

Beaumont sur Vesle completely destroyed by the war. All of these vineyards had to once again be replanted afterwards, less than a generation after phylloxera had necessitated grafting over all of the Roederer vineyards onto American rootstocks! One can only imagine just how difficult the financial times were for the Champagne house at this time, with their biggest market lost to the Bolsheviks and one third of their vineyards decimated by the fighting of the war.

The period of the 1920s and 1930s was one of regeneration for Champagne Louis Roederer. Cristal was introduced to the world at large for the first time in 1924, when the 1912 vintage was offered to clients other than the Russian court. New clients in France, England and the United States were courted and won over by the house's outstanding quality, with *Veuve Olry* Roederer proving to be very adroit at finding and keeping loyal clients for her wines through her lavish tasting dinners and parties which she hosted regularly in Reims. The Second World War was hard on the *maison*, as it was on all of France, but the horrific trench warfare that had defined the fighting in the Champagne region during World War I was happily not repeated and at least the house's vineyards remained relatively unscathed during the war. But, with all of the previous dislocations in the business caused by phylloxera, the First World War, the Russian Revolution and then the Second World War and the difficult rebuilding across all of France in the wake of that second international war, Madame Olry Roederer's time at the helm was not one of vineyard expansion for the estate, with the property's vineyard heritage remaining much the same as it had been in 1880, with about one hundred and thirty *hectares* of vines under Louis Roederer ownership.



*Champagne Louis Roederer's Technical Director, Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon.*

When Madame Olry Roederer was eventually succeeded by her grandson, Jean-Claude Rouzaud in 1975, Monsieur Rouzaud became the first trained oenologist and agronomist at the head of the family business and he and was perfectly groomed to successfully lead the *maison* into the modern era. The present day foundation of success for Louis Roederer had been re-laid during the previous three decades and the *maison* was once again on the lookout for opportunities to expand its foundation of high quality vineyards as they became available. As mentioned above, prior to Monsieur Rouzaud ascending to the head of the house, the vineyard acreage owned by Champagne Roederer had stayed pretty much the same as it was from the time of Louis Roederer II in the late nineteenth century, with the firm owning about one hundred and thirty *hectares* of vineyards. Monsieur Rouzaud reinvigorated the program of looking for good opportunities to buy grand cru and premier cru vineyard land, so that by 1976 the house's vineyard patrimony had climbed to one hundred and fifty *hectares* and by the late 1980s, to one hundred and eighty *hectares*. During this period, it was not as easy as it had been in the past to buy high quality vineyards, as other *Grandes Marques* had emulated the success of Louis Roederer and there was fierce competition for purchasing vineyards in the top crus. But, the *maison* has been quick not to miss opportunities and today their vineyard portfolio has continued to climb to their present figure of two hundred-forty *hectares*. In this era, just prior to Madame Olry Roederer's passing, that the first vintage of Cristal Rosé was crafted by Jean-Claude Rouzaud in the 1974 vintage. It would be released for the first time by Monsieur Rouzaud in 1980, as this was his inspiration.

Today, Champagne Louis Roederer is run by the seventh generation of the founding family, Frédéric Rouzaud, who succeeded his father, Jean-Claude Rouzaud as President of Champagne Roederer in 2006, has continued his family's passion for nurturing great vineyards, so that it has been under his watch that the vineyard foundation of Louis Roederer has grown to its present day level of two hundred and forty *hectares* of premier and grand cru vineyards. Frédéric Rouzaud's father, Jean-Claude, was the gentleman who gave the initial go ahead for this important *Grande Marque* to make the first steps towards a transition to organic and biodynamic farming methods in their large vineyard holdings. This was done in 2000 on a small trial basis, the year after Monsieur Rouzaud had appointed Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon as his new Technical Director. As Monsieur Lécaillon recalls of their transition to healthy and sustainable farming methods, "my conviction has always been that the first quality of a wine is to express the best of the soil and the place", so "organic and biodynamic (viticulture) seemed obvious to me." He continues, "I shared this vision with Jean-Claude Rouzaud when he appointed me *Chef de Caves* in 1999 and he totally backed me." However, the first steps on the road to organic and biodynamic farming were not easy, as Jean-Baptiste recounts: "in 2000, we launched our first biodynamic trials in Vallée de l'Ardre and it failed during the year of 2001, which was a very wet growing season" and our trials were "in a difficult location." Happily, Messieurs Lécaillon and Rouzaud were not deterred and notes Jean-Baptiste, "in 2004, I re-launched with success the program on the top *terroirs* used for Cristal of Avize, Aÿ and Verzenay", with the *maison* never looking back and continuing each year to expand the number of *hectares* under organic and biodynamic farming methods. Frédéric Rouzaud has been equally supportive of the transition to biodynamics at *Maison* Roederer since succeeding his father in 2006. I believe that one day, this change in farming at Louis Roederer will be seen as the most important moment in the history of Champagne since Dom Pérignon's day, as this decision will eventually change the very foundation of viticulture in the entire region in the decades to come, producing even greater

wines and a far more healthy environment in the villages of the region endowed with vineyards. Frédéric Rouzaud has also dramatically grown and diversified the commercial base of Champagne Roederer during his tenure, having purchased from the Lencquesaing family a majority interest in the great Second Growth estate of Château Pichon Comtesse de Lalande in Pauillac in 2006.

Today, the winemaking at Louis Roederer continues to be in the very capable hands of Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon and his team. Monsieur Lécaillon is a very thoughtful and talented winemaker, and the wines at Maison Roederer are as fine under his tenure as they have ever been in the illustrious history of this fine property. The traditional Roederer house style of fermentation in stainless steel tanks, followed by *elevage* in very large, old oak *foudres* has been, of course, generally continued under Monsieur Lécaillon's watch, but he has been willing to adopt small changes as opportunity has allowed in the last several years if they would improve the quality of a particular cuvée. In this regard, there are now certain lots of *vins clairs* that are barrel-fermented these days (always in older wood), rather than everything being initially fermented in stainless steel (as was the case in the past). The team will also employ a gentle re-suspension of the lees during the *elevage* of certain *vins clairs* if this is deemed likely to improve the quality of the wine, though Jean-Baptiste is quick to point out that "I cannot say we really do use *bâtonnage*, as we have large tanks" and this is quite a different phenomenon than stirring the lees in small casks, so "I prefer calling it *putting the lees back in suspension*." The decision on whether or not to do so is done on a week by week basis by Monsieur Lécaillon and his technical team, based on tastings of the individual *vins clairs*.

As Jean-Baptiste observes about his decisions in recent times to barrel ferment a percentage of the *vins clairs* or to re-suspend the lees of certain wines during their *elevage*, "the idea is not to change the style of the wines here, but rather to be intellectually curious enough to try different methods on an experimental basis and see if this will give us a richer palette of blending possibilities with the *vins clairs*- we were quite pleased with the experimental lots we have done in the past (with both techniques) and it gives us more flexibility now in certain vintages to maintain a classic house style." He is also very agnostic when it comes to allowing the *vins clairs* to go through malolactic fermentation (with the important exception of lots destined for Cristal, which is almost always a non-malo wine), allowing some wines in some vintages to go through malo, while other lots do not. The overriding principal is to provide the widest variety of potential still wines to bring complexity and consistency to the various cuvées each year. Traditionally, Cristal has been a non-malo Champagne since its very earliest days, so the *vins clairs* here have typically not undergone malolactic fermentation, but as we will see below, this is about to change, as the upcoming release of the celestial 2008 Cristal is one of the very first to incorporate a small percentage of *vins clairs* in the blend that did actually undergo malo. But, more on this below.

With over two hundred and forty hectares of estate-owned vineyards, as well as long-term contracts to meet the final thirty percent of the *Grande Marque's* annual production needs, there is an awful lot of work to be done each harvest when the wines begin to come into the cellars in Reims. Like many of the other *Grandes Marques*, Louis Roederer has pressing stations situated amongst the villages where their grapes are grown, and presses the grapes in these prior to sending the juice to the cellars in Reims to complete their fermentations and *elevage*. The

*maison*'s three press houses are located in the villages of Verzenay, Aÿ and Avize. Amazingly, given the scale of production here, Louis Roederer ferments each of its parcels separately, so that there are fully four hundred and ten different cuvées of *vins clairs* produced each year from the estate grown fruit here, not to mention the additional lots fermented from purchased grapes! As touched upon above, up until the last decade or so, all of the different cuvées of *vins clairs* were fermented in stainless steel tanks of varying sizes, but this has changed in recent times, as the early experiments with barrel fermentation for certain plots and villages was deemed quite successful by Monsieur Lécaillon, and now, depending on variations of vintage and vineyard site, certain lots of *vins clairs* may well be barrel-fermented, rather than starting out their lives in stainless steel. At the present time, about twenty percent of the *vins clairs* each year are barrel-fermented, with about half of these chardonnay and the other half pinot noir. But of course, this depends on both the vintage and the individual wine's character. As Jean-Baptiste comments, "I choose the parcels to be cask-fermented according to my records, experience and most important, my feeling" about the individual wine. As is always the case at *Maison* Roederer, where casks are used, they are invariably old neutral oak, as the goal is not to allow new oaky flavors into the *vins clairs*, but to match the variations of micro-oxygenation between old oak and stainless steel to the particular lot of wine. The ultimate goal for Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon and his talented winemaking team is to have each *vin clair* fermented to its optimal potential by matching its characteristics to the fermentation vessel, thus allowing for the widest range of high quality *vins clairs* each year from which to produce the blends.



*Some of the great old foudres used for aging reserve wines in Champagne Louis Roederer's cellars.*



I mentioned above the very large stocks of reserve wines that are kept in the cellars here at Louis Roederer. They are probably the largest to be found anywhere in the Champagne region and this rich heritage of reserves is another key to the consistent excellence of the Brut Premier bottling here. When one sees the rows and rows of old, thousand liter *foudres* that house most of the reserve wines in the cellars (there are also smaller amounts of reserve wines that are kept in stainless steel, rather than the old *foudres*), it is pretty amazing to realize that this very large library of older wines is kept almost exclusively for use in the blending of the Brut Premier cuvée each year, given that this bottling only represents thirty percent of the Roederer production. But, it is the only non-vintage wine produced at Champagne Louis Roederer, with each and every other bottling a vintage-dated wine. However, the reserve wines are not used solely for the flagship non-vintage Brut bottling here, as they are also used for the preparation of the *liqueur d'expédition* that the *maison* uses for the *dosage* of its wines when it is time for disgorgement. The *liqueur d'expédition* is used for all of the Louis Roederer cuvées, with the exception of the new Brut Nature Millésime bottling, and Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon and his team prepare a different version for each and every wine, each year, which best suits the wine to be disgorged and *dosé*, with each *liqueur d'expédition* a blend of different reserve wines and with a different level of residual sugar designed to bring the final wine into a perfect harmony of balance. After disgorgement, all of the cuvées here spend at least six months recovering prior to their release into the market.

This article has been in the planning stages for a couple of years now, with the first cornerstone laid when I visited Louis Roederer in the spring of 2015 and asked Monsieur Lécaillon to organize a small vertical tasting of his Brut Millésime Rosé to see how that cuvée evolves with extended bottle age. I printed those notes back in the summer of 2015, but have included them here as well, to give the full range of Roederer bottlings their proper due in this piece on the history of this great house. Subsequent visits to the *maison* have focused on other bottlings since the spring of 2015, culminating with my most recent visit here in the start of March- happily a couple of days before the dreaded 2018 flu of Reims struck me down and rendered me incapable of continuing my tastings in Champagne. If I had been forced to miss my tasting at Louis Roederer because of the flu, I would have been crushed, as this most recent visit allowed for the first tastings of the new 2008 bottlings of Cristal, which are to be released in June of this year, and which truly represent the greatest young vintage of Cristal and Cristal Rosé I have ever had the pleasure to taste. The summer of 2018 will indeed be a seminal moment in the long and illustrious history of Cristal, as Louis Roederer will release at the same time the 2008 Cristal and Cristal Rosé, as well as a small re-release of the 2002 vintage of both wines, and the second iteration of their Vinothèque program (which are later-disgorged versions of older Cristal vintages, which I discuss in depth below), and in this case these will be the magical 1996s. So, well-heeled Champagne enthusiasts are going to have an unprecedented opportunity to secure bottles of the 2008s, 2002s and later-disgorged 1996s all at the same time, and given the legendary status of all three vintages, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to add to the cellar three absolutely magical vintages of Cristal straight from the Roederer cellars in Reims. I tasted all six of these wines as part of my visit in March and believe me when I tell you that it was one of the greatest tastings of my lifetime! So, if you happen to be in the market share that can lay down Cristal in the cellar, do not miss this upcoming opportunity in June!

The following notes are all arranged by cuvée, with Brut Premier listed first, followed by the new Brut Nature Millésime, Brut Vintage, Blanc de Blancs Brut Vintage and Cristal. Prior to

the tasting notes on each cuvée, there is an introductory discussion of the history, vineyard sources and winemaking techniques for each bottling. The Cristal notes are broken up both by color and whether or not the bottling is a recent release under the new Vinothèque program for this iconic *Tête de Cuvée*. I will discuss the genesis of this new aging program for Cristal in detail below, but the Vinothèque Series is the newest chapter in the Louis Roederer book, with the *maison* aging these vintages of Cristal for a very extended period in their cellars in Reims, prior to disgorgement and re-release into the market, typically around twenty-two years or so out from the vintage. The first iterations of Cristal (both regular and Rosé) released under the Vinothèque program were the 1995s, which were introduced into the market in 2017. They will be followed this year by the 1996s in June of 2018, but more on this exciting new project below!

### ***Brut Premier***

During his time as head of the house, Léon Olry Roederer was instrumental in creating the flagship non-vintage bottling of Brut Premier, which he first settled on the cuvée's general blend parameters in the 1920s. Part of his motivation for creating a consistently high quality, non-vintage blended bottling, was of course, that in the wake of World War I, the *maison* was in the midst of a serious replanting of the destroyed vineyards and utilizing purchased grapes was necessarily part of the immediate future to ensure that the house had enough wine to sell. At that time, the bottling was known as "Extra Quality Brut", but this was changed in the early 1980s. Today, the flagship non-vintage has changed its name to "Brut Premier", but that is about all that has really changed from this consistently fine non-vintage bottling. Brut Premier is the sole non-vintage wine that Louis Roederer produces (there was a brief period when there was a non-vintage Brut Rosé produced as well, but more on that below), as all the other cuvées are vintage-dated. This is also the only bottling at Champagne Roederer that continues to include wine made from purchased grapes in its blend, so in effect, it is the sole *négociant* bottling still made at the *maison*, as everything else in their impressive lineup is now entirely composed from estate-grown fruit. The hallmark of this non-vintage bottling from Louis Roederer is the influence of their large stocks of reserve wines, most of which are stored in their army of large, old oak *foudres* in the cellars, which adds a very real house signature to all of the Roederer non-vintage wines from the added complexity derived from the older reserve wines in each blend. The non-vintage Brut Premier bottling typically will contain at least four different vintages in the blend each year, with the current vintage's base year augmented by a minimum of ten percent reserve wines taken from at least three older vintages which have been aged in the giant old *foudres* in the Roederer cellars (one of the recent releases of Brut Premier, contained fully thirty percent of reserve wines). These old oak *foudres* do not provide any overt signs of oak to the finished wine- no butter or vanilla in the aromatics of flavors for example- but, texturally, they provide a different characteristic from many other examples of non-vintage Brut, as the wines have a greater sense of roundness and greater depth in their youth from the inclusion of these old reserve wines, despite always Maison Roederer's customary girdle of brisk acid.

But, as Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon is quick to point out, the old *foudres* are not the only reserve wines that are kept at Roederer and used in the blending of Brut Premier. As he notes, "we have two types of reserve wines that we use for the Brut Premier: one is single varietal and single vineyard and is stored in cask" and "the other is kept as a blend in large stainless steel tanks." So, once can see that when it is time to start considering a blend for the Brut Premier each year, the question becomes which reserve wines and in which percentages should he use to

maximize the potential of the cuvée in a given year. Does one use a three or four year-old chardonnay from Avize, last year's chardonnay from Cramant, Aÿ Pinot Noir from two years ago or Verzenay pinot noir from six or seven years? Or will a blend of an older vintage from the stainless steel tanks that has all three varietals in it work better? For Brut Premier is the only cuvée at Maison Roederer that includes pinot meunier in the blend, or at least this was the case until 2006, when the first vintage of Brut Nature Millésime bottling was crafted here, which also includes pinot meunier in its *cépages*. While each year is different, the general guiding principles for the blend for Brut Premier seem to be forty percent each of chardonnay and pinot noir and twenty percent pinot meunier, but as one can see, with the vast array of different reserve wines available in the cellars here, one can reach forty percent of one of the main varietals in a myriad of different manners! Typically, the blend for Brut Premier is completed in the spring following the harvest, with the wine aged a minimum of three years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement, and then is held an additional six months in the Roederer cellars in Reims prior to shipping, so the wine usually has had close to a year to recover from its disgorgement by the time it has arrived at merchants and restaurants.

#### **Louis Roederer “Brut Premier” NV (2016 Release)**

The new release of Brut Premier is from the base year of 2012 and was disgorged in the spring of 2016, after spending three years aging on its fine lees. The wine is its customary blend of forty percent each of chardonnay and pinot noir and twenty percent pinot meunier. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex and still youthful blend of apple, white peach, gentle leanness, *patissière*, lovely soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with excellent mid-palate depth, refined *mousse*, excellent focus and grip and a long, poised and complex finish. This will be even better with some bottle age and is a fine iteration of this consistently excellent cuvée. 2017-2037+. **92.**

#### **Louis Roederer “Brut Premier” NV (2015 Release)**

This most release of Louis Roederer “Brut Premier” is composed of its traditional blend of forty percent each of chardonnay and pinot noir, with the balance made up of pinot meunier. I am not positive, but I assume this was from the base year of 2011, but did not have any confirmation to that effect. The wine is aged three years *sur latte* and an additional six months in bottle after disgorgement. The bouquet is truly superb, wafting from the glass in a precise and vibrant blend of apple, gentle notes of tangerine, beautifully complex soil nuances, warm bread and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and supremely elegant, with a lovely core, seamless balance, refined *mousse* and outstanding length and grip on the complex and very classy finish. I love the precise elegance of this release. This is one of the best examples of Brut Premier in years! 2016-2030+. **92.**

#### **Louis Roederer Brut Premier NV (2014 Release)**

The new release of Louis Roederer's Brut Premier is from a base wine of 2008, with fully half of the blend having undergone malolactic fermentation, which is the most for this bottling in quite some time (though the cuvée based on the 2013 vintage will also be a fifty percent malo wine, but that will not be out for four more years or so). The *cépages* this year is forty percent pinot noir, forty percent chardonnay and twenty percent pinot meunier. The bouquet is deep and classy, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, orange peel, fresh-baked bread, a complex base of soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and minerally in personality, with a fine core, crisp acids, lovely *mousse* and fine length and grip on

the complex finish. Really a lovely version of Brut Premier, which will be easy to spot on the market, as this is the first one with the new label. *Disgorged October 2012*. 2014-2025+. **91.**

**Louis Roederer Brut Premier NV (2012 Release)**

The current release (in 2012) of Brut Premier is very fine indeed, with an overt “leesy” character on the nose (perhaps from a bit of *bâtonnage*) and lovely depth and length on the palate. This cuvée this year is comprised of fully thirty percent reserve wines. The complex bouquet definitely shows some of this reserve wine character in its classy mélange of apple, lemon zest, lovely notes of wheat toast, stony minerality, a touch of heather and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and toasty, with lovely complexity, fine mid-palate depth, elegant *mousse* and very good length and grip on the finish. Fine juice. 2012-2020+. **90.**



*The village of Cumières, as seen from the vineyards up above the town on the western end of the commune.*

***Brut Nature Millésime***

This is the newest cuvée to be crafted at Champagne Louis Roederer, which has been done in conjunction with the famed designer, Philippe Starck. Monsieur Starck is best-known for his design work that ranges from mass-produced, stylish office furniture to train stations to luxury yachts, but his passion for great wine is well-known and he had been approached countless times to collaborate with different Champagne houses on labels for special bottlings. He had always turned these offers down, as he did not want any of his design work to be coupled with a wine in the bottle that he had no relation with, but when Frédéric Rouzaud’s proposal to collaborate on the *maison*’s new Brut Nature bottling came along with the possibility to be a full participant in the blending of the wine, he could not say no. So the resulting wine is a truly

collaborative effort between Maison Roederer and Monsieur Starck. The wine is always a vintage-dated bottling, with thus far two iterations released, the inaugural year of 2006 and the 2009. There was no 2008 Brut Nature, as this cuvée needs riper vintages to allow for its non-*dosé* style to seamlessly be delivered in the finished wine. The other key element in the creation of the Roederer Brut Nature is time, as the *maison* allows this wine to soften properly with extended aging *sur latte* prior to disgorgement and preparation for release. For example, the inaugural vintage of 2006 spent fully seven and a half years aging on its fine lees prior to its *disgorgement*.

As touched upon above, the Brut Nature Millésime bottling at Louis Roederer is produced entirely from the estate's vineyards in the village of Cumières, which lies at the foot of the western flank of the Montagne de Reims in the gateway to the Marne Valley. I have a good friend who is very, very savvy about Champagne who has dubbed Cumières the "sun bowl of Champagne", with its southerly exposition always producing excellent ripeness in all but the coldest and wettest years in the region. It is the perfect village to produce ripe fruit to work with when producing a Brut Nature, as there is no buffering *dosage* in this wine for the acidity and ripe acids are a prerequisite for making a successful example of a non-*dosé* wine. Maison Roederer owns ten *hectares* of vines in Cumières and it was in this village that they first began conversion over to biodynamic farming, so that all ten *hectares* here have been certified biodynamic since 2006, which may be one reason why this year was chosen as the inaugural vintage for the Brut Nature. The grapes for their Brut Nature bottling all hail from the *lieu à dit* of le Chèvres. Other than the Brut Premier, this is the only other cuvée at Louis Roederer where pinot meunier plays an important role in the blend of the wine, which is understandable, as Cumières has long been renowned for the excellent quality of this varietal. The three varietals that make up the blend of 2009 Brut Nature, chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier, were all harvested on the same day, pressed together and co-fermented to make the Brut Nature bottling. The *vin clair* for the Brut Nature is done solely with indigenous yeasts. In the inaugural release of 2006, half of the *vins clairs* were fermented in in old oak vats and half in stainless steel, in anticipation of the wine being released with no *dosage*. For the 2009 vintage, a third of the blend was fermented in older oak and the remainder in stainless steel. This is an exciting new addition to the Louis Roederer lineup.

### **2009 Louis Roederer Brut Nature Millésime**

The second release of Louis Roederer's Brut Nature hails from 2009 vintage and came entirely from the estate's vineyards in the village of Cumières. The wine is a blend of one-third chardonnay and two-thirds pinot noir and pinot meunier, with thirty-three percent of the *vins clairs* barrel-fermented. The wines did not undergo malolactic fermentation this year and were aged more than five years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement. The wine offers up a fine nose of white peach, apple, *patissière*, complex soil tones and the gentle floral topnote of meunier. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and racy, with a rock solid core of fruit, elegant *mousse*, brisk acids and impressive backend minerality on the long, complex finish. The ripeness of the year is nicely presented here, but within a harness of minerality and bright acidity that allows the wine to shower the palate with generosity, without ever losing cut and grip. Fine juice. 2017-2040. **93.**

### 2006 Louis Roederer Brut Nature Millésime

The first release of a *non-dosé* wine from Louis Roederer, the 2006 Brut Nature was produced entirely from fruit grown in the house's parcels in the vineyard of le Chèvres in Cumières. It is a blend of fifty-five percent pinot noir, twenty-five percent pinot meunier and thirty percent chardonnay, with all of the grapes co-fermented. Half of the *vins clairs* were barrel-fermented and half were fermented in stainless steel, with none going through malolactic fermentation in 2006. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon decided to bottle this at a lower pressure, and it was disgorged after seven and a half years on the lees, with both decisions obviously intended to prevent the wine from being unduly tensile on the palate when released. The wine is absolutely excellent, as it offers up a superb bouquet of pear, apple, a touch of menthol, salty soil tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, elegant *mousse* and a long, racy finish where the acids are very well-buffered by depth of fruit and bottle age. A very, very auspicious first bottling of Brut Nature from Maison Louis Roederer. *Disgorged December 2014. 2015-2030+. 93.*



### *Brut Vintage*

Like all of the vintage-dated bottlings at Champagne Roederer, the Brut Vintage bottling is matched to the specific characteristics of certain vineyards in the *maison's* vineyard patrimony, which provide a fruit and mineral profile to dovetail with the aspirations of the technical team here for a given *cuvée*, allowing both for the individuality of the bottling and a

consistency of style from vintage to vintage, as the same parcels are generally used in each iteration. In the case of the Brut Vintage at Louis Roederer, this cuvée is based primarily on some of the *maison*'s earliest vineyard purchases of pinot noir parcels on the Montagne de Reims in the villages of Verzenay and Verzy. Typically, this cuvée will include about seventy percent pinot noir from these two grand crus, as the cooler exposition here is towards the northeast and delivers a great spine of acidity, to the wines produced from pinot noir in these villages; this acidity provides the chassis on which this long-lived cuvée will age. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon likes to use vineyards in these two villages that have a fairly high clay content in the soils, to give this bottling broad shoulders, serious depth at the core and the structure to age long and gracefully. Given the preponderance of pinot noir from these cooler grand crus in the blend of the Brut Vintage bottling, this is a wine that will typically exceed the general quality average of other vintage-dated bottlings in warmer, continental years such as 2009. The Montagne de Reims' pinot noir in the *cépages* is augmented solely with chardonnay from the Côte des Blancs in the Brut Vintage bottling, with the finished wine aging a minimum of four years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement. In most vintages, this will be a non-malo wine, or at least the chardonnay portion of the blend will not undergo malolactic fermentation. The Louis Roederer Vintage Brut is also given at least six more months in the cellars in Reims to recover from its disgorgement prior to release into the market. Like all of the vintage-dated bottlings from the estate, the Brut Vintage is a wine that is designed to age and evolve in the bottle for many decades after it is released, with most vintages likely to last forty or more years in bottle, depending upon the structural acidity of a given year.

### **2009 Louis Roederer Brut Vintage**

As I mentioned last year, the *cépages* of the 2009 Louis Roederer Vintage Brut is seventy percent pinot noir and thirty percent chardonnay and the wine was aged four years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement. Eighteen percent of the *vins clairs* were barrel-fermented for this cuvée and the wine did not undergo malolactic fermentation. I last tasted this fine bottle late last fall and the wine has continued to blossom very nicely since that time. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a ripe and classy blend of peach, apple, brioche, fresh almond, a fine base of soil, gentle smokiness and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full and complex, with a wide open and zesty personality, elegant *mousse*, fine focus and grip and a long, classy and exuberant finish. The sunny summer of 2009 has made this wine a charmer right out of the blocks and the wine is already drinking at its apogee, though with the balance to also age very nicely over the next fifteen to twenty years. But, that said, this is really a nice moment to be drinking this vintage from Louis Roederer! 2017-2040. **92+**.

### **2008 Louis Roederer Brut Vintage**

The 2008 Louis Roederer Brut Vintage is comprised of a blend of seventy percent pinot noir and thirty percent chardonnay, with none of the *vins clairs* undergoing malolactic fermentation in this vintage. Thirty-seven percent of the *vins clairs* were barrel-fermented and the rest raised in stainless steel, with the wine aging four years on its fine lees prior to disgorgement and a finishing *dosage* of nine grams per liter. This is an outstanding bottle in the making, as it wafts from the glass in a deep and youthful blend of apple, white peach, fresh-baked bread, great minerality, gentle leesiness and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a great girdle of acidity, outstanding focus and grip, elegant *mousse* and excellent length and nascent complexity on the pure and racy finish.

This is a dynamite wine in the making, and though it is a delight to drink today, the wine really deserves five to seven more years of bottle age to blossom fully. Great juice. 2020-2045. **93.**

#### **2007 Louis Roeder Brut Vintage**

The 2007 Brut Vintage from Louis Roederer is comprised of a blend of thirty percent chardonnay and seventy percent pinot noir, with all of the chardonnay hailing from estate vineyards in the Côte des Blancs and the pinot noir all from the house's own vineyards on the Montagne de Reims, with the furthest north villages used being Verzenay and Verzy. These vineyards have an exposition towards the northeast, which helps retain acidity and precision in the finished wine. The chardonnay in the blend for this wine is aged in old oak prior to blending, without going through malo, to add roundness to the finished wine, without sacrificing cut and grip. The 2007 is still a young wine, but it is absolutely stellar, wafting from the glass in a mélange of apple, pear, kaleidoscopic minerality, brioche and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and racy, with a rock solid core, great focus and cut, very elegant *mousse* and simply superb length and grip on the focused and seamless finish. Electric juice- are we starting to see the first impact of *biodynamism* on this cuvée? 2017-2040+. **94.**

#### **2005 Louis Roederer Brut Vintage**

The 2005 Brut Vintage is comprised of seventy-percent pinot noir (all hailing from the grand cru village of Verzenay) and thirty percent chardonnay, with forty percent of the *vins clairs* this year having been barrel-fermented for this cuvée. This a very fine and very young wine, wafting from the glass in a minerally mélange of apple, quince, stony minerality, a touch of wheat toast, citrus peel and leesy tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and minerally, with frothy *mousse*, fine focus, lovely mid-palate depth and excellent length and grip on the piercing finish. This will need at least a few years in the cellar to really blossom and start to hit on all cylinders. Excellent wine. 2016-2040. **92+.**

#### ***Blanc de Blancs Brut Vintage***

The vintage-dated Blanc de Blancs at Champagne Louis Roederer has been traditionally produced entirely from estate grown fruit in the two Côte des Blancs grand cru villages of Mesnil-sur-Oger and Avize. However, starting with the 2010 vintage, Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon has decided to produce this bottling exclusively from Avize fruit when possible, as he very much likes the precision that this gives the cuvée. Like all of the Louis Roederer vintage-dated wines, this is always a bottling built for extended cellaring, with the wine given a minimum of five years aging *sur latte* prior to disgorgement, and it is routinely still a very young wine when it is released from the cellars in Reims six months after disgorgement. The Blanc de Blancs Vintage is typically also a non-malo cuvée, with the percentage of *vins clairs* that are barrel-fermented slowly climbing in the last few years, as the initial experiments proved quite successful. I generally prefer to keep the Roederer Vintage Blanc de Blancs another three to five years in my cellar after it has arrived in the market, as the wine really starts to blossom with a bit more bottle age and is better ten years out from the vintage than it is upon release. I have not drunk many older vintages of Blanc de Blancs here, so I do not have a really good sense of how long this cuvée will last in the cellar, but my gut feeling has always been that it is not quite as long-lived as the Brut Vintage bottling and is probably best drunk up over the first twenty-five or thirty years out from the vintage. But, one of these days, I may have a chance to work through some older iterations of Blanc de Blancs here and get a better idea of its potential longevity.



### **2010 Louis Roederer Blanc de Blanc Brut Millésime**

The 2010 Louis Roederer Blanc de Blanc Brut Vintage is a lovely example of its year. Twenty percent of the *vins clairs* were barrel-fermented this year, with the wines not undergoing malolactic fermentation. After bottling, the wine spent five years aging *sur latte* prior to disgorgement and a finishing *dosage* of nine grams per liter, with the pressure in the bottle a bit lower than the other vintage-dated wines from the *maison*. The bouquet of the 2010 delivers a very refined aromatic constellation of apple, a touch of tangerine, fresh-baked bread, complex, limestone soil tones, a touch of almond, white flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a good core, fine focus and grip, frothy *mousse* and a very long, brisk and well-balanced finish. At age seven, this is just starting to blossom, but I would suggest tucking it away for another three or four years in the cellar and allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2020-2045+. **92+**.

### **2009 Louis Roederer Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime**

It had been a bit over a year since I last tasted the 2009 Louis Roederer Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime, and the wine has started to blossom nicely and is really starting to come into its own. As readers may recall, this wine was aged just under five years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement, with the *vins clairs* barrel-fermented in *foudres* and not undergoing malolactic fermentation. The finishing *dosage* is nine grams per liter. The bouquet is showing a bit more almond than it back in the summer of 2015, wafting from the glass in a superb blend of pear, apple, lovely nuttiness, a fine base of chalky minerality, gentle fruit blossoms, brioche and still that exotic (and truly captivating) topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and already starting to blossom nicely, with a lovely core, fine focus and grip, elegant *mousse* and a very long, complex and classy finish. The warmer vintage character of 2009 has allowed this wine to come forward a bit quicker than I anticipated when I tasted the wine last and the wine is drinking very nicely today. It may not last quite as long as I anticipated when I tasted it soon after release, but it is now ready and showing beautifully. 2016-2030+. **93**.

### **2007 Louis Roederer Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime**

The 2007 vintage is strongest for the chardonnay grape and there are going to be an awful lot of well-made, vintage-dated Blanc de Blancs from this year emerging on the market over the next twelve months. The 2007 Roederer Blanc de Blancs is outstanding, offering up a beautifully youthful nose of pear, tangerine, brioche, chalky soil tones, a touch of lilac and *crème patissière*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still very, very youthful, with its fine core carried by bracing acids, excellent purity and focus, pinpoint bubbles and superb length and grip on the snappy and well-balanced finish. This needs time to really blossom, but with a little patience, this is going to be a stunning glass of Blanc de Blancs! 2016-2035. **93**.

### **2005 Louis Roederer Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime**

While the 2005 Brut Millésime could really benefit from a few years of cellaring to blossom, the 2005 Blanc de Blancs is superb right out of the blocks and my pick for the vintage-dated current release for prompt consumption. The deep and very classy nose jumps from the glass in a blend of pear, apple, chalky minerality, bread dough, white flowers and a very gentle topnote of leesiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and elegant, with a fine core of fruit, beautiful, ethereal *mousse*, zesty acids and very fine length and grip on the focused and complex finish. This is made with Cramant pressure of 18 grams per liter of gas, which adds to its lightness of step and dancing quality on the palate. Fine, fine juice. 2012-2025. **92**.

### ***Brut Rosé Millésime***

As I noted in the introduction, the purpose of my spring 2015 visit with Monsieur Lécaillon was to report on their vintage-dated Brut Rosé, as this is a typical Louis Roederer bottling and is meant to evolve with bottle age, rather than be drunk up soon after release. Like all of the Louis Roederer bottlings of Rosé, the Rosé Millésime is given its color through skin contact, rather than the addition of still red wine. But, this was not always the case. Louis Roederer has been producing a bottling of Brut Rosé for a very long time, as Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon notes that “the oldest book I have is from 1832 and there is already a Rosé bottling mentioned from *Maison Louis Roederer*.” But, this wine has changed a bit in more recent times, and it is interesting to note the historical evolution of Brut Rosé at this *grande marque*. The practice of making this wine through the *saignée* method of skin contact during the start of fermentation, rather than by blending in a bit of still red wine, is a relatively recent phenomenon for the cuvée, as this was only adopted for the bottling when Cristal Rosé was created in 1974, and prior to this, Louis Roederer’s Brut Rosé was made with the addition of a bit of red still wine. The wine had been throughout the second half of the twentieth century (and perhaps earlier?) always a vintage-dated wine, as it is today, but once Cristal Rosé was launched in 1974, the thought was that the other Brut Rosé bottling at *Maison Roederer* might be switched to a non-vintage wine, to target a different segment of the market. This decision was undertaken by Jean-Claude Rouzaud in the late 1970s, but as Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon recalls, “he soon realized that our Rosé had to stay a vintage category (and) he quickly came back to vintage Rosé” for this cuvée. Consequently, for several years during the late 1970s and 1980s, Champagne Roederer did produce a non-vintage bottling of Brut Rosé and if you happen to come across bottles of non-vintage Rosé wines from the *maison* at auction today, then you can peg them to this era. I should note that the Brut Rosé here, whether it be vintage or non-vintage, has been made exclusively from the *saignée* method since 1974.

The house uses fruit from the same vineyards each year to produce their bottling of Rosé Millésime. The vintage-dated Rosé cuvée typically includes seventy percent pinot noir grapes, sourced solely from the house’s own parcels of vines in the village of Cumières, which lie on either side of the well-known (to Vincent Laval fans) *lieu à dit* of les Chèvres and which are found on the western side of the village, in the direction of Damery. These parcels are in the *lieux à dits* of le Moulin à Vent, les Chalmonts and les Pêchers, and in all of these parcels, as in les Chèvres, there is a higher limestone content in the soil than vineyards on the eastern end of the Cumières. This is a warmer area and Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon and his team like to pick their grapes earmarked for the Rosé Millésime on the riper side, so that the seeds and skins are thoroughly ripe and will impart no green elements during the short period of skin contact at the outset of fermentation. Acidity levels are of secondary importance for the pinot noir in this bottling, as Monsieur Lécaillon explains that “we will get the good acidity we need for this cuvée from the chardonnay that we include in the blend.” All the chardonnay comes from the domaine’s vineyards in the village of Cuis in the Côte de Blancs, which is blessed with a northerly exposition that allows for high acidity- just perfect for giving a fine spine of acid to go into the blend with the riper pinot noir grapes the house picks in Cumières. Monsieur Lécaillon’s team picks the Cumières pinot noir in the afternoon and then transports the grapes in refrigerated trucks to the press house, where they will receive a ten day pre-fermentation maceration to set the color (there is virtually no pressing of the pinot grapes according to Jean-Baptiste) before it is

co-fermented with the chardonnay grapes from Cuis to create the *vins clairs* for the Vintage Brut Rosé.

For Maison Roederer's Rosé Vintage Brut bottling, malolactic fermentation for the *vins clairs* tends to be a reflection of the style of the vintage, so that some wines will undergo malo and others will not, depending on each year's characteristics. This is on contrast to Cristal Rosé, where the *vins clairs* almost never go through malolactic fermentation (other than in the upcoming release of the 2008). However, whether or not a batch of the *vins clairs* for the Rosé Vintage bottling go through malo is not necessarily what one might expect based on a general vintage's characteristics, but is specific for the parcels of vines earmarked exclusively for this cuvée. For example, the 1996 Rosé Millésime (a ripe and very high acid year) saw thirty to forty percent of its *vins clairs* go through malolactic, whereas the 1995 version was fully a seventy percent malo wine. For Monsieur Lécaillon, he likes to differentiate vintages in Champagne as either "Oceanic Vintages" or "Continental Vintages", with the former influenced by weather coming in from the west and typically wet and cool growing seasons, whereas the latter are more influenced by weather from the south and are always warmer (though can be either dry or wet over the course of the summer) and "it is the Continental vintages that are always our greatest years in Champagne" and most often the ones where a Rosé Millésime will be produced. The wine tends to be one of the lightest Rosés in Champagne (as is the case with their Cristal Rosé), as the color comes primarily from the ten day "cold soak" prior to the onset of fermentation, and as mentioned above, the pressing is very, very gentle for the pinot noir in the cuvée. As the blend is always made from the same vineyards in Cumières and Cuis, slight variations in the percentage of each varietal in the finished wine are simply a reflection of respective yields in a given year, as the seventy percent pinot noir and thirty percent chardonnay are always the targets and the grapes are co-fermented together, so there is no blending of *vins clairs* after fermentation to make the final cuvée. Today, the wine ages at least five full years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement, though the minimum used to be only four years in the past. It is an extremely ageworthy bottling of Brut Rosé and one of the great wines produced at Maison Louis Roederer.

### **2011 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Vintage**

The 2011 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Vintage is composed of a blend of sixty-five percent pinot noir and thirty-five percent chardonnay, with a quarter of the *vins clairs* barrel-fermented. The wine spent four-plus years aging *sur latte* and was disgorged in 2016. Given that pinot noir here comes from the sun-bowl of Cumières, the moderate ripeness of the vintage is nicely offset in this wine, which is one of the strongest examples of the vintage that I have tasted. The wine is its customary very pale salmon color and offers up a really lovely bouquet of peach, a touch of strawberry, gentle spice tones, orange zest, a complex base of soil and gentle hints of the smokiness that will come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is pure, full and complex, with a lovely core, a great sense of elegance out of the blocks, refined *mousse* and lovely focus and grip on the seamlessly balanced finish. A superb bottle in the making and a transcendental 2011! 2017-2040. 92+.

### **2010 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Millésime**

I last tasted the 2010 vintage of Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Millésime in the early summer of 2015 and was very happy to see how the wine was evolving almost a year and a half later. This vintage is produced from its classic house blend of seventy percent pinot noir from the village of Cumières and thirty percent chardonnay from the village of Cuis (which adds a fine

spine of acidity to the blend). The color on this bottling is still very pale and copper-salmon in hue, with the complex bouquet starting to blossom nicely and offering up a very elegant blend of tangerine, white cherries, a lovely base of limestone soil, fresh-baked bread, hints of the smokiness to come, gentle spice tones and orange blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, elegant *mousse*, bright acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This is drinking with great style today, but is still a puppy and will be even better with some extended bottle age. 2016-2035. **93**.



*A nice little vertical of Roederer Brut Rosé Millésime- note how light the colors are!*

### **2009 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Millésime**

The 2009 vintage of Rosé Millésime is the newest release from Maison Roederer is a lovely wine from this very ripe and warm vintage. The bouquet is deep, young and superb, wafting from the glass in a mix of white cherries, tangerine, wheat toast, a complex base of soil and a smoky topnote. There is a slightly baked fruit element to the fruit here that is quite similar to what the 1982 Bordeaux vintage displayed out of the blocks and is reflective of this “Continental Vintage”. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with refined *mousse*, great focus and balance and superb backend cut and grip on the very long and youthful finish. This is a terrific bottle in the making, but I would still give it a couple of years in the cellar to allow it to more fully blossom. 2017-2035+. **93**.

### **2008 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Millésime**

I really love the style and shape of the 2008 vintage in Champagne and Maison Roederer’s Rosé Millésime is an outstanding example of this lovely year. The bouquet is more refined and filigreed than its 2009 counterpart, offering up a classy, youthful and very fresh

constellation of apple, white cherries, discreet smokiness, a complex base of limestone minerality, *pain grillé*, lovely spice tones and a topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very tightly-knit today, with a rock solid core, superb mineral drive, elegant *mousse* and outstanding focus and grip on the very long and utterly refined finish. This is a beautiful bottle in the making, but it will demand a bit longer in the cellar to fully blossom than the 2009 version. 2020-2045+. **93+**.

#### **2007 Louis Roederer Brut Millésime Rosé**

Like all of the Roederer Rosé bottlings, this wine is made by a one week cold soak of whole berries, prior to crushing, rather than from still red wine. Seventy percent of the blend is made up of pinot noir, with the remaining thirty percent chardonnay from vineyards in Chouilly, which Jean-Baptiste likes for the cut and brightness that it brings to this cuvée. The color is a lovely, poached salmon color. The 2007 Roederer Brut Rosé is an excellent wine, offering up a vibrant and complex nose of blood orange, *fraises du bois*, chalky minerality, bread dough, smoky notes and citrus zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and classy, with lovely focus and complexity, refined *mousse*, and a fine grip on the very long, soil-driven and frothy finish. This is a lovely wine that is still quite young and I would be very happy to tuck this away for at least another six to eight years in the cellar and really allow it to blossom. I would not be surprised at all to still see in drinking beautifully at age twenty-five or older! 2012-2025+. **92**.

#### **2004 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Millésime**

At age eleven, the 2004 Roederer Rosé Millésime is starting to develop some lovely secondary elements on both the nose and palate and is just starting to reach its plateau of peak drinkability. The excellent bouquet delivers a complex mélange of dried cherries, tangerine, smoky tones, rye bread, gorgeous minerality and a nice touch of brioche in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off excellent mid-palate depth, with pinpoint bubbles, fine focus and cut and a very long, complex and vibrant finish. This wine is now wide open on the palate, but still retains the zesty acid chassis of a young wine and will age beautifully for many years to come. Fine juice. 2015-2035. **93**.

#### **2003 Louis Roederer Brut Rosé Millésime (Reims)**

Our bottle of the 2003 was ever so slightly influenced by a less than ideal cork, which did not show any signs of TCA taint on either the nose or within its flavor spectrum, but certainly made the wine quite a bit shorter on the finish than any of these other examples. I would love to see a pristine bottle of this wine, as interestingly, the fruit tones here in this very hot growing season were actually fresher than in the 2009! The bouquet is a fine blend of oranges, cherries, wheat bread, smoke and a fine base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wide open, with lovely focus and complexity. The acids here are lovely and I have little doubt that a perfect example would be very long and drinking with great style today. Unfortunately, there was no time during my visit to chill another bottle of the '03, so I will have to wait for a future opportunity to taste a pristine example of this wine.

#### ***Cristal and Cristal Rosé***

While the entire range of wines at Champagne Louis Roederer is outstanding, there is little doubt that the house is best known for its *Tête de Cuvée* bottling of Cristal, which, as mentioned above, was first produced at the behest of Czar Alexandre II of Russia in 1876. This wine is well-known for its thick, clear and punt-less bottle, which is always wrapped in clear golden film to protect the wine from harmful ultraviolet rays. The Russian royal family and

aristocracy was Louis Roederer's most important clientele prior to the Russian Revolution in 1917, so it is no surprise that the house happily acceded to the Czar's request for a special cuvée in 1876, which became Cristal and was Champagne's very first *Tête de Cuvée* bottling. This was originally produced exclusively for the drinking pleasure of the Russian royal family and it was not until several years after the revolution that Cristal became commercially available to other Maison Roederer clients. From the beginning, Cristal was designed to be Louis Roederer's finest cuvée, and it continues to be so to this day. Of course, the wine was quite different in this initial era to the Cristal of today, as the Czars and their court were well-known for preferring their Champagne very much on the sweet side and the *dosage* of the earliest examples of Cristal was more than generous to meet the tastes of the clientele in St. Petersburg. The oldest blending records extant in Champagne Roederer's archives only date back to 1903, so it is not possible to know precisely what the *dosage* was of the original vintages of Cristal, but Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon notes that "at this time, *dosage* was customized to each client and we have no precise records," but "there are good reasons to believe that the *dosage* was more than one hundred grams per liter." In fact, in the wake of the revolution in 1917, the *maison* was left with large stocks of this sweet, unsold Cristal, not to mention a mountain of unpaid bills by the Russian royal family and a huge market hole.

Cristal is quite remarkable in the world of luxury cuvées of Champagne, as this is almost always a wine that does not undergo malolactic fermentation. Today, Cristal is always produced exclusively from the house's own vineyards, from parcels selected for their very high limestone content in the soils and with a minimum of twenty-five to thirty year-old vines. Typically the blend will be approximately sixty percent pinot noir, with the balance comprised of chardonnay, as no pinot meunier ever finds its way into Cristal. The pinot noir will always hail from the house's finest parcels in the villages of Verzenay, Beaumont-sur-Vesle and Verzy (for their northeasterly exposition and racier structures) on the Montagne de Reims, as well as Aÿ and Mareuil-sur-Aÿ (for a bit more opulence in the fruit expression from these more southerly exposed villages). The chardonnay fruit used for Cristal hails from the *maison's* top parcels in the communes of Avize, Mesnil-sur-Oger, Cramant and Oger. Today, the Cristal bottling is about forty percent from biodynamically-farmed vineyards, with the remainder of the parcels earmarked for this cuvée farmed organically and in transition to biodynamics, so the percentage of biodynamic fruit in the bottling will continue to grow with each passing vintage. While Maison Roederer is rather agnostic about malolactic fermentations in general for their *vins clairs*, they studiously try to avoid this for any of the base wines that are going to be earmarked for the Cristal bottling, as this is emphatically a wine that is designed to be aged for many decades in the cellar and the snappier acids of no malolactic are preferred for this cuvée. One of the rare exceptions to the non-malo norm for Cristal was the 1988 vintage, where the *vins clairs* did go through malolactic fermentation. We will see below that thirty years on, the 2008 Cristal will follow discreetly in the footsteps of the 1988, as Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon has utilized a small percentage of base wines that have undergone malo in this new Cristal as well. But, more on that a bit further on.

As is currently the case with other Louis Roederer bottlings, Cristal occasionally will contain a small percentage of the blend where the *vins clairs* have been barrel-fermented; perhaps these now add a touch more mid-palate richness to the young wine. All of the house's stocks of each vintage of Cristal used to go through disgorgement at the same time (typically

after five to six years of aging on the lees- though the amount of time spent *sur latte* for Cristal has been extended a few years longer in recent times), as the Roederer cellar team was for a long time far from enthusiastic about producing “later disgorged” versions of this fine wine. Each vintage of Cristal is then aged an additional eight months in the cellar after the disgorgement to allow the wine to recover, prior to being sent out into the market. However, as we will see below, the new Vinothèque program for Cristal has introduced another philosophical avenue for the aging of Cristal in the *maison’s* cellars in Reims and the old days, when all of the stocks of Cristal would be disgorged at five or six years of age are now part of the past. We will discuss in far more detail below the new program for aging of Cristal as part of the Vinothèque series, but at the present time, Louis Roederer has begun a two front approach to the aging of Cristal in their cellars for later release, with some bottles held back that are part of the original disgorgement program and aged in bottle in Reims, while others that are to be now released under the new Vinothèque label are disgorged far later, after a rather unique and compelling extended aging process *sur latte*. Cristal, in all its guises, remains emphatically a wine meant to be aged after its release, with most vintages not really reaching their peaks of drinkability until they are at least twenty years of age, and as emphasized by the fine examples such as the 1979 and 1977 Cristal bottlings that I have tasted recently, they can age far, far longer and remain vibrant and at their plateaus of peak maturity well into their forties and fifties.



While Cristal is the oldest Cuvée Prestige produced in Champagne, the Cristal Rosé bottling is a far more recent addition to the Louis Roederer lineup. As touched upon above, it was first produced in the 1974 vintage, and like all of the Roederer Rosé bottlings, it is made by the “*saignée* method” after a bit of skin contact for the pinot noir during a one week-long “cold soak”, pre-fermentation maceration, rather than the addition of any still red wine later in the blending process. This style of Rosé at Maison Roederer produces some of the lightest colored and most elegant Brut Rosés as one is likely to find anywhere in Champagne. In fact, the Cristal Rosé is probably the palest of all the Rosé bottlings on the market, along with that of Champagne Krug. Cristal Rosé is typically a blend of seventy percent pinot noir and thirty percent chardonnay (though this can of course vary a bit according to vintage characteristics- for instance the 2004 is a blend of sixty percent pinot noir and forty percent chardonnay), with all of the pinot noir hailing each year from a two *hectare* parcel of fifty-five year old vines in the village of Aÿ. These old pinot vines are cropped around forty hectoliters per *hectare*- draconian yields by Champagne standards. The chardonnay for the Cristal Rosé comes from another old plot of vines in the village of Mesnil-sur-Oger. Interestingly, the two varietals are fermented together to make Cristal Rosé, rather than fermented on their own and blended together after fermentation. Today, this is the only cuvée at Louis Roederer where the vineyards used for the wine are now farmed biodynamically in their entirety, as the last used for this cuvée were certified in 2007. The parcel of old vines in Aÿ for this bottling have been farmed under biodynamique principals the longest of any that go into the Cristal Rosé. Like the regular bottling of Cristal, the Rosé too is a very, very long-lived wine that demands extended cellaring to really blossom and come into its own.

### ***Vinothèque Cristal***

Vinothèque is the new aging program of Cristal that was begun officially with the 1995 vintage and continues to this day. This is a selection of Cristal bottlings from each vintage that are now earmarked for longer aging *sur latte* than the standard disgorgement of Cristal, and are disgorged several years after the first release, but still a handful of years in advance of their re-release into the market. The Vinothèque releases are typically more than twenty years out from the vintage and follow fifteen years after the initial release of any given vintage of Cristal or Cristal Rosé. When I asked Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon about the inspiration for the Vinothèque Series at Maison Roederer, he replied that “the idea came in the mid-1990s, as I was fascinated by the ‘twenty year window’ of beauty of Cristal and I wanted to reach that window with a perfect bottle that would be vibrant, precise and pure...super fresh, focused and concentrated to the essence of purity that is the DNA of Cristal.” With that goal in mind, Jean-Baptiste began to experiment with bottles of the 1993 Cristal, holding the wine back and aging it longer *sur latte* with an eye towards eventually establishing the Vinothèque program. Jean-Baptiste would taste a bottle of the 1993 Cristal each year to see how it was evolving, with an eye towards that twenty year window, but allowing the wine to decide when might be the optimal age at which to re-release a vintage of Cristal as a Vinothèque bottling. While he was experimenting and tasting the 1993 along its evolutionary arc, the decision was taken that the 1995 Cristal would be the first in the Vinothèque Series, if the experience with the 1993 proved as fruitful as expected. However, the 1995 waiting in the wings was not cooperating as the 1993 had and “was evolving faster *sur lattes* than did the Cristal 1993 at the same age” recounts Jean-Baptiste, so “we decided to riddle to slow down the autolysis and oxidation and it worked very well- probably better than our initial expectations” with the 1995, so another element to the Vinothèque aging regimen was added to the program. This was aging the wine in a combination of horizontal position in the bottle (the



traditional *sur latte* position) and then moving the bottles to riddling racks to age the wine in a vertical position with the cork facing downwards that would slow down its evolution and keep the wine as fresh as could be for its eventual release, twenty-two years or so out from the vintage. When the bottles are in their vertical position, the lees are concentrated in the neck of the bottle and act as another layer of anti-oxidative protection for the wine.

As this technique has proven so successful with the 1995 Vinothèque release, it is now standard operating procedure with each future release that will be in the program, with each vintage having variations in the number of years that the bottles are stored horizontally and the number of years that they are stored vertically. For example, the 1995 Vinothèque Cristal spent eight years aging horizontally, before Jean-Baptiste shifted the bottles to their vertical positions on the riddling racks, where they spent an additional six years aging in a vertical position with the cork down prior to disgorgement. In contrast, the higher acid and racier vintage of 1996 Cristal spent fully ten years aging horizontally and only four years aging in a vertical position. Keep in mind that each bottle of Cristal that has been earmarked for the Vinothèque Series of extended aging in the cellars in Reims has already spent five to seven years aging *sur latte* as part of the original batch of this particular vintage of Cristal, before it is sequestered off in a cool corner of the Roederer cellars for further aging. For each future vintage of Cristal that is released under the Vinothèque series, the number of years spent either horizontally or vertically will be adapted to the structure of the vintage, with the wines tasted regularly by Jean-Baptiste and his team to decide when the moment comes for the bottles to be shifted to the riddling racks.

The adoption of the Vinothèque program is a bit of a philosophical departure for Champagne Louis Roederer, as the long-held view here was that Cristal was always to be disgorged at the same time for the entire vintage, and then aged in bottle after its disgorgement and *dosage*. No doubt, this point of view was partially held due to the fact that Cristal in almost every vintage is a non-malo wine and it is really built to age from the outset. One of the few vintages where the *vins clairs* used for Cristal did go through malolactic fermentation was the 1988 Cristal, but this was quite exceptional and I do not know of any subsequent vintage that has undergone malo. Given how beautifully Cristal has always aged in bottle, there was no compelling reason to alter this, but Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon's vision for "pristine" bottles of twenty year-old Cristal for the market eventually led to the establishment of the Vinothèque program, with absolutely stellar results. There is another interesting variation between the initial releases of a given vintage of Cristal and its Vinothèque version in that the *dosage* of each wine can be different, as the perfect point of balance in the finished wine changes as it has a chance to evolve structurally with its extended aging in the cellars here. For example, the original *dosage* of the 1995 Cristal was twelve grams per liter. The 1995 Vinothèque version was disgorged in 2010 and was finished with a *dosage* of seven grams per liter. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon is quick to point out that it is not only the levels of residual sugar that are different between the two versions of the 1995, but also the method of *dosage*, as "for example, the original *dosage* of Cristal 1995, in 2001, was twelve grams per liter with a liquor from oak casks," but the 1995 Vinothèque Cristal was disgorged "with a few bottles of the same wine- no cask liquor- and a completely different *dosage*" as the wine only "reached a little bit more than seven grams per liter- almost extra brut!" While there have only been two iterations of Vinothèque Cristal so far, the 1995 and the soon to be released 1996, one has to assume that there will be Vinothèque versions every year that Cristal is made, as the results are truly stunning.

### ***Another New Chapter For Cristal***

The Vinothèque program is not the only new addition to the release schedule for Cristal, as the *maison* has also begun to also re-release older vintages of Cristal from their cellars in Reims that date back to the original disgorgement, rather than the Vinothèque versions that have spent more time aging *sur latte* and which are disgorged many years after the originals. The concept of holding back some of the original disgorgement of Cristal is another variation on aging Cristal, and when I asked if this was new or had been done in the past by *Maison* Louis Roederer, Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon responded, this is “completely new for the *Maison* and is another story” that will now run concurrently with the Vinothèque project. He continues, “when we launched Cristal 2002 in 2009, many of the comments were: it is a *grand vin*, beautiful, but much too young.” Based on these comments from Louis Roederer customers, in concurrence “with Frédéric Rouzaud, we decided to keep some bottles aside to release them one day” concludes Monsieur Lécaillon. I do not know that the house has decided on a name for this re-release of the original disgorgement of the 2002, but it is set for June of 2018 and will be part of the trifecta of great vintages of Cristal that hit the market together at that time, alongside of the Vinothèque version of the legendary 1996 and the first release of the 2008, which may well go down in history as the greatest version of Cristal ever crafted since the first drier-styled 1912 Cristal found its way onto the market all the way back in 1924.

As I alluded to above, the 2008 Cristal will be the first vintage that purposefully includes a small percentage of *vins clairs* in the blend that have undergone malolactic fermentation. Always seeking to improve, Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon decided during the 2008 Cristal blending trials that a more sophisticated and complex cuvée might be produced in this racy vintage by incorporating a bit of *vins clairs* that had gone through malo, which in the case of the '08, ended up being sixteen percent in the final blend. When we tasted it together in March of this year, he noted that “I feel that a wine like the 1996 Cristal could have ended up even better if I could have done the same thing with it at the time, as the acid structure of the 1996 has always been just a touch aggressive and a bit of *vins clairs* that had gone through malo might have given a more elegant structure to the wine.” In our vertical tasting that day, the 1996 soon followed on the heels of the 2008, and tasting the two side by side was quite revealing and made me a very strong fan for allowing a bit of malo to be included in the blend of racier vintages of Cristal, if it will make the final wine even better. It is not that the soon to be released 1996 Cristal Vinothèque lacks for anything, but there is just a sense of slightly greater structural refinement to the 2008. And given how much of a traditionalist I can be, that is probably a pretty good indication of just how magically this technique has worked with the celestial 2008 Cristal!

### ***Louis Roederer Cristal***

#### **2009 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

The 2009 vintage of Cristal is composed of a blend of sixty percent pinot noir and forty percent chardonnay, with none of the *vins clairs* this year undergoing malolactic fermentation. Sixteen percent of the base wines were barrel-fermented this year and the wine was finished off with a *dosage* of eight grams per liter. The bouquet shows the generosity of fruit of this warm summer, but coupled with the classic Cristal sense of elegance, as it offers up scents of white peach, apple, *patissière*, beautifully complex, chalky minerality, a hint of almond and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and vibrant, with excellent mid-palate depth, utterly refined *mousse*, laser-like focus and excellent length and grip on the

youthful and very complex finish. This is likely to reach its apogee earlier than many vintages of Cristal, given the Continental warmth of '09, but the wine is impeccably balanced and it will also age long and very gracefully. Just lovely. 2021-2050+. 96.



*Note the platinum labels for the new Vinothèque versions of Cristal on the two bottles to the right.*

### **2008 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon and the team at Louis Roederer decided to release the very fine 2009 Cristal ahead of the more racy 2008 version, and this seems to have been a very good idea, as this decision has allowed the 2008 version to rest comfortably in the cellars for an additional year or two. In fact, the 2008 Cristal will be the first vintage of this wine to be released ten years out from the vintage. This is not the only exceptional aspect of the 2008 Cristal, as this is one of the very, very few vintages of this iconic wine that has included a small percentage of *vins clairs* that have gone through malolactic fermentation, as Monsieur Lécaillon observed that sixteen percent of the blend in 2008 is composed of wines that went through malo. The results are magical, as this small part of the blend that has undergone malolactic fermentation seems to have rounded off the snappy acids of 2008 a bit and given the wine an unprecedented textural accessibility out of the blocks that was not found in a similarly racy vintage like 1996, which was tensile and hermetically sealed when first released. Twenty percent of the *vins clairs* for the 2008 Cristal were barrel-fermented and the wine was finished with a *dosage* of 7.5 grams per liter. The wine is flat out stunning, offering up a pure and youthfully complex bouquet of apple, lemon,

warm brioche, stunningly complex, chalky minerality, a touch of orange zest, fresh almond and a floral topnote redolent of lemon blossoms and mimosa. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and utterly seamless in its balance, with a great core, laser-like focus, utterly refined *mousse* and a very, very long, racy, complex and seamlessly balanced finish. This is a breathtakingly beautiful wine in the making! It is approachable today, but like all vintages of Cristal, the 2008 really deserves at least another decade in the cellar before starting to drink it with abandon. *Disgorged September 2017*. 2028-2095+. **99.**

#### **2007 Louis Roederer “Cristal” Brut**

The 2007 Cristal is comprised of a blend of fifty-eight percent pinot noir and forty-two percent chardonnay, with fifteen percent of the *vins clairs* barrel-fermented this year. The base wines did not undergo malolactic fermentation for the 2007. The wine spent five years aging *sur latte* and was finished with a *dosage* of 9.5 grams per liter. Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon is very pleased with the potential of the 2007 Cristal, which he feels hails from an under-appreciated vintage in Champagne. The wine offers up a beautiful young nose of pear, apple, *patissière*, a gorgeous base of limestone minerality, very gentle spice tones, hints of the smokiness to come, a touch of fresh almond and a lovely topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly seamless, with brisk, well-integrated acids, laser-like focus, very elegant *mousse* and outstanding length and grip on the focused and still very youthful finish. The balance here is impeccable and the wine is certainly approachable today, but its true zenith is still a good eight to ten years down the road. A beautiful wine. 2016-2050+. **96.**

#### **2006 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

The 2006 Cristal is comprised of a blend of fifty-five percent pinot noir and forty-five percent chardonnay, with twenty percent of the *vins clairs* having been barrel-fermented for this vintage. Despite the 2006 vintage's predilection towards precociousness, there is no sign of this character in this beautiful rendition of Cristal, which offers up a deep, youthful and very serious bouquet of apple, delicate tangerine, brioche, fresh almond, very classy limestone minerality, incipient smokiness, a touch of orange peel and a floral topnote redolent of white lilies. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and impeccably balanced, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus, utterly refined *mousse*, crisp acids and superb length and grip on the very pure and primary finish. Structurally, the 2006 Cristal is decidedly more open than its 2005 counterpart, but aromatically the wine is certainly not more developed and remains a young and very beautiful bottle of Champagne. I really love the background influence from the barrel fermentation here, which gives the wine a hint of roundness out of the blocks, but which does not intrude on the classically racy style of young Cristal. The 2006 Cristal will certainly reach its apogee earlier than the 2005, but this is still a young wine and deserves at least a handful of years in the cellar prior to drinking. 2018-2040+. **95.**

#### **2005 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

The 2005 Cristal is a legend in the making, but this wine is still very young and closed and some extended bottle age will be necessary to really allow all of the multi-faceted elements here to blossom and come to the fore. The *cépages* is the same as for the 2006, fifty-five percent pinot noir and forty-five percent chardonnay, but this does not mean that Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon selected *vins clairs* from the same crus for the two vintages! The 2005 vintage was considered strongest for chardonnay, so careful selection of pinot noir *vins clairs* for the Cristal in this vintage was of paramount importance, though the domaine's superb holdings in Verzenay and Verzy certainly made the selection process a bit easier. The 2005 Cristal offers up a deep, extremely primary and very promising bouquet of apple, pear, a gorgeously complex base of

chalky soil tones, incipient nuttiness, citrus peel, smoke, a touch of lavender and a topnote of peach blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with great focus and finesse, very refined *mousse*, a crisp girdle of acidity and great length and laser-like focus on the poised, primary and utterly refined finish. The 2005 is an utterly brilliant Cristal in the making, but give it time to blossom in the cellar! 2019-2060. **97.**

#### **2004 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

The 2004 Cristal strikes me as an absolute classic vintage for this iconic bottling, but it will only really show its complete potential with extended bottle age. This was a warm vintage that produced beautifully ripe, but not overripe grapes and a very fine harvest season that allowed grapes to be collected in optimal condition throughout the different Champagne sub-regions. It was also the largest crop on record in Champagne up to that time, as the pent up energy of the vines from the torrid and atypical summer of 2003 allowed for a very, very generous cropload the following year. Twenty to twenty-five percent of the 2004 Cristal was barrel-fermented, with some *battonage* used for a percentage of the cuvée. The nose on the '04 is deep and utterly refined, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, brioche, a lovely touch of orange zest, a beautifully complex base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully-balanced, with a lovely sense of reserve, superb mid-palate depth, zesty, pinpoint bubbles, crisp acids and laser-like focus on the nascently complex and stunning length and grip on the dancing finish. One can certainly drink the 2004 Cristal today with great enjoyment, but the real fireworks here are not going to start until this wine has rested quietly in the cellar for another decade! A stunning Cristal. 2015-2040. **96+.**

#### **2002 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

I last tasted the 2002 Cristal back in the autumn of 2013, when the wine was still a bit on the young side, but it has now started to really blossom beautifully and is really entering its plateau of maturity in 2018. The 2002 Cristal is composed of a blend of fifty-five percent pinot noir and forty-five percent chardonnay, with none of the *vins clairs* having gone through malo and the finishing *dosage* ten grams per liter in this vintage. This has been a brilliant vintage of Cristal since its inception and at age sixteen, the wine is just beginning to properly blossom and show some of its secondary layers of complexity, The nose jumps from the glass in a refined blend of pear, apple, fresh almond, gentle smokiness, a touch of the tangerine to come, chalky soil tones and brioche in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a powerfully-built vintage of Cristal, with a great core, elegant *mousse*, bright, racy and well-integrated acids and stunning mineral drive on the very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is a great vintage of Cristal, and though it is now beginning to show some lovely generosity and secondary layering, a bit more cellaring would still be richly rewarded. 2018-2075. **97+.**

#### **1997 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

The 1997 vintage in Champagne was characterized by damp and cool conditions through August, but September was scorching. The resulting grapes were very high in malic acidity according to Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon, but there was no malo in the Cristal base wines this year. The 1997 Cristal is a very pretty wine for current drinking, offering up a reasonably mature, transparent and classy nose of apple, lemon zest, a touch of smokiness, chalky soil tones, fresh almonds and a whisper of honeycomb. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and *à point*, with good, but not great depth, refined *mousse* and very good length and grip on the complex finish. One gets used to the rock solid cores of most vintages of Cristal, and while this is far from *fluide*,

there is still a touch less depth here than in most recent vintages of this fine cuvée. 2012-2022. **92.**

### **1993 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

The 1993 Cristal is a very good bottle of bubbly, but the vagaries of the vintage here have produced a wine that does not deliver the same seamless elegance customarily found in most years of Cristal. The fully mature nose of the 1993 is just a touch four-square, but deep and vibrant in its mélange of honeyed apples, wheat toast, gentle leesy tones, lovely minerality and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and slightly angular, with good complexity and quite refined *mousse*, but with only solid length and grip on the finish. This has a bit more mid-palate stuffing than the '97 Cristal, but I prefer the more refined and classic profile of the '97 over this slightly blunter 1993. Not a bad drink by any stretch of the imagination, but not a great Cristal by the lofty standards of this cuvée. 2012-2020. **89.**

### **1990 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

I had not crossed paths with a bottle of the 1990 Cristal since all the way back in 2006, so I was absolutely delighted to see that Jean-Baptiste has selected this vintage to be included in our vertical at the *maison* in the spring of 2018. Having tasted this wine last in a large tasting of the 1990 vintage of Champagne in 2006, I was curious to see how the wine had evolved over the last dozen years and I was delighted to see that it had continued to blossom beautifully and that I had quite underrated it back in '06. Today, the wine is into its apogee of peak maturity and is absolutely lovely, offering up a deep and complex nose of baked pears and peaches, a touch of white truffle, a beautiful blend of almond and walnut, limestone soil nuances, gentle smokiness and incipient notes in the upper register of the honey to come with further aging. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and utterly refined in profile, with a lovely core, still vibrant *mousse*, excellent complexity and grip, precise focus and a very long, poised and seamlessly balanced finish. When I last tasted this wine, the muscular nature of the 1990 vintage was quite evident in this wine, but the additional twelve years of bottle age has allowed the inherent elegance of Cristal to come to the fore and this wine is now quite classical in profile and an absolute joy to drink today. 2018-2035+. **95.**

### **1979 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

The 1979 vintage of Cristal was the very first that I sold as a young retail wine buyer, and it impressed me very much back in its youth. I was delighted to find it as part of our lineup in March of this year, as I am a believer that Cristal really only reaches its true apogee with a long time in the cellar and, to my palate, the 1979 is now at its true peak. The tertiary and still quite vibrant bouquet is deep, pure and complex, offering up scents of apricot, orange, hazelnuts, barley, chalky soil tones, orange peel and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still very lively in all aspects, with a fine core, superb soil signature, gentle *mousse* and a very, very long, vibrant and beautifully complex finish. This wine still has plenty of life ahead of it, but it has reached a stage of its evolution where I find it perfectly resolved and I can see no reason not to savor it over the next several years, while it is at this magical summit of evolutionary charm. 2018-2035+. **94.**

### **1977 Louis Roederer Cristal Brut**

1977 was a very late harvest, as the grapes struggled to ripen all season long and full ripeness did not really arrive until the second half of October in this year. I am sure that a very strict selection and the customary low yields in the vineyards earmarked for Cristal were the keys to this wine's success, which is actually really quite excellent. The deep, complex and beautifully mature nose wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, brioche, honeycomb, orange peel, a touch of

fresh nutmeg and a lovely base of limestone soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with superb complexity, lovely mid-palate depth, excellent focus and grip, still very vigorous *mousse* and outstanding length and grip on the wide open, fully mature and dancing finish. This is a vintage of Cristal that is now at its absolute zenith of peak maturity, and while it is not the greatest of vintages for this wine, it is an utterly complete and satisfying bottle of Cristal for relatively near-to-mid-term drinking, as there is still plenty of life in the 1977 Cristal! A superb success for the vintage. 2012-2025. **93**.



### ***Louis Roederer Cristal “Vinothèque”***

#### **1996 Louis Roederer Cristal “Vinothèque”**

The 1996 Vinothèque version of Cristal was aged on its cork ten years stored horizontally, and then an additional four years with the bottle in a vertical position prior to its disgorgement in the fall of 2011. This has been a legendary wine in the Cristal firmament since its original release, but Jean-Baptiste Lécaillon feels that he could have crafted an even more complete Cristal here in 1996 if he had employed some of the blending ideas that gave birth to the 2008 (such as a bit of *vins clairs* that went through malo or were barrel-fermented), but these techniques had not yet been tested and proven positive back in 1996. In any event, the very tensile nature originally displayed by the 1996 Cristal is not particularly evident today in the Vinothèque version, which was showing brilliantly in March in Reims, wafting from the glass in a gorgeous blend of pear, apple, a touch of hazelnut, a combination of brioche and incipient

*crème patissière*, complex limestone soil tones and just a whisper of honeycomb starting to emerge in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still rock solid at the core, with great focus and grip, magical complexity, elegant *mousse* and great cut and balance on the very, very long, electric finish. This is a great vintage of Cristal that has taken beautifully to the Vinothèque extended aging regimen in the cellars and the wine is now drinking very well indeed, though of course, with decades and decades of life still ahead of it. 2018-2075. **98.**

**1995 Louis Roederer Cristal “Vinothèque”**

I was in Burgundy tasting when the 1995 Cristal Vinothèque was first unveiled with a press tasting here in New York last year, so I had not yet had a chance to taste this version of the 1995 Cristal until my visit to the cellars in Reims in March of this year. The *cépages* of the 1995 is fifty-seven percent pinot noir and forty-three percent chardonnay, with the finishing *dosage* having been seven grams per liter. The 1995 Cristal Vinothèque was aged eight years on its cork in a horizontal position, followed by six years in the vertical position, prior to its disgorgement in the autumn of 2010. The wine is drinking superbly well today, delivering a complex aromatic constellation of fresh apricot, apple, a touch of orange, complex chalky minerality, hazelnuts, just a whisper of barley and an exotic, gentle topnote of summer truffle. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and now *à point*, with excellent mid-palate depth, refined *mousse*, impeccable balance and lovely backend minerality driving the long, tertiary and very complex finish. The 1995 Cristal Vinothèque is at a beautiful moment in its evolution for current drinking, but has plenty of decades still ahead of it. The vintage will not be one of the longest-lived in recent memory, but will provide stellar drinking for at least another quarter century and probably well beyond. 2018-2040. **95.**

***Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé***

**2008 Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé Brut**

Like the 2008 Cristal, the 2008 Cristal Rosé is the finest young vintage of this cuvée that I have ever tasted. The vineyards used for this cuvée have been farmed entirely biodynamic since the 2007 vintage and the wine was finished with a *dosage* in '08 of 7.5 grams per liter. This is simply a brilliant young vintage of Cristal Rosé, offering up a stunningly pure and precise bouquet of *fraises du bois*, tangerine, complex, chalky minerality, white flowers and a touch of caraway seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, refined and full-bodied, with a flawless, completely seamless structural chassis, great depth at the core, elegant *mousse* and superb complexity and grip on the perfectly balanced, refined and laser-like finish. The 2008 Cristal Rosé is still a baby and will need at least another seven to ten years to start to truly blossom, but its magic is already very easy to behold. Rosé Champagne simply does not get any better than the brilliant 2008 Cristal! 2025-2075+. **100.**

**2005 Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé Brut**

The 2005 Cristal Rosé is quite typical in its very pale salmon color. The wine offers up a simply superb and refined nose of peach, gentle melon tones, stony limestone, bread dough, orange peel, smoky overtones, bread dough and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully bracing, with a rock solid core of fruit, great mineral drive, refined *mousse* and outstanding focus and cut on the exquisitely balanced and youthfully tensile finish. This is a superb wine that is built to age and really should not be touched for at least another three or four years. Its true apogee will be around age twenty. 2015-2035+. **96.**



### **2002 Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé Brut**

There will be a tiny re-release of the 2002 Cristal Rosé to accompany the release of the 1996 Vinothèque version in June of 2018. The blend of the 2002 Cristal Rosé is sixty percent pinot noir and forty percent chardonnay. Today, the bouquet is wide open and showing beautifully, offering up scents of dried red berries, peach, gentle smokiness, Cristal's inimitable base of chalky minerality, cherry skin and a touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with refined *mousse*, great focus and grip and a very, very long, complex and elegantly balanced finish. A beautiful wine that is just starting to enter its prime. 2018-2055+. **96.**



### **1996 Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé Brut**

The 1996 vintage of Cristal Rosé is absolutely brilliant and about as profound a glass of Brut Rosé as I can recall tasting. The ripe and classic style of the 1996 vintage, coupled with quite high acidity has combined to produce a magical Cristal Rosé, soaring from the glass in a celestial blend of white peach, rye toast, a touch of cranberry, chalky minerality, gentle smokiness and bread dough. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and racy, with brilliant mid-palate depth, stunning complexity, snappy acids, utterly refined and ethereal *mousse* and profound length and grip on the laser-like finish that is just beginning to reach its apogee of peak drinkability. This is a work of art of uncommon beauty. The 1996 Cristal Rosé is now

drinking superbly well and will continue to dazzle for at least the next couple of decades. Sheer brilliance! 2012-2035+. **98.**

**1988 Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé Brut**

The 1988 Cristal Rosé is another absolutely superb bottle of wine at its zenith of maturity. The deep and utterly refined nose wafts from the glass in a mature and vibrant mélange of white cherries, apple, rye bread, chalky minerality, gentle smokiness, orange peel and a touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and vibrant, with beautiful focus and complexity, lovely, zesty acids, vigorous *mousse* and a very long, very classy and *à point* finish. The 1988 Cristal Rosé is at its apogee of peak drinkability and is a great glass of bubbly, but still has plenty of life in it. 2012-2030. **95.**

***Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé “Vinothèque”***

**1996 Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé Brut “Vinothèque”**

The 1996 Vinothèque version of Cristal Rosé is a great wine that is into its plateau of peak maturity, where it should rest very comfortably for at least the next thirty years. The bouquet is deep, complex and almost wild in its aromatic constellation of apple, citrus peel, chalky soil tones, almond, a whisper of malt and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with again, like the regular 1996 Vinothèque, stunning mid-palate depth at the core. The pinpoint bubbles remain vigorous, the focus and balance here are exquisite and the wine is very, very long, pure and shows off great grip and backend lift. Simply a brilliant wine at its zenith, but with years and years of life still ahead of it. 2018-2050+. **98.**

**1995 Louis Roederer Cristal Rosé Brut “Vinothèque”**

The 1995 Vinothèque Cristal Rosé is more evolved aromatically and on the palate than the 1996, and this wine has started to show some lovely tertiary layering that is really lovely. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex and classy blend of desiccated cherries, orange peel, summer truffles, walnut, chalky soil tones, orange peel and a lovely potpourri of dried, Middle Eastern spices in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, wide open and frothy, with a fine core, beautiful focus and grip and a long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. There is not quite the same dimension here as is found in vintages such as 2008, 2002 or 1996, but this is a superb wine in its own right and at a perfect place for current drinking. 2018-2040. **95.**

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*A reflection of unseasonable weather in the vineyards of Maranges on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March this year.*

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*The Château du Gevrey-Chambertin-proving it did not snow every day in March.*

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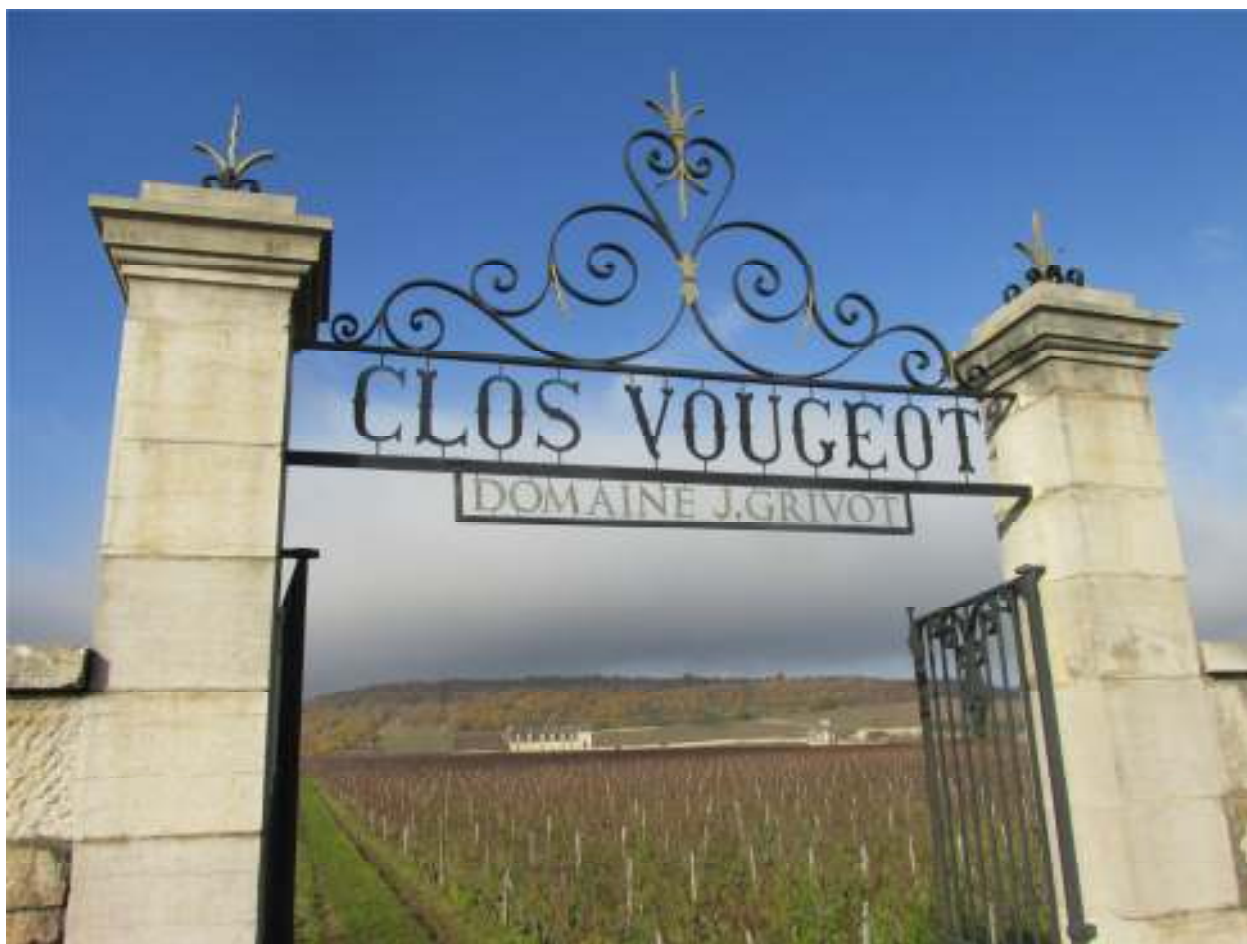
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## ROUND TWO OF THE EXCELLENT 2016 BURGUNDY VINTAGE



As readers will recall from Issue Seventy-Two, I left Burgundy last November with very, very favorable impressions of the 2016 Burgundy vintage, which I would rank as outstanding and probably likely to at least keep pace (and in certain cases, surpass) the far more highly-touted 2015 vintage in the years to come. I will not go into all of the extremely challenging growing season vagaries of 2016 again here, as that was covered in plenty of depth a couple of issues back, but my spring trip to another fine cross section of top flight Burgundy domaines did nothing to dampen my enthusiasm for the excellent 2016 vintage in the Côte d'Or. As I mentioned often back in Issue Seventy-Two, the biggest challenge of the vintage is potential yields, as the communes that were the most adversely affected by the severe frost damage of 2016 (the worst in the region since 1981) are going to have very little wine to sell in this vintage and prices are likely to rise yet again. This is exactly what the region of Burgundy does not need, as prices are already too high in my estimate for the most famous crus and domaines' wines, and though there remains a small, well-heeled crowd of wine lovers who have no difficulties paying the very high prices for so many Burgundies today, historically, this cross section of the market has been mostly interested in only the "best of the best" in their consumption patterns, which does not dovetail very well with the traditional Burgundian philosophy of rewarding fidelity in good years and bad. If things continue to progress as they have since the 2005 vintage, we will

see more and more of a two-tiered Burgundy market, with a small percentage of estates at the top selling for any price and especially in what are touted as “top years”, while everyone else in the food chain will have difficulties moving their wines and falling further behind their most famous neighbors. This will be especially the case in vintages that do not get hyped by merchants and market makers.

All of this would be okay and simply a reflection of the present day Burgundy market mechanisms at work, if indeed there was some coherence to the rubric of “the best” when it comes to recent vintage assessments. However, with a decidedly new clientele for Burgundy, many of whom only want wines from great vintages, the market is going to be more and more tempted to hype a vintage as great when it is no such thing. We have already seen this with the 2009 vintage, which certainly has its share of very good wines at the very top tier (though I am still quite uncertain that I would term any of these truly “great” Burgundies- time will tell on that score), but the year really has just as many overripe, pruneey, clumsy and rather pedestrian wines as it has top flight examples. This is particularly evident as one moves away from the very top twenty-five or thirty producers in the region. Which would have been just fine, if the market had recognized the quality of 2009 for what it was: a “very solar vintage” with some good examples and some decided misses, rather than trotting out every superlative under the sun to inaccurately describe the wines and raise prices. It is not that I inherently dislike vintages such as 2009, which trade mostly on their powerful depth of fruit tones, rather than relying more on their underlying and subtle minerality to define the wines, but rather, I fear that Burgundy may well be on the verge of going the same way as other famous French wine regions, such as Bordeaux, and much of the Rhône Valley, where fat, ripe and powerful wines received inordinate praise by market makers and wine merchants, beginning in the late 1980s and accelerating through the decade of the 1990s, eventually giving way to winemaking philosophies that sought to consciously add these qualities to most vintages through picking dates and cellar techniques, whether it was an accurate reflection of the growing season or not, losing their vinous souls along the way.

Heretofore, this had not been a major concern in Burgundy, as a great many of the most highly-respected domaines have resisted this over the top vision of their wines, but the seeds have already been sown in the market since the 2005s for such an eventuality to arrive, and the temptations will grow if truly great, elegant and transparent vintages start to be downgraded in the market. We have already witnessed this to a certain degree with the beautiful wines from 2007 and 2008, which were initially underappreciated by many merchants and Burgundy collectors (many intent on moving on to the buxom 2009s and ratcheting up prices), only to find a bit of a renaissance after their initial selling seasons amongst the more experienced segment of the market. But, we have to recognize that some of the responsibility for the later discovery of the 2007s and 2008s by collectors had to do with their relative value, *vis à vis* many of the over-hyped and lower quality 2009s. However, since those days, prices have risen across the board and this is unlikely to reoccur in the market with future elegant vintages, as the average prices from the most famous wines from the most famous domaines have probably passed beyond the point where they are going to be perceived as “relative values”. The continued cool reception of the very fine, low octane 2011 vintage in the market is probably more indicative of where the market has gone in the last half dozen years and a more prescient blueprint for the future.

We now have to live with this “boom or bust” Burgundy market, which is far more reminiscent of the Bordeaux market mentality of yesteryear. Into the cauldron of today’s Burgundy bazaar comes the very refined and excellent 2016 vintage, and I suspect that many merchants who most vociferously touted the 2015s with loud praise are likely to tone down the hyperbole (or even fall silent) with the 2016s, even if the absolute quality of the two vintages may well end up being quite similar. It is not that I have lost my appreciation for the powerful and often stunning 2015s, but rather that I hope to see the gorgeous 2016s also get a fair hearing in the market when they start to emerge from producers’ cellars in the autumn. I am not overly sanguine that this will indeed be the reality, but in many cases, because of the very short crop in certain communes and vineyards due to the severe frost damage, there may be sufficient demand in the market to soak up the short crop of 2016. But, where this will leave us in the future, when another remarkably refined and elegant vintage comes along in the mold of 2016, but which is not accompanied by draconian yields in some communes, remains to be seen. If the market makers continue to champion the “solar vintages” as the best of the best, for their clientele who really only wishes to drink the same, then we may see the final pieces fall into place where *vignerons* start to monkey around in the cellars more aggressively with modern technical augments to produce these highly-touted “solar vintages” in the cellar, rather than allowing the vintage to be shaped out in the vineyard.

No matter how the Burgundy market evolves in the coming decade and how these lovely wines are eventually received, the 2016 vintage in Burgundy is truly a “great vintage” and clearly worthy of serious attention. My most recent round of domaine visits produced yet another large slice of the vintage that is truly comprised of beautiful and utterly classical Burgundies. As I wrote back in December, there is great purity and generosity to the fruit components of the 2016s, coupled to outstanding transparency and expression of underlying *terroir*. The structures of the wines are suave, sophisticated and perfectly balanced and the best red wines of 2016 will have little difficulty cruising along and delivering great pleasure for fifty to seventy-five years, so this is certainly not an easy-going, completely forward vintage that will have to be drunk up very soon. However, as the red wines are so beautifully balanced, they are likely to also offer really fine drinking early on and they may well be the most satisfying set of wines since the 2007 reds in this regard, so if one buys enough 2016s (which of course is not going to be easy for everyone), it will be possible to have your cake and eat it too in this vintage! The 2016 whites in general tend to be a bit more accessible out of the blocks than the reds, but a great many of these too share beautiful balance, pristine fruit, very expressive soil inflection and plenty of zesty acidity to make them at least very good mid-term agers, which is perhaps all we can hope for in any case in this age of premo. There are some variations in absolute quality for both the reds and whites (perhaps just a touch more for the frost-damaged chardonnays?), depending on how severe the frost was in a given commune or vineyard, but all but the most severely frost-damaged wines have escaped unscathed and offer excellent quality, despite often being produced in modest quantities. So, here is chapter two of the beautiful and truly exceptional 2016 vintage in Burgundy.

Many of my observations about the current state of evolution of the Burgundy market are primarily related to the most famous domaines and *négociants* in the Côte d’Or and Chablis, and outside of this fairly exclusive club of top producers, many Burgundy prices remain relatively fair and do not exhibit the same symptoms of speculative fever. With this in mind, I have been

trying to expand my coverage of producers in the region a bit more with each passing year, trying to review more estates whose wines are a bit outside of the speculative pricing bubble. I was very happy to add several new producers to my itinerary this year, such as Domaine Joseph Voillot in Volnay (whose 2016 wines are flat out gorgeous!), Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet in Meursault, Domaine Bachelet-Monnot in Maranges, and there will be further additions in my trips later this year of *vignerons* whose wines I have had a chance to taste recently and liked the style very much, but who were some of the hardest hit by the severe frost damage of 2016, so I thought it would be far more polite to visit for the first time when the wines to be tasted would be from the copious vintage of 2017, rather than the severely short crop of 2016. Notes on my first visits to the aforementioned domaines can be found below, as well as several other fine *vignerons* who I have only been visiting for a short time now, but who are also making excellent wines such as Gilbert Felettig in Chambolle, Marinette Garnier at Maison Jaffelin in Beaune, Rémi Rollin in Pernand and Bernard Glantenay in Volnay, so this spring report will be filled with more relative value 2016s than was the case with the end of the year report from my November trip to the Côte d'Or. The differing focuses of the two Burgundy reports each year is done by design, as I try to load up the November itinerary with the most famous names of Burgundy, as these are the domaines whose top wines are most likely to be only available *En Primeur* these days and so getting them written up before the end of the year is a necessity for those interested in pursuing them on a futures basis. As my notes from Issue Seventy-Two attest, there are an awful lot of truly stunning 2016s available from the Five Star domaines in the Côte d'Or, but as I hope this article will also emphasize, there is also plenty of exceptional red and white Burgundies available in this vintage from less well-known domaines and villages.



March 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 at the wall of the Clos de Vougeot.



In Issue Seventy-Two, I intimated that I would make another visit to Chablis during my spring trip to Burgundy, as I was in the region for fully two weeks. However, having had some time to reflect upon this, I decided to not spend any time in Chablis this March, reasoning that with the severe frost damage of 2016 (not to mention further shortening of the crop by hail in some vineyards), coupled with more of the same in the 2017 vintage, would make it extremely impolite to show up in March and ask to have bottles opened of 2016s from Chablis producers who have had very tough luck in the last couple of growing seasons and could use the sale of every single bottle of 2016 that they had managed to produce. Some producers, such as the very talented Patrick Piuze, would have already sold almost their entire 2016 vintage in any case, but I suspected that everyone in Chablis could do with keeping as many bottles as possible from this very short crop and I would be better off just waiting to taste the 2017s in November, when most would still be in cask or tank. I made a similar decision as well with a few of my favorite domaines further south in the Côte d'Or, such as Domaine Bart in Marsannay, as they were severely hit by frost damage in 2016 and it struck me that waiting to visit and taste the 2017s was the right thing to do.

I should take a moment to speak a bit about the famous domaines in Burgundy that I do not visit with any regularity. There are various reasons why I do not visit some of these producers, and it probably makes sense to reiterate what these are, as it has been a few years since I discussed the “missing names” from my annual Burgundy coverage. Some of these are domaines whose wines I like very well indeed, but who choose not to see me these days. At the top of the list is of course, Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, whose new wines I have not been given an appointment to taste since the 2011 vintage, though I ask on each and every trip. The response from the domaine and its US importer has been pretty much the same on each occasion, with DRC “overrun in November by the crowds” and “preparing the wines for bottling in March.” This spring I was received a new variation on the theme, as I was told Aubert de Villaine would be in the US when I was in Burgundy, so an appointment would not be possible. Of course, since my first visit to taste the 1988 vintage at DRC in the spring of 1990, I have never once tasted with Monsieur de Villaine, so I did not really understand the response. Moving on to DRC's arch rival, Domaine Leroy, I have not sought to taste *sur place* here since 1995, as I find that a great many of the wines are not as remarkable as they are made out to be (though the occasional high water mark can be truly magical) and they are not made in my favorite style in any case. At Domaine Coche-Dury, where I used to visit a couple times a year, I have not been able to make an appointment since the generational change here. However, I had the pleasure to be introduced to Raphaël Coche by Jean-François at our vertical Corton-Charlemagne tasting (reported on further in the issue) in Beaune at the end of February, and Raphaël told me I would be welcome to taste here any time, so I hope to make this happen in November. At Domaine Ramonet, who I also used to visit on every trip to the region, Noël Ramonet took a dislike to me several years ago and I was not able to taste here from that point forward, but with his retirement, perhaps I will be able to once again visit, as I have always liked the family's wines quite well.

Other well-known Burgundy estates whose wines I do not cover regularly include Domaine Arlaud in Morey, whose style tends to be overly oaky for my palate (though I firmly believe that the reports of the excellence of the vineyard work here are accurate and I really like the style of the wines under the lumber), Domaine Grivot (always a bit too extracted for my palate, though again, I respect their quality in that chosen style), Domaine Dugat-Py (both overly

extracted and too oaky for my tastes), Domaine Claude Dugat (ditto, though again, the vineyard work here is purported to be second to none, but I cannot find it under the lumber and extract), Clos de Tart (previously over-oaked to my palate, though with the change in ownership, perhaps worthy of a return visit), Domaine Anne Gros (again, over-oaked, with really good wines underneath), and Domaine Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey (adored by many, but I have yet to taste one that was not too oaky as well, despite obviously serious wines under the wood). It is not that I am opposed to new oak in Burgundy, but it strikes me as a difficult tool to master at high percentages, and for every Domaine Dujac or Domaine Rousseau that can make magical wines that speak eloquently to their underlying *terroir* with lots of new oak, there are so many Burgundies where I find the new wood just gets in the way and masks the *terroir*, not to mention, frequently coarsening up the texture with uncovered wood tannins on the backend. I should also mention Domaine de Montille in this list, as Jeremy Seysses mentioned to me a handful of years ago that Etienne de Montille had told him that he would like me to come taste at the domaine. Consequently, I made several attempts to schedule an appointment, but each time, Etienne or his sister were not available, and I eventually gave up trying for lack of progress. So, there is your update about well-known estates from the region not regularly covered in these pages.

The following notes are all arranged geographically from north to south, starting in Gevrey-Chambertin and finishing up in Maranges with the talented Bachelet brothers of Domaine Bachelet-Monnot. I was about ten days earlier this year for my spring trip than is customarily the case, as I needed to get to Beaune at the end of February, in time for the Domaine Coche-Dury and Weingut Keller vertical tastings that I report on in this issue (or will do so with the Keller wines in Issue Seventy-Five). However, even with an earlier window of tasting in Burgundy this spring, I still found the wines in various stages of evolution, with some wines having been recently bottled, others racked and assembled in preparation for the *mise*, while other wines were still in cask and in the case of some with very late malos, not even racked for the first time yet. This makes the tastings a bit more challenging than in November, when most wines are in a great stage of their evolution for tasting, and consequently, a few wines are scored in a range, rather than given a single digit score. As I have mentioned in the past, I dislike scoring wines within a range (much preferring to just change the score as the wines evolve and take their separate paths with bottle age), but with some wines at this time of year in Burgundy, it is a necessity and the fairest thing to do for the wine in question, which is in a very transitory phase of its evolution.

It was quite the interesting climactic visit to the Côte d'Or this spring, as I encountered unsettled and unseasonable weather on this trip that I have not seen for a long, long time (if ever) in early March in Burgundy. This included a rather significant snowfall on the first of March, making for some adventure on the way to morning tastings appointments that day, due to a serious dearth of plowing, and it was as cold during my first week on this trip as I can ever recall in the region. The Burgundians said that the cold was from a wind blowing in from the east from Russia, and I wish I had packed some heavier garments for the trip (or opted for a rental car equipped with snow tires!), as the cold and occasional snowy weather persisted right up to my departure from Burgundy. I spent a three days in Beaujolais on this trip, after wrapping up my first couple of weeks in the Côte d'Or, prior to going on to Champagne where I expected to spend two more weeks of tasting. However, I was stricken with a very severe flu in Reims after only a couple of days tasting and eventually had to cancel the last week and a half of my trip, as I

could not taste, and came back through Beaune for a couple of nights in a hotel prior to returning to nurse my flu in New York. There was even more snow on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March in Beaune, so the unsettled and prolonged winter weather of 2018 that many of us in the United States have also experienced has its counterpart in France this year! It will be interesting to see how this late winter weather in Burgundy in mid-March will affect the potential growing season of 2018.

In any event, despite having the backend of my spring tasting trip jettisoned by the flu, I was able to cover a lot of ground over the first fifteen or sixteen days on the road and part of that voyage is reported on below. In addition to many of my customary stops in the spring in the Côte d'Or, this article also includes my first visit to Laurent Ponsot to hear about his new *négociant* project based in Gilly and taste some of his 2016s (he was one of the *vignerons* in the midst of bottling in early March, so our tasting lineup was necessarily limited), as well as a visit to his family's domaine in Morey St. Denis, now under the sole direction of his sister, Rose-Marie Ponsot, after Laurent's departure in February of 2017. So, this was a very good trip to Burgundy in late February and March, as I had a chance to catch up on the 2016s with families opening new chapters, such as the Ponsots, as well as visiting a fine range of talented *vignerons* and *négociants*, not to mention attending several vertical tastings, which will find their way into separate reports in this and upcoming issues.

### **Maison Pierre Bourée (Gevrey-Chambertin)**

*The Vallet family has made lovely 2016s, though the frost damage found extensively in some villages and vineyards across the region has cut back on their lineup a bit in this vintage. For example, there will be no Chambertin here in 2016, as their parcel in the vineyard was badly damaged by frost. The 2016 white wines in the Bourée cellars were in the midst of bottling at the time of my visit in late February, so I had to content myself with tasting through a fine range of 2016 red wines here this year, followed by a glass of their fine 2015 Meursault. There are a lot more "villages" level bottlings in the Bourée cellars in 2016 than I can recall in previous vintages, and I assume this is a reflection of the scattered severe frost damage in several communes, which probably made for very short availability of certain wines that the Vallet family normally buys, or no grapes at all from certain suppliers this year. But, the range is as strong as ever at Maison Pierre Bourée in 2016, and though some of the appellations are new in the cellars this year (or at least, I had not tasted them on previous trips), the quality is as fine as it always is at this staunchly traditional maison. The Santenay "Gravières", Fixin "la Croix Blanche" and Beaune "Epenottes" had already been bottled at the time of my visit, with the remainder of the lineup still in barrel, but in preparation for bottling in their immediate future. Several of the wines I tasted were in very short supply in the cellars, with only one, two or three casks produced, so it will not be as easy as usual to find specific cuvées here in 2016, but they will be worth a special search, as many will offer simply stellar value in a Burgundy market that remains seriously overheated.*

### **2016 Santenay "Gravières"- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

This is always one of the top values in the Bourée cellars and the 2016 will be no exception. The bouquet offers up a refined blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a fine base of chalky soil tones, gamebird, coffee and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, transparent and beautifully balanced, with fine-grained tannins, bright acids and very good length and grip on the focused finish. Fine juice. 2022-2055. **91.**

### **2016 Auxey-Duresses- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 is the first example of Auxey-Duresses that I can recall tasting from the Vallet family and it is a very good example of this underrated commune. The bouquet is pretty and very red fruity, offering up scents of strawberries, cherries, chalky soil tones, gamebird and a nice, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, tangy and soil-driven, with a touch of seamless tannins, perfectly respectable depth at the core and sneaky length and grip on the nicely balanced finish. Good juice. 2021-2045. **89+**.



*An old photograph of the maison's founder, Pierre Bourée, in the domaine's offices in Gevrey-Chambertin.*

### **2016 Chassagne-Montrachet Rouge- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

This is another bottling that I can never recall tasting previously at Maison Bourée, but perhaps I have just overlooked it in the cellars in the past? This is a very good, solid example, as it offers up a deep bouquet of red and black cherries, venison, coffee, dark soil tones and a topnote of bonfire. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and moderately tannic, with a good core and soil signature, sound acids and a long, primary and gently chewy finish. This needs a few years to blossom, but it has depth and stuffing and will be a good value when it is ready to drink. 2023-2045+. **89**.

### **2016 Aloxe-Corton- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

Given the intense frost damage in the lower sections of the hill of Corton, I was surprised that the Vallet family had an example of Aloxe *villages* in the cellars from 2016, but if I recall correctly, there was only a single cask of this wine. It is too bad there are not ten barrels, as it is an excellent example and will be a fine value. The nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, gamebird, stony soil tones, coffee, a touch of fresh thyme and a topnote of bonfire. On

the palate the wine is deep, full and quite soil-driven in personality, with excellent focus and grip, moderate tannins and a long, vibrant finish. Fine juice. 2022-2045. **90.**

#### **2016 Pommard- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The inherent elegance of the 2016 vintage is very evident in wines such as this lovely young Pommard AC from Maison Bourée. The wine is pure and refined on the nose, delivering a fine mélange of red plums, cherries, venison, raw cocoa, a superb base of soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy at the core, with excellent focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and nascently complex finish. This is really, really good Pommard *villages*! 2024-2055. **91.**

#### **2016 Beaune “Epenottes”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 Beaune “Epenottes” was showing a bit more spicy new oak than is customary with this bottling, and I wondered if this was just a reflection of its recent *mise*, or if the wine was raised in a bit more new oak in 2016, due to the short yields. In any case, it will need some time in the bottle to absorb its new wood component, but should do so nicely with the passage of time. The bouquet is a bit closed after the bottling, but offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, espresso and dark soil, as well as the new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and filled with sappy black fruit at the core, with fine focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, youthful finish. This will be quite good in the fullness of time. 2024-2055. **91+**.

#### **2016 Vougeot- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

There is not a lot of Vougeot *villages* produced and I had never tasted an example from Maison Bourée prior to this stylish 2016. The wine is elegant and very red fruity in personality, offering up scents of cherries, cocoa, a touch of gamebird and a lovely mix of soil nuances. On the palate the wine is medium-full, transparent and bouncy, with lovely focus and grip, bright acids, very discreet tannins and good length on the finish. This is not the most complex *villages* one will find in 2016, but there is plenty of charm and style here. 2020-2040+. **89.**

#### **2016 Fixin “la Croix Blanche”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 Fixin “la Croix Blanche” was one of the few reds that I tasted here that had already been bottled. The wine was showing well for only a few days after the *mise*, offering up a black fruity nose of cassis, black cherries, grilled meats, bitter chocolate, dark soil tones and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and nicely structured, with a good core, moderate tannins and a long, tangy finish. Good juice. 2025-2050. **89+**.

#### **2016 Nuits St. Georges- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 Nuits St. Georges *villages* from the Vallet family is excellent and one of the best AC level wines that I tasted from Nuits in this vintage. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a sappy and complex blend of red plums, black cherries, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, dark soil tones and a topnote of raw cocoa. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile (particularly for a young Nuits), with a sappy core, fine focus and grip and a long, ripely tannic and refined finish. This is excellent juice. 2024-2055+. **91.**

#### **2016 Vosne-Romanée- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

Interestingly, given how many 2016s here are quite red fruity in personality, the Vosne AC is quite black fruity in profile this year. The wine offers up a precise and quite primary bouquet of cassis, black cherries, *pigeon*, cocoa and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely balanced, with a fine core of fruit, good soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, suave finish. This is still quite unevolved on both the nose and palate, but all

of the constituent components are in place and all this needs is some time in the cellar to properly blossom. It will prove to be a fine example of its appellation. 2023-2050. **89+**.

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 Gevrey-Chambertin AC from Maison Pierre Bourée Fils is excellent and not far off the quality of the Clos de la Justice this year. The bouquet is pure, complex and beautifully detailed, wafting from the glass in a complex mix of red and black cherries, a nice touch of plum, grilled meats, raw cocoa, woodsmoke and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full and focused, with a good core of fruit, fine-grained tannins and impressive length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. Classy *villages*. 2021-2050. **90+**.

**2016 Nuits St. Georges “Chaignots”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

While Maison Pierre Bourée is best known for their superb lineup of wines from Gevrey-Chambertin, I have always found them an outstanding source for bottlings from Nuits St. Georges as well, and this is again the case in 2016. The Chaignots in the cellars this year was a touch reductive at the time of my visit, but with some coaxing in the glass offers up a black fruity nose of black cherries, dark berries, espresso, woodsmoke, gamebird and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripely tannic, with a rock solid core, good soil signature and a long, primary and chewy finish. This will be very good, but as it was quite reduced at the time of my visit, I have scored it in a range. I would fully expect it to place at the top of the range in due course. 2026-2065. **91-92**.

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos de la Justice”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 Clos de la Justice is very pure, refined and classically proportioned this year. The bouquet wafts from the glass in an elegant blend of plums, cherries, raw cocoa, a fine base of soil tones, gamebird and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, refined and very suave on the attack, with a fine sappy core, lovely transparency, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the poised and very well-balanced finish. Fine, fine juice. 2023-2055. **91**.

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 Champeaux from the Vallet family is outstanding. The bouquet is deep, pure and very elegant already, offering up scents of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, grilled meats, a complex base of soil, mustard seed and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full, with a lovely, sappy core, fine-grained tannins, excellent focus and grip and a long, soil-driven and complex finish. Just a classic example of Champeaux in the making. 2028-2075. **93**.

**2016 Charmes-Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The old vine Charmes-Chambertin has always been a Vallet family specialty and the 2016 version is again outstanding. The stunning young bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, grilled meats, woodsmoke, raw cocoa, superb soil signature, mustard seed and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very sappy at the core, with lovely backend mineral drive, ripe, suave tannins and great length and grip on the poised and focused finish. Just a superb vintage for this consistently excellent bottling! 2028-2075+. **94+**.

**2016 Clos de la Roche- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

The 2016 Clos de la Roche from Maison Pierre Bourée is stunning. The bouquet is pure, sappy and beautifully transparent, soaring from the glass in a blaze of red and black cherries, plums, venison, raw cocoa, a very complex base of soil tones, a touch of mustard seed and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a marvelous synthesis of sappy fruit and soil signature. The tannins are ripe and fine-

grained, the acids are tangy and the wine is very, very long, complex and perfectly balanced. Great juice. 2029-2075+. **94+**.

### **2015 Meursault- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils**

As all of the 2016 whites were in the midst of bottling, Monsieur Vallet kindly opened up a bottle of the 2015 Meursault AC to taste at the end of our tasting. This is outstanding Meursault *villages*, offering up a fine bouquet of apple, passion fruit, hazelnut, chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with very good cut and grip for the vintage, a plump core and excellent backend mineral drive on the long finish. A classy example. 2018-2035. **91**.

### **Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils (Gevrey-Chambertin)**

*This was my first visit ever to Domaine Sérafin in Gevrey-Chambertin. In the past, I have always liked the underlying raw materials here, but found the wines too new oaky for my tastes. I had heard that they were starting to use a bit less new wood, which prompted my visit, but I found this was at least not the case in 2016, where every single cuvée was raised in one hundred percent new oak. I am not sure if this was because the barrels had already been ordered and the shorter crop necessitated the use of all new casks, or if this is still the preference of the domaine. Checking on their importer's website, I see that the customary percentages a couple of years ago were fifty percent new oak for the Bourgogne, seventy percent for the Gevrey AC and one hundred percent for everything else, so maybe the use of all new oak for every wine in 2016 was a slight reflection of the shorter crop. In any event, I left with the same impression I have had in the past, that these are outstanding wines simply in need of a new oak enlightenment in the cellar, as the wines are really good underneath the new oak, but they are forced to carry an awful lot of lumber during their lives in bottle. The domaine is now being run by Christian Sérafin's niece, Frédérique Bachotet, and his daughter, Karine Sérafin, as Monsieur Sérafin has reached the age of mandatory retirement. The two ladies were very lovely and gracious hosts for my visit, which happened to be on March 7<sup>th</sup>, as domaine's team were finishing up the bottling of the 2016s. Very kindly, the Sérafin cousins had set aside samples of all of the wines prior to the bottling (with the exception of the Bourgogne, which had been bottled five weeks earlier), so that they would all show well.*

*This is a domaine with really, really good holdings, particularly at the premier cru level, and tons of old, old vines, so in theory, this could be one of the absolute superstars in the commune of Gevrey-Chambertin, but the oak regimen here seems to have gotten stuck in the style of the mid-1990s and not evolved in the direction of less new oak and greater expression of underlying terroir that has swept through the cellars of so many of the very top domaines in the Côte de Nuits in the last fifteen years. The wines are all fermented with indigenous yeasts and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered, so the one thing missing to my mind is a reduction of new wood. I am sure that there are people who absolutely love the new oaky style of the Domaine Sérafin wines as they stand today, but for my palate, they could be twice as good if the new oak was dialed back dramatically, and it would also help the bottom line of the domaine as well, as new oak casks have gotten plenty expensive in the last couple of decades. I had similar impressions with the wines from Domaine Trapet back in the mid-1990s, where the new oak that was used in this era was heavily-toasted, so a turnaround in new oak philosophy here is not out of the realm of possibility and could be done with a single vintage and with transformative results. Part of the new oak issue here, at least to my palate, is that the family has been fond of Taransaud barrels*

*for quite a while, and use a fifty-fifty mix of these and François Frères' casks for their wines. As readers know, I am quite convinced that the Taransaud style of new oak, which seems to always impart quite a bit of "spice" to the finished wine, is particularly ill-suited to Burgundy.*

*Madame Bachotet very kindly opened a bottle of 2002 Fonteny to finish up our tasting, and I have to admit that the wine was just delicious to drink when first served and had integrated its new wood beautifully with fifteen years of bottle age. However, she generously offered me the remainder of the bottle to have with dinner that evening, and the wine got progressively more woody with extended air and I did not enjoy it anywhere near as much with dinner as I did at the domaine, which brought back my concerns about the percentage of new oak used here. I do want to reiterate that there are really, really good wines lurking under the new oak, but to my palate, the 2016s were just a bit too new oaky for my sensibilities and I had the sense that some of the potential of these great old vines and a stellar quality vintage was sacrificed to all of the new oak. I have scored the wines under the assumption that they will eventually integrate their oak tannins fairly well with extended bottle age, but they seem likely to always be rather new oaky wines in personality and I am absolutely certain that they would merit higher scores with less new wood. I do not want to give the false impression that these are not very good wines, as they most certainly are that, but there is even more potential here than what currently makes it into bottle and I hope one day soon we will get to see these wines with less new wood. Maybe start with the Chambolle-Musigny "les Baudes" for a first step and see how the wine adapts to a third new oak and some older, neutral barrels? The results could be pure magic!*



*Frédérique Bachotet, in the courtyard of her family's domaine, with the Château de Gevrey-Chambertin behind.*



### **2016 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

The Bourgogne rouge 2016 was the only Domaine Sérafin wine that was already bottled prior to my tasting, as the *mise* for this wine was at the start of February of 2018. All of the vines for this bottling hail from the commune of Gevrey. The bouquet is quite lovely here, offering up scents of cherries, red plums, grilled meats, dark soil and cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and nicely transparent, with good grip and a fair bit of tannin on the backend for its level. The new oak here is not showing quite as dramatically as it is in several other of these 2016s, but I wonder if this will still be the case four or five years down the road. Today, this is showing good promise. 2021-2040. **87.**

### **2016 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

As is the case with all the rest of these 2016s *chez* Sérafin, the Gevrey *villages* sample was set aside in the morning, before the bottling run. Aromatically, this is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up scents of cherries, strawberries, grilled meats, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely soil-driven, but with its oak tannins still currently sticking out a bit on the backend. There is good depth of fruit here to try and integrate the wood tannins with and it seems like this could happen down the road, but I would have liked it a lot better with less new wood. 2022-2045. **88?**

### **2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

The vines that go into the Vieilles Vignes bottling *chez* Sérafin average sixty to seventy years of age and this has always been one of the most well-regarded examples in the village. Like all of the 2016s here, this is a gorgeous wine being hampered a bit by its new, spicy oak component. The bouquet is deep and black fruity in 2016, offering up scents of black cherries, cassis, grilled meats, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely sappy at the core, with good soil signature, fine focus and grip and a long, chewy finish. This will need time to integrate its oak tannins on the backend, but should do so over the long haul. 2024-2060. **88-90.**

### **2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Corbeaux”- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

The Sérafin family has forty-five year-old vines in this superb premier cru. The 2016 Corbeaux was showing marvelous potential underneath its veneer of new wood, offering up scents of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, grilled meats, dark soil tones, spicy oak and a touch of violet in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, chewy and rock solid at the core, with fine soil inflection, ripe, chewy tannins and a long, youthful finish. I love the raw materials here and hope most of them will come to the fore as the new oak gets absorbed. 2027-2055+. **89-91+.**

### **2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “le Fonteny”- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

The domaine’s parcel of vines in Fonteny are fifty-five years of age and there is a very, very good wine here underneath the new oak. The bouquet is deep and classically black fruity, delivering a blend of sweet dark berries, black cherries, raw cocoa, venison, a bit of bonfire, black minerality and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and carrying its new wood a bit better out of the blocks than the Corbeaux, with a sappy core, good mineral drive and a long, chewy and focused finish. This could be brilliant with less new oak, but as it is, it should still end up very good with sufficient bottle age. 2028-2060. **90-92.**

### **2016 Morey St. Denis “les Millandes”- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

Madame Bachetot noted that two-thirds of their parcel in les Millandes are extremely old vines, with the other third “only forty to forty-five years of age.” Her uncle first acquired this parcel in the 1996 vintage. The 2016 version is going to be very good, as it offers up a pure and

sappy nose of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, gamebird, lovely soil nuances, a bit of mustard seed and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and sappy at the core, with good soil signature, fine length and grip and a ripely tannic, youthful finish. 2026-2060. **91-92+**.

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “les Baudes”- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

The les Baudes from Domaine Sérafin is composed of good old vines as well, with one-third of parcel closing in on seventy years of age and the remainder of the vines here around forty-five. This was the most marked by its new oak at the time of my visit and I had some concerns that it may never fully integrate its new wood, as it was downright rigid on the palate from the oak tannins and not particularly charming or Chambolle-like. Underneath the new wood veneer is an aromatically interesting wine, with scents of red and black cherries, soil, gamebird, raw cocoa vying for attention with the Taransaud spice. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with a good core, but there is an awful lot of wood tannin currently uncovered on the backend of this wine today. ???

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Cazetiers”- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

For as long as I can recall, the Cazetiers *chez* Sérafin has been the flagship premier cru in the domaine’s lineup. The 2016 is going to be very good, as it offers up a fine, sappy nose of red and black cherries, grilled meats, mustard seed, dark soil tones, bitter chocolate, a nice touch of violet and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, transparent and sappy at the core, with fine focus and grip, impressive nascent complexity and a long, chewy, but pretty well-balanced finish. There is certainly the stuffing here to carry its new oak with sufficient bottle age and the wine will be very good in the fullness of time, but again, it could have been spectacular with less new oak! 2026-2060. **91-93**.

**2016 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

The Domaine Sérafin Charmes-Chambertin is a fifty-fifty split of parcels in Mazoyrès and Charmes proper, with both parcels seventy-five years of age. The depth of fruit of the grand cru here carries its new wood component more seamlessly out of the blocks and I have little worries about the ultimate balance of this wine at maturity! The bouquet is superb, wafting from the glass in a sappy blend of black cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, dark soil tones, grilled meats, roses and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and nicely sappy at the core, with fine backend mineral drive, excellent focus and grip and a very, very long, ripely tannic finish. A fine example. 2028-2075. **94**.

**2015 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Cazetiers”- Domaine Sérafin Père et Fils**

The 2015 Cazetiers from Domaine Sérafin is a good, solid example of the vintage, but there are still some uncovered wood tannins here on the backend of the palate that have not been absorbed, which is not a particularly reassuring quality. The bouquet is first class, wafting from the glass in a pretty blend of red and black cherries, gamebird, a fine base of soil, lovely floral tones and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite tangy, with a plush core, good soil signature and a long, focused and chewy finish. Some of the backend tannins here are clearly derived solely from the wood. There is plenty of depth of fruit and it should eventually eat up all of its new oak, but I would have loved to have seen this same wine with one-third new casks and no Taransaud in the mix! 2025-2065. **91**.

**Domaine Philippe Jouan (Morey St. Denis)**

*This was my first visit to Domaine Jouan, whose wines I have had out of bottle on several occasions and whose style I like very well indeed, as I have often found them quite reminiscent of the wines of Jacky Truchot. In fact, Henri Jouan, Philippe’s father, and Jacky Truchot were*

*long-time friends and it is not surprising that their wines would share some similarities, as they hail from the same generation of vigneron who cut their teeth on the vintages of the 1970s and their styles are quite emblematic of that chapter in the history of Burgundy. This is not a big domaine, as they only own three hectares of vines, though they do farm a couple more parcels under a mettayage agreement. Philippe Jouan took over from his father in 2004 and inherited plenty of old vines in their parcels in the villages of Morey St. Denis, Gevrey-Chambertin and Chambolle-Musigny. There is only one grand cru here, a fine, very old vine parcel (well over one hundred years of age) in Clos St. Denis. The wines are well-made, but hard to find generally in the market, as the Jouan family has long been important suppliers to one of the very top négociants in Beaune and they are quite content with this arrangement, so the lion's share of their production still is sold off in cask. I was very much looking forward to my visit to taste the 2016s, but I arrived at an inopportune time, as Philippe Jouan was just finishing up the bottling of his 2016s, with the Clos St. Denis having gone into bottle that morning! He very kindly opened up the whole range and we tasted through the lineup, but the 2016s were all still upset from the very immediate mise and quite impossible to take precise notes on during my visit. I will look forward to visiting here in November to taste the 2017s, so that I do not run into the bottling run when trying to taste that vintage! Based on what I have tasted out of bottle in the past, these are very, very good wines and well worth adding to your cellar- particularly if you liked the style of Jacky Truchot's wines back in the day, as the two families had vines in some of the same appellations and the wines certainly share a similar inspiration in style, though the Jouan wines tend to be just a bit more powerful in style than the ethereal Truchot bottlings.*

### **Domaine Ponsot (Morey St. Denis)**

*Perhaps no bigger news came out of Burgundy in 2017 than the announcement that Laurent Ponsot, long the director of his family's domaine in Morey St. Denis, was leaving the estate and starting his own négociant firm. The change at the head of the family domaine came in February 2017, though as the family finalized the terms of Laurent's departure, the news was kept quiet for several months. Laurent had joined his father here in 1981 and had been in charge of the winemaking at Domaine Ponsot since the 1983 vintage, so his departure from the cellars here in Morey was certainly a seismic shift in the firmament of winegrowers in the Côte de Nuits, and a new chapter has begun at Domaine Ponsot with the 2016 vintage. One of Laurent's sisters, Rose-Marie Ponsot, has returned from Paris to take over as full-time Director of the domaine in Morey St. Denis, though she had been co-directing the property with Laurent since 1997. Rose-Marie Ponsot has added Alexandre Abel to the team at the domaine, as her Deputy Director and winemaker, with Rose-Marie's nephew, William-Jacquin Ponsot, is also starting his career at the domaine and will eventually assume the directorship of Domaine Ponsot sometime in the years to come. At the present, he is at the domaine part-time, with a few international "stages" planned for the near future, prior to settling in permanently in the domaine in a year or two. So, both the immediate and long-term future of this important family domaine looks very sanguine. The family also lost Jean-Marie Ponsot, Rose-Marie and Laurent's father, in April of 2017, so the last year was one of great change at the domaine. Jean-Marie Ponsot had been retired for many years, but was responsible for much of the rise to prominence of this fine domaine during his tenure at the head of the estate from the time of his father's retirement in 1957, up until Laurent assumed control for the direction of the winemaking at the domaine in 1983, and he was one of the most important vigneron of his generation in Burgundy.*



*A rainbow over the vineyards of Gevrey-Chambertin, as I made my way to Domaine Sérafin one afternoon.*

*With the departure of Laurent Ponsot from the family domaine, there have been a few changes in the roster of wines at Domaine Ponsot, starting with the 2016 vintage. Gone from the past lineup are all of the bottlings that were made under the métayage agreement with Domaine des Chézeaux, which commenced all the way back in 1982, as this contract was held by Laurent Ponsot personally, and these wines are now going to be made by Laurent's négociant firm. These bottlings include the Clos St. Denis, Griotte-Chambertin, Chambertin and Chambolle-Musigny "les Charmes", which for more than thirty years now have been synonymous with the Domaine Ponsot lineup. The Saint-Romain Blanc, Corton-Charlemagne, red Cortons, Clos Vougeot and Charmes-Chambertin bottlings that were made by Domaine Ponsot from purchased grapes for the last decade here have been continued in the wake of Laurent Ponsot's departure, so much of the estate's lineup from the last ten to twelve years here remains the same, despite the loss of the Domaine des Chézeaux holdings. I tasted the full range of 2016s here, with the exception of the Chapelle-Chambertin, which had an extremely late malo in this vintage and was still settling in post-malo and not ready to taste at the time of my visit. The harvest here started on September 29<sup>th</sup> in Corton-Charlemagne, with the red Cortons picked the following day and the picking proceeding up through October 12<sup>th</sup>, with the last bunches gathered in the Clos des Monts Luisants and Morey AC parcels. As the notes below will attest, these are a very strong set of 2016s and very much in keeping the traditions at Domaine Ponsot.*

### **2016 Saint-Romain “Cuvée de la Mésange” Blanc- Domaine Ponsot**

The 2016 Domaine Ponsot Saint-Romain Blanc was still in tank at the time of my visit, but was destined to be bottled the following day. This has been a lovely new addition to the family domaine’s lineup over the last decade and the 2016 version is again, quite serious. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a pure blend of pear, peach, bee pollen, a touch of honey and a fine base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and complex, with beautiful focus and balance, bright acids and fine length and grip on the vibrant finish. 2018-2030. **90.**

### **2016 Morey St. Denis “Clos des Mont Luisants” Blanc- Domaine Ponsot**

The world’s greatest example of old vine Aligoté is once again stellar in 2016. The nose wafts from the glass in a sophisticated blend of peach, lemon, superb minerality, spring flowers and just a whisper of the honey elements to come with bottle age. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, pure and racy, with a fine core, excellent balance and a long, complex and beautifully focused finish. Fine, fine juice. 2021-2050. **92.**

### **2016 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Ponsot**

The parcel of vines for the Domaine Ponsot Corton-Charlemagne bottling sit on the Aloxe-Pernand border in the heart of the appellation, and consequently, were not badly frosted in 2016. This has been a superb and quite unique example of this great *terroir* since its inaugural vintage, as this is probably the only Corton-Charlemagne that is produced without any new oak. The 2016 is excellent, offering up a very pure and promising bouquet of apple, pear, lemon, white flowers, chalky minerality and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with laser-like focus, impressive, nascent complexity and a very, very long, zesty and well-balanced finish. 2021-2055. **94+.**

### **2016 Morey St. Denis “Cuvée des Grives”- Domaine Ponsot**

The 2016 Morey *villages* bottling *chez* Ponsot is excellent, offering up a very pure and nicely red fruity nose of cherries, red plums, a touch of beetroot, superb minerality and a delicate topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely transparent, with a good core, moderate tannins and fine length and grip on the focused finish. A very serious *villages*. 2024-2060. **90.**

### **2016 Morey St. Denis “1er Cru” Cuvée des Alouettes- Domaine Ponsot**

The 2016 Cuvée des Alouettes is a fine Morey premier cru in the making, wafting from the glass in a fine aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, venison, stony soil tones, bitter chocolate, a touch of mustard seed and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with lovely focus and plenty of the vintage’s purity on display. The tannins are fine-grained and seamless, the wine has good acids and fine focus and grip on the long and nascently complex finish. This was one of the last 2016s to finish its malo and the wine was still in cask and not yet racked at the time of my visit. 2026-2065+. **91+.**

### **2016 Corton “Cuvée de Bourdon”- Domaine Ponsot**

The 2016 Corton “Cuvée de Bourdon” from Domaine Ponsot is a superb wine in the making. The bouquet is deep, pure and expressive, delivering scents of red and black cherries, lovely, stony minerality, raw cocoa, gamebird, violet, peonies and a touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a fine core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, vibrant and very promising finish. Fine, fine Corton. 2026-2075. **93+.**

### **2016 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Ponsot**

The 2016 Bressandes from Domaine Ponsot is a bit more black fruity in personality out of the blocks than the Cuvée de Bourdon, with just a faint touch of red cherry mixing in with scents of sweet dark berries, black plums, *pigeon*, complex soil tones, woodsmoke, mustard seed and a bit of upper register stoniness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile, with a rock solid core, impressive backend mineral drive, ripe tannins and a long, youthful and very well-balanced finish. This will be a top flight example of Bressandes in the fullness of time. 2028-2075+. **94.**

### **2016 Clos de Vougeot “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Ponsot**

To the best of my recollections, 2004 was the first vintage of Clos de Vougeot from Domaine Ponsot and this has been an excellent addition to their lineup since that time. The vines for this bottling hail from the top section, right next to Grands Echézeaux and are from old vines. The 2016 version is a classic in the making, delivering a refined bouquet of plums, red and black cherries, a great base of soil, gamebird, raw cocoa, just a whisper of mustard seed and plenty of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully sappy at the core, with fine-grained tannins, excellent focus and grip and a long, vibrant and very precise young finish. 2026-2075. **93+.**

### **2016 Charmes-Chambertin “Cuvée des Merles”- Domaine Ponsot**

The 2002 vintage was the first Charmes-Chambertin at Domaine Ponsot, with the wine produced from purchased grapes hailing from forty-five to fifty year-old vines at the very top of the slope in Mazoyrès. The 2016 version is outstanding, with the nose jumping from the glass in a vibrant and nicely red fruity mélange of cherries, wild strawberries, *pigeon*, coffee, raw cocoa, mustard seed and a superbly complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very refined in personality, with an excellent core of pure fruit, lovely soil inflection, ripe, seamless tannins and a long, energetic and perfectly balanced finish. Fine, fine Charmes in the making here! 2026-2075. **94.**

### **2016 Clos de la Roche “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Ponsot**

Not surprisingly, the 2016 Clos de la Roche “Vieilles Vignes” from Domaine Ponsot is utterly brilliant. The bouquet is deep, sappy and very pure, delivering scents of red and black cherries, plums, raw cocoa, gamebird, woodsmoke and a magically complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, sappy and very transparent in profile, with a great core of fruit, impeccable focus and balance, suave, ripe tannins and a very, very long, complex and vibrant finish. This is not as massively endowed as some recent vintages of Clos de la Roche here, and I have absolutely no complaints in this regard, as this wine is showing just beautiful potential and is every bit as promising as any recent vintage of this cuvée *chez Ponsot!* 2028-2085. **97.**

### **Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig (Chambolle-Musigny)**

*Gilbert Felettig was quite philosophical about the frost damage in Chambolle-Musigny in 2016, which no doubt was aided by the much better number of casks from 2017 that were bubbling away in the cellars here. Monsieur Felettig noted that he lost fully sixty percent of a normal crop, due to the severe frost damage in the commune in 2016, and consequently, he had to blend several of his different premier crus together this year, as he simply did not have enough grapes to produce even a micro-cuvée from some of his most heavily-frosted vineyards. In fact, his 2016 bottling of Chambolle-Musigny “Premier Cru” will include seven of his premier crus in it this year, as the only one where he had enough production to make a bottling on its own was his les Carrières, where he had sufficient grapes to make three barrels. So, our tasting was quite*

*a bit quicker than normal this year, as the number of wines was quite diminished. It was not only Monsieur Felettig's Chambolles that were hard hit as well, as he produced his very good Bourgogne rouge from yields of fifteen hectoliters per hectare in 2016, as the frost here was also severe! His quantities were better in his Gevrey "la Justice" (truly stellar this year) and Vosne AC, as frost damage was minimal or non-existent in these vineyards, but his Nuits St. Georges AC bottling was also severely cut back by frost damage. His parcels that go into this bottling are located on both sides of the center of town, with one-third to the north (and barely frosted) and two-thirds to the south of the center, where he again averaged fifteen hectoliters per hectare! Monsieur Felettig was another vigneron who used more whole clusters for some of his cuvées in 2016 than is customary for him (he has just been starting to expand his inclusion of a percentage of stems in the last few years), with an eye towards helping to fill the fermenters a bit more for particularly small crops. His parcels in both the Haute Côte de Nuits and Haute Côte de Beaune were completely lost to the frost damage in 2016. I did not taste either his Vosne "Reignots" or Echézeaux this year, as they had both just been bottled a day or two before my visit and it would have just been wasting bottles to open them at the time, in a vintage where there are emphatically not enough bottles to waste any! The Bourgogne and villages wines had all been bottled in January, with the premier crus only having been bottled a week before my visit. However, everything showed well and while the quantities are very small here for most of the 2016s, the quality is very, very good. We finished up our tasting with a couple of 2015s, as I had missed visiting here last year due to my spring knee surgery. I am strongly of the opinion that the Domaine Felettig wines get a bit better each and every year, as Monsieur Felettig further refines his style, with the use of whole clusters bringing more potential complexity to the wines, and the use of new oak getting a bit more seamless (perhaps with slightly lower percentages?) with each passing vintage. This is really a fine source in Chambolle!*

### **2016 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

Though this wine was made from tiny, tiny yields, it has turned out really well and will be an excellent example of its level. Monsieur Felettig raised this wine in twenty percent new oak in 2016 and the wine offers up a lovely nose of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, a bit of chocolate and a very discreet framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full and moderately tannic for a Bourgogne, with a good core and a long, tangy and still quite primary finish. This will need a year or two in the cellar to blossom, but it will be a fine example. 2020-2035. **88.**

### **2016 Chambolle-Musigny "Vieilles Vignes"- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The Domaine Felettig old vine Chambolle *villages* bottling included about twenty percent whole clusters in 2016 and was raised in thirty percent new oak. Gilbert Felettig noted that the natural alcohol here was thirteen percent and he chose not to chapitalize the wine. This is going to be a very, very good bottle of Chambolle "V.V.", as it offers up a pure and black fruity bouquet of black cherries, gamebird, complex soil tones, woodsmoke, vanillin oak and a touch of balsam bough in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and nicely transparent in personality, with a fine core, ripple tannins and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. Good juice. 2023-2060. **90.**

### **2016 Chambolle-Musigny "Clos le Village"- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

Monsieur Felettig noted that "these vines are protected a bit by the village, so we had much less frost here than in most of our other parcels in Chambolle." The wine was fermented in 2016 with thirty percent whole clusters and has turned out beautifully, offering up a fine

aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, *pigeon*, chalky soil tones, mustard seed, woodsmoke and a nice touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and tangy, with fine-grained tannins, lovely focus and grip and a long, poised and soil-driven finish. This is more mineral and a touch more precise than the Vieilles Vignes bottling. 2024-2060. **90+**.

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Justice”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

La Justice is one of my favorite *villages* level vineyards in all of Gevrey and Monsieur Felettig has made an excellent example of this fine *terroir* in 2016. The bouquet is pure and sappy, offering up scents of red plums, red and black cherries, cocoa, a fine base of dark soil tones, mustard seed and a nice touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent in profile, with a sappy core, suave tannins and a long, poised and quite vibrant finish. This is a beautiful village wine in the making. 2023-2060. **91**.



*It may never rain in southern California, but it does snow sometimes in Chambolle-Musigny in March.*

**2016 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

This was another of the fortunate cuvées at Domaine Felettig in 2016, as there was virtually no frost here and the wine has also turned out very, very well for its level. The nose is pure and expressive, wafting from the glass in a classic blend of black raspberries, black cherries, gamebird, Vosne spices, a lovely base of dark soil tones and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very mineral in profile, with a sappy core of black fruit, excellent



focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and impressive lift and backend tension on the well-balanced finish. Another really good *villages*. 2023-2060. **91+**.

**2016 Nuits St. Georges- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

As I mentioned in the introduction, two-thirds of the blend for the Nuits AC bottling come from vines on the Prémieux side of the village, which were devastated by the frost, and one-third from the Vosne side, where the frost was virtually non-existent. Interestingly, despite the draconian yields on the Prémieux side, the wine shows none of the structural coarseness of some badly-frosted wines, and this is another very, very strong and classy AC in the making. The bouquet offers up a superb blend of red plums, black cherries, venison, raw cocoa, excellent soil tones, a dollop of mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, quite sappy at the core, with ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, soil-driven and tangy finish. Classy juice. 2024-2060. **91**.

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “Premier Cru”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

From a blend of Feusselottes, Fuées, Charmes, Gruenchers and three others, it is not surprising that this is a very special bottle of blended Premier Cru in 2016. Amongst all of these, Monsieur Felettig reported that yields averaged thirteen hectoliters per hectare. The wine has turned out beautifully on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up a refined blend of red and black cherries, red plums, cocoa, gamebird, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and a lovely floral topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and sappy, with excellent mid-palate depth, suave, fine-grained tannins and a very long, nascently complex and very well-balanced finish. Fine, fine juice in the making. 2026-2075. **93**.

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “les Carrières”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The sole premier cru with sufficient quantity to bottle on its own, the 2016 Carrières *chez* Felettig has turned out beautifully as well. There are only three casks of this wine, with two of them new this year and the wine was one hundred percent whole clusters as well, as the stems were beautifully ripe in this vineyard. The bouquet is more black fruity in profile than the blended Premier Cru, but every bit as precise, offering up scents of plums, black cherries, dark chocolate, a superb base of soil, a nice touch of stem spice, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a lovely core, tangy acids and excellent focus and grip on the soil-driven and complex finish. I really like the textural sophistication here, as this will turn velvety with bottle age. Lovely wine. 2026-2075. **93+**.

*And a Couple of 2015s:*

**2015 Chambolle-Musigny “les Gruenchers”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

Monsieur Felettig used forty percent whole clusters for his Gruenchers in 2015 and the wine has turned out beautifully. The bouquet is deep, ripe and vibrant, offering up scents of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, venison, dark chocolate and a nice base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite primary today, with a rock solid core, fine precision and grip, ripe tannins and a long, promising finish. This needs time to blossom, but will be a fine example of this solar vintage. 2027-2075. **92**.

**2015 Chambolle-Musigny “les Carrières”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

In contrast to the Gruenchers 2015, the les Carrières was completely destemmed in this vintage. The bouquet here is superb, jumping from the glass in a mix of black cherries, sweet cassis, dark chocolate, a fien base of soil, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with nascent complexity, ripe, suave tannins and a long,

well-balanced and tangy finish. This seems likely to drink a little sooner than the Gruenchers in 2015 and should prove to be an outstanding example of the vintage. 2025-2075. 92+.

### **Laurent Ponsot (Gilly-lès-Citeaux)**

*Laurent Ponsot has found temporary winemaking and cellaring facilities in a sleek new commercial space in Gilly, right next door to the superb fromagerie of Belin who is responsible for so much of the world's beautiful Brillat Savarin cheese. There is plenty of space to work with here and it is a fine first home for Laurent Ponsot's new venture, but the plans are already working for a new and permanent home for this new venture in Gevrey-Chambertin. Laurent departed the family domaine in Morey St. Denis with a few casks of the 2015s that he produced there (as part of his share of the family vintage), as well as his vineyard holdings from his méttayage agreement from Domaine des Chézeaux from this vintage forward, so there are many familiar names in the new roster of bottlings from Laurent. Of the 2015s that he brought along with him, they are only single barrels of each wine, with the exception of the Corton-Charlemagne, of which he received three casks, so the 2015s here will be very rare wines. As far as Monsieur Ponsot is concerned, 2016 is really the first vintage for his new enterprise, which is a combination of winegrower and négociant, as he has continued his contracts with certain producers he purchased grapes from in the past and expanded his lineup as well to add several new appellations, including quite a roster of premier crus in Meursault. So, a new and exciting chapter is unfolding for Laurent Ponsot. He has been joined in this endeavor by his son, Clément Ponsot, in the running of the project, and his other two children, Claire and Nicolas are also shareholders in the firm and this will be a family-run business for many generations to come. I arrived here to taste on a snowy first day of March this year, right in the midst of bottling, so I only tasted a very small percentage of the 2016 cuvées that Laurent will offer in this vintage.*

*The full roster of 2016s here is already quite impressive. From the Domaine des Chézeaux holdings remain bottlings of Bourgogne rouge, Chambolle AC and Chambolle "Charmes", Griotte-Chambertin, Clos St. Denis and Chambertin. Additionally, from "joint ventures" that Laurent initiated over the last decade or so, cuvées of Saint-Romain Blanc, Clos de Vougeot and Chambertin "Clos de Bèze" will still be made by the new firm, and Laurent has added a bevy of new appellations to this gambit as he starts to stake out his territory as a new and important négociant in Burgundy. In the 2016 vintage, these include: Meursault villages, premier crus in this commune of Blagny, Genevrières, Charmes and Perrières and a bottling of Corton-Charlemagne (from different sources than he worked with previously). The roster for 2017 will be expanded even a bit further, with cuvées of Montrachet and Beaune "Premier Cru", so Laurent Ponsot's lineup will be even more extensive than what he offered while at Domaine Ponsot. And, as Laurent emphasized during my visit, this is only the beginning and he will have his eyes open for further opportunities that present themselves as the future unfolds for him and his children. I am very much looking forward to visiting again in November to taste the full range of 2017s out of barrel. As has always been the case with Monsieur Ponsot's wines, new oak will be eschewed for the élevage of his wines and one does not expect the style to change one iota from his days at the head of the family domaine in Morey. However, as is always the case with Laurent, he is working on improving certain aspects of the wine producing chain through the use of new technologies- if they can allow him to make even more precise, old school wines- and there are a number of innovations already in the works here. I am sure it is a very exciting and challenging time for Laurent and Clément Ponsot, as their new négociant firm begins to take*

*shape, but with further projects already on the drawing table, it is quite clear that this is the unfolding of a new chapter in Burgundy that will make the Côte d'Or an even more exciting and inviting place to visit in the years to come.*



*Laurent Ponsot in his new offices in Gilly.*

**2016 Bourgogne Blanc “Cuvée du Perce Neige”- Laurent Ponsot**

The 2016 Bourgogne Blanc from Laurent Ponsot is very good this year. The vines for this bottling hail from Meursault. The bouquet is a fine blend of apple, bee pollen, spring flowers and a lovely, complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with a good core and fine length and bounce on the finish. This was bottled a week before my visit, but had not yet shut down and was showing beautifully for its level. 2018-2030. **89+**.

**2016 Meursault “Cuvée du Pandoréa”- Laurent Ponsot**

The 2016 Meursault *villages* bottling *chez* Ponsot was bottled on the same day as the Bourgogne Blanc and was also showing well. The nose is bright and classy, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, passion fruit, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and a touch of orange blossom in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with bright acids, fine focus and grip and a long, elegant and vibrant finish. Classy juice. 2021-2045. **91+**.

### **2016 Meursault “Blagny” Cuvée du Myosotis- Laurent Ponsot**

This premier cru had little or no frost damage in 2016 and I have tasted some other superb examples in other cellars, but Laurent Ponsot’s Meursault “Blagny” is the finest I have yet tasted from the vintage. The bouquet is superb, offering up a pure and vibrant nose of apple, pear, orange zest, a very complex base of soil tones, white flowers and a nice, esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and nicely reserved in profile, with a superb core, excellent focus and balance and a long, complex and zesty finish. I can only imagine how good the Charmes, Genevrières and Perrières are here this year! 2022-2050. **93.**

### **2016 Corton-Charlemagne “Cuvée du Kalimeris”- Laurent Ponsot**

The 2016 Corton-Charlemagne from Laurent Ponsot was still in tank at the time of my visit and destined for bottling the following week. This is from a couple of different parcels in the vineyard than Laurent had worked with previously white at Domaine Ponsot, but he has once again found some outstanding fruit and this is a brilliant young example of the appellation! The bouquet is deep, reserved and nearly bottomless, offering up scents of apple, white peach, chalky soil tones, spring flowers, just a touch of lemon blossom and again a lovely, esthery topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with great intensity at the core, racy acids and stunning backend mineral drive and energy on the young, racy and complex finish. Stunning juice. 2023-2060. **96.**

### **2016 Bourgogne Rouge “Cuvée des Peupliers”- Laurent Ponsot**

Laurent Ponsot’s vineyard sources for his Bourgogne rouge bottling are mostly in the Côte de Beaune, with a small parcel in the village of Chambolle included. This was bottled two weeks before my visit and was really singing still, offering up a very red fruity and sappy nose of cherries, strawberries, woodsmoke, a complex base of soil and a touch of Chambolle mustard seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite succulent out of the blocks, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, tangy finish. This is really, really good Bourgogne rouge! 2020-2040. **90+.**

### **2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Cuvée du Aulne”- Laurent Ponsot**

In 2016, the Gevrey AC here is mostly made from purchased grapes vinified by Laurent Ponsot, but he noted that he had also bought a couple of barrels to augment the cuvée in this vintage. The wine is superb, wafting from the glass in a fine and quite complex mélange of red and black cherries, gamebird, a complex base of soil, a touch of nutskin, mustard seed and coffee. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a superb core, fine-grained tannins and lovely transparency and grip on the long, poised and vibrant finish. This is high class juice and clearly of premier cru quality this year! 2023-2060. **92.**

### **2016 Chambolle-Musigny “les Charmes” Cuvée du Tilleul- Laurent Ponsot**

Long-time fans of this bottling from Domaine Ponsot are going to be very happy with the 2016 version from Laurent, as this wine has not changed its stripes at all with the relocation from Morey to Gilly for its *elevage*. The wine is deep, pure and sappy, offering up scents of black cherries, plums, gamebird, chocolate, a fine base of soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a plush core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a long, well-balanced and seamlessly tannic finish. Fine juice. 2026-2060. **93.**

### **2016 Griotte-Chambertin “Cuvée du Saule”- Laurent Ponsot**

The 2016 Griotte from Laurent Ponsot is also very much in its customary style, offering up a ripe and sappy nose of black cherries, plums, chocolate, roasted meats, a fine base of soil, a touch of mustard seed and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, powerful and opulent in personality, with a sappy core, fine-grained tannins and

excellent length and grip on the long, tangy and beautifully balanced finish. A classic Laurent Ponsot Griotte in the making. 2031-2080. **95+**.

### **Domaine Bruno Clavelier (Vosne-Romanée)**

*I have been remiss in not visiting with Bruno Clavelier each and every year, as I love his wines and he has been on quite a tear in the last decade or so. I often call the domaine while planning trips, but it is tough to catch Monsieur Clavelier at the domaine, as he loves to be out in his vines, and my itinerary often fills up before I have success catching Bruno in the office to pick up the phone. Happily, this spring I was able to do so and tasted through his superb, soil-driven and very sappy range of 2016s, which are clearly one of the best vintages I have had the pleasure to taste in the cellars here in Vosne-Romanée. Bruno Clavelier is clearly one of my very favorite producers in the village of Vosne, as he is one of the few here who eschews using high percentages of new oak for his wines and they shine out with their underlying minerality in a manner that is more emblematic of Chambolle-Musigny these days than it is of Vosne-Romanée, where so many vigneronns seem to have caught the “new oak disease” of the mid-1990s and never recovered! But, Monsieur Clavelier is a lover of terroir, which is aptly demonstrated by the various soil and mineral exhibits he keeps in his tasting room to underscore the variations of terroir between his various parcels, and he is quite modest with his use of new barrels for his wines. The excellent village wines here generally see no more than ten percent new oak, the premier crus from twenty-five to thirty percent and the lone grand cru, Corton “Rognet” only fifty percent, which are very, very modest numbers for a top flight domaine in the village of Vosne-Romanée today! The 2016s here had been bottled two and a half to three weeks prior to my visit, which turned out to be fortuitous, as they had a chance to recover from the mise, but had not yet started to really shut down post-bottling (which usually takes a month and a half to two months to do in my experience with red Burgundies) and the wines were showing really, really well. Having parcels primarily in Vosne-Romanée allowed Monsieur Clavelier to avoid the worst of the frost damage, but his two premier crus in Chambolle were, of course, heavily frosted and yields were microscopic for him in both Noirot and Combe d’Orveau this year, and he also lost fifteen percent of his crop in Corton “Rognet” as well due to the freeze. But, all in all, he counted himself lucky and he has not missed the opportunity presented by the 2016 vintage and has made a stunning lineup of wines this year, with each and every wine perfectly capturing the inherent elegance of the vintage! This is a lineup that is absolutely loaded with great 2016s and there is not a wine here that I would not want to have in my own cellar!*

### **2016 Vosne- Romanée “Hauts Beaumonts”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2016 Haut Beaumonts is an outstanding village wine in the making, which I often find to be of premier cru quality in many vintages and this is again the case in 2016! The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a red fruity blend of raspberries, cherries, stony minerality, Vosne spices, woodsmoke and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very transparent in profile, with a fine core, tangy acids, modest tannins and lovely backend lift and tension on the long and complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2021-2050. **91**.

### **2016 Vosne- Romanée “Combe de Brûlées”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

Monsieur Clavelier’s vines in Combe de Brûlées are now eighty-five years of age and the wine has turned out beautifully in 2016. The pure and classic nose delivers scents of red plums, raspberries, duck, lovely minerality, gentle spice tones and a dollop of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and soil-driven, with a fine core, suave, ripe tannins, lovely focus and grip

and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. This will need a year or two longer in the cellar than the Hauts Beaumonts to really start to drink well, but it too will be excellent. 2023-2050. **90+**.

### **2016 Vosne- Romanée “Hauts Mazières”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2016 Hauts Mazières *chez* Clavelier is also an excellent village wine in the making, as these sixty-eight year-old vines have produced a very elegant, sappy example. The nose is quite black fruity in profile, offering up a mix of black raspberries, black cherries, dark soil tones, a touch of lavender, espresso and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, soil-driven and shows lovely mid-palate depth, with fine-grained tannins, superb focus and grip and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. Fine juice. 20121-2050. **90+**.



*A very refined, exceptional lineup of 2016s left Bruno Clavelier and all of us smiling at the end of the tasting.*

### **2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Corbeaux”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2016 les Corbeaux from Domaine Clavelier is very red fruity this year, which comes as a bit of surprise, as I normally think of this vineyard as producing a very black fruity version of Gevrey. The wine is excellent, delivering a superb aromatic constellation of wild strawberries, cherries, complex minerality, lovely spice tones, a bit of spicy oak and a topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and very elegant in personality, with a sappy core, suave tannins and impeccable focus and grip on the long, complex and vibrant finish. A beautiful bottle of Corbeaux in the making. 2028-2075. **92+**.

**2016 Vosne- Romanée “aux Brûlées”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2016 Clavelier aux Brûlées is an outstanding wine in the making. The bouquet is deep, pure and sappy, wafting from the glass in a mix of red plums, black raspberries, woodsmoke, duck, raw cocoa, a very complex base of soil tones, Vosne spices and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and notably sappy at the core, with beautiful soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and energetic finish. Fine juice. 2026-2075. **93.**

**2016 Vosne- Romanée “les Beaumonts”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2016 les Beaumonts here is also outstanding. The nose delivers a fine constellation of black cherries, plums, raw cocoa, gamebird, dark soil tones, a touch of cedar and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full and still quite primary, with a sappy core, excellent soil signature, ripe, suave tannins and a very long, pure and dancing finish. The inherent elegance of the 2016 vintage has really worked its magic on this excellent Beaumonts! 2028-2075. **93.**

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “les Noirots”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

Despite the heavy frost damage in the domaine’s parcel of Noirots, these old vines have produced a lovely wine in 2016. The wine is one hundred percent whole clusters this year (perhaps to help fill the fermenter?) and the single *pièce* here was a one wine barrel. It is too bad that there will only be twenty-five cases of this wine, as it is lovely, offering up a complex bouquet of cherries, red plums, an exotic touch of lavender, gamebird, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke and still a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and already velvety on the attack, with a sappy core, lovely focus and grip, moderate tannins and a long, vibrant and refined finish. 2025-2075. **92.**

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “Combe d’Orveau”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The Clavelier parcel in Combe d’Orveau is one *hectare* in size, but the frost was so bad here that he was only able to get three barrels of wine out of here in 2016. If I recall correctly, one-quarter of the parcel had been replanted back in 2010 and is not used in this cuvée, but that still leaves three-quarters of a *hectare* of older vines producing only three barrels of wine! In any event, despite the draconian yields, this wine has turned out beautifully in 2016, offering up a superb bouquet of red and black cherries, plums, woodsmoke, gamebird, chalky soil tones, a touch of vanillin oak and lovely topnotes of violets and roses. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with a great signature of soil, fine-grained tannins and a very long, vibrant and complex finish. There is no signs of any diminution of energy from the frosts in this wine, which is stellar! 2028-2075. **93.**

**2016 Nuits St. Georges “les Cras”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

As les Cras is located on the Vosne side of Nuits, there was little or no frost damage here and these great old vines (all at least seventy-five years of age) have excelled in 2016. The gorgeous nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of black cherries, sweet dark berries, a complex base of soil tones, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, gamebird and a nice touch of Vosne-like spices in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven in personality, with a sappy core, excellent balance, fine-grained tannins and a long, nascently complex and youthful finish. This is going to be terrific in the fullness of time, but it will need a good ten to twelve years’ worth of bottle age to really start to stir. 2028-2075. **93+.**

**2016 Corton “Rognet”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2016 Corton “Rognet” from Bruno Clavelier has also turned out beautifully. This will be a very, very elegant example of Corton when it is ready to drink, as the bouquet delivers

a complex and vibrant blend of red and black cherries, plums, raw cocoa, an excellent base of soil, spiced meats, a touch of coriander and a discreet base of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, soil-driven and full, with a sappy core, great focus and grip, ripe, seamless tannins, tangy acids and a very, very long, nascently complex and utterly complete finish. Great juice. 2030-2085. **94.**

### **Domaine Alain Michelot (Nuits St. Georges)**

*When I contacted Elodie Michelot back in the fall of last year about organizing a visit in November to taste her 2016s, she opined that the spring would be better, as the malolactic fermentations here this year were very late. I happily acceded to her wishes, as my November schedule is always too packed in any case, but still found several of the 2016s here in the midst of recovery from their malos in early March. The wines that had finished up their malos here a bit earlier were absolutely singing, so there is little doubt that this is an excellent vintage chez Michelot, but not everything was happy about being shown on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March of this year. None of the wines here had been racked yet, as a few had just completed their malolactic fermentations at the end of February! The frost damage in Nuits St. Georges was centered upon the band of premier crus south of the center of town, where the Michelot family has most of their holdings, so yields are down here in 2016, but Elodie seemed quite philosophical about this, as she noted that “it is easier to take the short crop of 2016 when you have this many barrels of 2017 fermenting in the cellars!” One of her hardest hit cuvées in 2016 was the domaine’s lovely example of Bourgogne Rouge, as there are only nine and a half barrels of this wine here in 2016, when the Michelots normally have fully twenty-five casks! With some of her top premier crus in Nuits, Elodie counted herself lucky, as les Cailles was only down about twenty percent, les Vaucraains only ten percent and la Richemone was spared completely. And of course, there was no frost in Morey St. Denis in 2016 and the two Michelot wines from this village have proper yields and showed excellent potential. Where the wines were either still a bit gassy from the recent completion of their malos, or a bit too reduced to take a precise note, I have scored them within a small range, but would expect all of these wines to eventually place at the top number in the range. Where the wines were a bit less grumpy, I have given them a single digit score. It is a very good vintage chez Michelot, but this is not news, as this has been one of the most consistently excellent domaines in the Côte de Nuits in the new millennium!*

### **2016 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Alain Michelot**

Though this is one of the hardest hit cuvées in the cellar by the frost damage of 2016, the wine was showing no ill effects and was really singing at the time of my visit. This is quite a sappy example, offering up a lovely bouquet of black cherries, cassis, bitter chocolate, woodsmoke and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and generous at the core, with moderate tannins, tangy acids and good balance and grip on the sneaky long finish. A fine example. 2021-2040. **88.**

### **2016 Morey St. Denis- Domaine Alain Michelot**

The malo here was one of the later to finish and the wine was a bit reduced at the time of my visit, but racking was set to start the following day. Underneath the reduction is a very good wine in the making, offering up real purity in its fruit component of black cherries, dark berries, raw cocoa, woodsmoke and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and will be both sappy at the core and very precise, with fine-grained, medium tannins and good tangy bounce on the backend. 2024-2055. **89-90.**



### **2016 Nuits St. Georges “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

In contrast to the grumpy Morey AC, the old vine Nuits *villages* from 2016 was in beautiful form and very happy to be tasted. This is a beautiful and very pure young Nuits, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of sappy dark berries, black cherries, dark chocolate, a complex base of soil tones and a fine note of *pigeon* in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with lovely transparency, supple tannins and a long, poised and nascently complex finish. This is going to be an excellent *villages*. 2026-2060. **91.**

### **2016 Morey St. Denis “les Charrières”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

The 2016 Michelot les Charrières was also in fine form at the time of my visit. This is a quintessentially elegant and soil-driven example of the vintage, delivering superb aromatic complexity in its mélange of cassis, dark berries, espresso, gamebird, a classy base of dark soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is very pure, focused and refined, with its full-bodied format sporting a sappy core, fine soil inflection, ripe, seamless tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. Lovely juice in the making. 2026-2065+. **92.**

### **2016 Nuits St. Georges “la Richemone”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

The 2016 la Richemone *chez* Michelot is a beautiful wine, offering up a pure and sappy nose of black cherries, sweet cassis, a nice touch of nutskin, gamebird, a complex base of dark soil tones and a touch of raw cocoa in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, bright and potentially sappy at the core, with fine transparency, lovely focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and a long, vibrant and very precise finish. This is going to be a very, very elegant rendition of la Richemone when it is ready to drink! 2027-2065+. **93.**

### **2016 Nuits St. Georges “les Cailles”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

The malo here had just finished at the time of my visit. Elodie Michelot noted that the frost damage here was confined mostly to the bottom of her rows in Cailles, with the upper two-thirds of each row nearly untouched, so the yields ended up being better than she had feared right after the frost. This still has a bit of CO<sub>2</sub> in it from the malo, but with some coaxing, it is easy to see that it is going to be very good indeed, as it eventually offers up scents of black plums, black cherries, espresso, quail and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with ripe tannins, a good core and impressive length and grip. The wine was still obviously agitated at the time of my visit, but there is real quality waiting in the wings here. 2027-2070. **92-93+.**

### **2016 Nuits St. Georges “Champs Perdrix”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

The Michelots' vines in Champs Perdrix celebrated their eightieth birthday in 2016. I was hoping to get a good look at this wine, but it too had a very late finish to its malo and was even more shut down than the les Cailles. There is plenty of pure and sappy black fruit here, as well as a very good soil signature, but the wine was grumpy and hard to take a proper note on. The palate is full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine-grained tannins, tangy acids and impressive length. I am sure this will be excellent, but it was not happy about being disturbed in early March! 2027-2065+. **91-93.**

### **2016 Nuits St. Georges “Chaignots”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

After a couple of late malo cuvées, it was nice to find the Chaignots in fine form and absolutely singing at the time of my visit. This is going to be a superb 2016, as the nose soars from the glass in a beautifully black fruity blend of black cherries and plums, bitter chocolate, gamebird, dark soil tones and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and focused, with a very sappy core, superb soil signature, ripe, suave tannins and great

length and grip on the complex and perfectly balanced finish. A superb Chaignots in the making! 2026-2065. **93+**.

**2016 Nuits St. Georges “les Vaucrains”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

The 2016 Vaucrains *chez* Michelot was also showing well in early March. The nose delivers a fine and very pure aromatic constellation of black cherries, sweet dark berries, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, mineral soil nuances and a touch of violet in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, vibrant and quite elegant in profile for a young Vaucrains, with a superb core of fruit, fine-grained tannins and a long, vibrant and beautifully balanced finish. Fine juice. 2028-2075. **93+**.

**2016 Nuits St. Georges “Les St. Georges”- Domaine Alain Michelot**

The Les St. Georges here in 2016 is also excellent, but with the malo finishing up a bit later than the Vaucrains or Chaignots, there was still a touch of gas on the backend and it was harder to get a precise read on the wine. The nose had recovered from the malo beautifully and offered up scents of cassis, black cherries, bitter chocolate, a touch of graphite, a very complex base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is a bit grumpier, but long, full-bodied and classy, with ripe, well-integrated tannins and tangy acids. I am sure this will be exceptional. 2029-2070. **93-94+**.



*March 1<sup>st</sup> snow in Clos Vougeot- welcomed by vignerons, but a touch difficult to get around in for tastings.*

### **2016 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Alain Michelot**

Since the very first vintage of 2010, Domaine Michelot's Clos Vougeot has been one of the very finest examples made in the vineyard, and the 2016 is again going to be absolutely stellar. Happily, the wine was showing very well in early March, with the bouquet jumping from the glass in a stunning blend of red and black cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, *pigeon*, a very complex base of soil tones and a delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with great purity and transparency, fine-grained tannins, bright, seamless acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long and complex finish. *Chapeau!* 2029-2075+. **95.**

### **2016 Nuits St. Georges "la Perrière Noblot" Blanc- Domaine Alain Michelot**

As is customary here, the 2016 la Perrières Noblot Blanc was bottled at the end of September of 2017. The frost damage cut back yields by twenty percent in 2016. The wine is simply lovely, with the nose delivering scents of apple, a touch of quince, fresh almond, chalky soil tones and a topnote of acacia blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and very elegant in personality, with a good core, fine backend grip and a long, zesty and complex finish. Fine juice. 2019-2040+. **91+**.

### **Domaine Antonin Guyon (Savigny-lès-Beaune)**

*Not surprisingly, given the location of a great many of the vineyards in the Domaine Guyon portfolio, frost damage was quite severe in several of their parcels in 2016 and yields are microscopic in some of these. For example, the domaine had only five casks (out of a normal cropload of thirty!) of their Chorey-lès-Beaune, their Chambolle "les Cras" cuvée was down by seventy-five percent, the Savigny "les Goudelettes" was off by ninety percent and in their Pernand "Sous Frétilles" they had only two casks out of a normal thirty. There is no Pernand "les Vergelesses" at all this year. So, certain bottlings were absolutely decimated by the frost damage, but others had pretty good yields to help compensate a bit, as their two red Cortons were barely frosted, their Corton-Charlemagne also was pretty lucky and of course, they had no frost in their parcels in Gevrey-Chambertin as well. So, as Monsieur Guyon noted, things could have been worse! The domaine was just getting rolling with bottling at the time of my visit in early March, so the Bourgogne Blanc, Sous Frétilles and Puligny "Pucelles" had just been bottled (the Pucelles on the day I was there, so we did not taste it), as well as the Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits. Everything else had been assembled several weeks prior to my visit in anticipation of bottling, so the wines were showing well on March 5<sup>th</sup>. We did not taste the Charmes-Chambertin this year.*

### ***Vins Rouges***

#### **2016 Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits- Dominique Guyon**

The domaine was lucky to miss the frost in their vineyards that go into the Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits bottling, and this has turned out pretty well. It offers up a quite red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, fresh herbs, woodsmoke and a nice touch of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and nicely generous on the attack, with a good core and just a touch of backend tannin on the sneaky long finish. A good example. 2019-2030. **87+**.

#### **2016 Chorey-lès-Beaune "Champs Longs"- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2016 Champs Long bottling from Chorey has turned out very nicely, particularly when one considers how badly this parcel was frosted, as the wine has a very suave and polished palate profile and does not show any of the coarseness that plagues some frost-damaged wines.

The bouquet is quite black fruity this year, delivering a fine blend of cassis, black cherries, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a nice touch of raw cocoa in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and nicely sappy at the core, with good focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and very good balance on the long finish. A classy *villages*. 2022-2045+. **89.**

**2016 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Goudelettes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

In contrast to the vibrant Chorey 2016 *chez* Guyon, the severe frost damage here in les Goudelettes is a bit evident in the finished wine, as this does not show the same energy as all of the other reds this year. It is still a good wine, but with ninety percent of the vineyard wiped out, the wine lacks a bit of vibrancy on the backend. The bouquet is quite good, offering up scents of black cherries, fresh herbs, bonfire, dark soil tones and a bit of roasted venison. On the palate the wine is deep, full and ripely tannic, with a good core, but not a lot of lift on the backend. Not bad, considering the damage in the vineyards, but not a great vintage for this consistently fine wine. 2024-2045. **87.**

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “les Cras”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

We did not taste the Clos du Village bottling from 2016 during my visit, and I cannot recall now if the wine was not produced or was just not ready to be shown. In any case, the les Cras *villages* was showing very well, despite three-quarters of the crop having been wiped out by frost. This has good energy on the palate and was in a far better place for tasting than the Chorey, offering up a black fruity nose of black cherries, espresso, gamebird, woodsmoke, a touch of mustard seed, a good base of soil and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripely tannic, with good depth of fruit at the core, nascent complexity and a long, youthful and chewy finish. Perhaps a little of this cuvée’s customary charm out of the blocks has been sacrificed to the frost, but there is plenty of merit here and all that will be needed is a bit of bottle age to allow the wine to blossom. 2026-2050. **89+.**

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Justice”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

I have tasted some very good examples of la Justice from the 2016 vintage and the Domaine Guyon version is yet another. The bouquet is quite red fruity, offering up scents of cherries, beetroot, woodsmoke, fresh herbs, raw cocoa, a lovely base of soil tones and a deft framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a sappy core of fruit, tangy acids, fine-grained tannins and impressive length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. This needs some time in the cellar, but will be an excellent *villages*. 2024-2055. **90.**

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Carougeot”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The Gevrey “Carougeot” bottling is produced from forty-six year-old vines that are right in their prime, and the wine has turned out beautifully in 2016. The wine is pure and sappy on the nose, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of red and black cherries, dark soil tones, grilled meats, a touch of mustard seed, a touch of cedar and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and shows lovely mid-palate depth, with good soil signature and a long, moderately tannic and vibrant finish. Good juice. 2021-2055. **91.**

**2016 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

I always like the Guyon family’s Clos des Chênes and the 2016 is another fine example in the making. The wine is quite a bit more red fruity in personality than in many vintages, offering up a fine aromatic constellation of red plums, cherries, gamebird, a complex base of soil, mustard seed, woodsmoke and a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and tangy, with a sappy core, excellent transparency, fine-grained tannins and lovely grip on the long and complex finish. 2026-2060. **92+.**

### **2016 Aloxe-Corton “les Fournières”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

I did not note how badly the two premier crus in Aloxe were hit by the frost of 2016, but given where they are located, I have to believe that they were probably pretty badly frosted and down at least half in this vintage. The 2016 les Fournières was showing very well at the time of my visit, offering up a fine bouquet of red and black cherries, bonfire, venison, iron-like soil tones and raw cocoa. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy at the core, with fine soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, complex and promising finish. 2022-255. **91.**

### **2016 Aloxe-Corton “les Vercots”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2016 les Vercots *chez* Guyon is also a good example of the vintage, but it is a bit more bound up in its structure out of the blocks than the les Fournières. The bouquet delivers scents of black cherries, a bit of dark berry, woodsmoke, game, dark chocolate and stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, chewy and still fairly primary, with a good core, firm tannins and a long, well-balanced finish. This will need a few more years in the cellar than the les Fournières before it starts to blossom. 2025-2055. **90.**

### **2016 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2016 Bressandes from Domaine Guyon was raised in forty percent new oak this year and included fifty percent whole clusters. This is a superb bottle of Corton on the making, wafting from the glass in a sophisticated mix of red and black cherries, venison, complex, stony minerality, Corton spice tones, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, excellent soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a very long, vibrant and complex finish. High class juice. 2027-2075. **94.**

### **2016 Corton “Clos du Roy”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2016 Domaine Guyon Clos du Roy is also outstanding and has just a touch more inherent complexity to it than the excellent Bressandes, and seems likely to just nose that wine out at the wire this year for “best in cellar” awards. It was raised in the same percentage of new oak and included about the same amount of whole clusters this year. This is a superb young wine, delivering a deep and sappy bouquet of red plums, cherries, a hint of orange peel, a very complex base of soil, raw cocoa, gamebird, a touch of stem spice and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and seamlessly balanced, with a sappy core, great transparency and grip, ripe, suave tannins and a very, very long, complex finish. Outstanding! 2028-2075+. **95.**

## ***Vins Blancs***

### **2016 Bourgogne Blanc- Dominique Guyon**

The 2016 Bourgogne Blanc from Monsieur Guyon is a pretty and forward example of the vintage, offering up scents of green apple, a touch of quince, chalky soil tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is full, crisp and wide open, with a good core and a pretty laid back finish. This will make good early drinking. 2018-2025. **87.**

### **2016 Pernand Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles” Blanc- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

As I noted in the introduction, the Guyon family’s parcel in Sous Frétilles was devastated by the frost, so there are only two casks of this lovely wine in the cellars this year. The wine (miraculously) seems to have escaped the diminished energy syndrome that plagues many of the wines from the most heavily frost-damaged parcels, as this wine is bright, nicely structured and vibrant. The nose is pure and fairly reserved out of the blocks, offering up scents of pear, apple, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and bouncy, with a fine core, good transparency and a long, zesty finish. Good juice. 2020-2040. **90.**

### **2016 Meursault “Charmes Dessus”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2016 Charmes Dessus from Domaine Guyon has just been racked in preparation for bottling and was still a bit out of sorts at the time of my visit. The nose was less agitated and showed lovely promise in its constellation of lemon, apple, chalky minerality, hazelnut, lemon grass and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine was a bit more unsettled, but was full, solid at the core, nicely mineral and bouncy on the finish. I am sure this will be very good, as there was no frost here and this is consistently excellent *chez* Guyon, but it was grumpy enough that I did not want to give it a precise score. Expect it to eventually land at the upper limit of the range. 2020-2045. **91-93.**

### **2016 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

Happily, the 2016 Corton-Charlemagne from Domaine Antonin Guyon was spot on and absolutely singing at the time of my visit. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a refined blend of apple, pear, fresh almond, a complex base of chalky soil tones, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent focus and grip, crisp acids and superb balance and cut on the long, nascently complex and properly reserved finish. A classic in the making. 2021-2050. **94.**



*This was truly the “Clos Blanc” on the first of March this year, as late snow frosted the Côte d’Or.*

### **Domaine Rollin Père et Fils (Pernand-Vergelesses)**

*Domaine Rollin Père et Fils has made excellent 2016s, albeit, not all that many of them. Rémi Rollin was in quite good spirits at the time of my visit, despite frost damage at the family domaine in Pernand having knocked down yields by fully seventy percent in this vintage. The reason for this was probably the combination of a full cellar of 2017s bubbling away in cask, coupled with the superb quality of the 2016s that were in bottle- whose sole problem is very short quantities with several of the cuvées. The domaine's vines that go into making up their Haute Côtes de Beaune bottlings (planted just outside of the communal border of Pernand) were completely wiped out by the frost, and there is also no Île des Vergelesses bottling in 2016, as this too was so heavily frost damaged that the tiny amount of bunches collected went into the Pernand AC bottling. In their old vine holding in the vineyard of les Grands Liards in Savigny-lès-Beaune, half of the crop was wiped out by frost. As was the case with several domaines with significant holdings on the hill of Corton, the silver lining of the great freeze of 2016 was that the Rollin's superb parcel of Corton-Charlemagne (in le Charlemagne) was virtually untouched by frost in 2016, and Monsieur Rollin noted that "our yields in le Charlemagne in 2016 were actually better than they were in the vintage of 2017!" The 2016 red wines at the domaine had been bottled at the start of the new year, with most of the white wine cuvées having been bottled at the end of August of 2017, with the Corton-Charlemagne bottled just ahead of the red wines. All of the wines were showing beautifully at the time of my visit on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March, and 2016 is once again a very, very strong vintage chez Rollin.*

### **Vins Blancs**

#### **2016 Pernand Vergelesses Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

The Pernand Blanc from Domaine Rollin is usually composed of equal parts from three different *lieux à dits* in the village, but in 2016, Rémi Rollin noted that this is almost entirely from only one of them, la Caradeux in this vintage, as the crop in the other two were almost completely wiped out by frost and the cuvée is down by fully eighty percent in this vintage. The wine itself has turned out very nicely, offering up a bright and classic nose of apple, pear, lime zest, superb minerality, spring flowers and an esthery touch of beeswax in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a wide open personality, good acids and grip and a long, complex and succulent finish. This will not make old bones, but it will offer plenty of pleasure from the moment of release. 2018-2030. **89.**

#### **2016 Pernand Vergelesses "les Clous" Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

The Domaine Rollin 2016 les Clous is also a fine wine in the making, with more mineral drive and precision than the juicy Pernand AC. The bouquet is flat out lovely, offering up an expressive constellation of apple, pear, chalky minerality, white lilies, citrus zest and a discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and laser-like in its focus, with a fine core, impressive nascent complexity and a long, energetic and zesty finish. This shares a nice touch of generosity on the attack with the Pernand *villages* bottling, but has better cut and grip, as well as a proper sense of reserve on the backend that augurs very well for its future evolution in bottle. I would try to give it three or four years in the cellar to allow it to truly blossom. 2022-2040+. **91.**

#### **2016 Pernand Vergelesses "Sous Frétilles" Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

The 2016 Sous Frétilles *chez* Rollin is also an excellent wine in the making. The bouquet is young and very refined, offering up scents of apple, pear, a touch of almond, a fine base of limestone soil tones, a discreet base of vanillin oak and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the

palate the wine is complex, full and sports excellent mid-palate depth, with bright, suave acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long, energetic and very precise finish. Fine, fine juice in the making. 2021-2045. **92.**

#### **2016 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

The 2016 Corton-Charlemagne from Domaine Rollin is an absolute classic in the making. The nose soars from the glass in a youthful blaze of pear, apple, complex, chalky minerality, a touch of beeswax, white flowers, vanillin oak and a touch of pink grapefruit in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with superb focus and grip, a bright, seamless structure and outstanding balance on the very, very long and youthful finish. This will need some time to properly emerge and start to deliver its secondary and tertiary layers of complexity, but it will be stunning when it is ready to drink! 2024-2065. **95.**

#### ***Vins Rouges***

#### **2016 Pernand Vergelesses- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

The 2016 Pernand *villages* bottling was showing beautifully in early March, with lovely structural elements, fine focus and purity and a seriously sappy element in the mid-palate that was very promising. The nose is complex and vibrant, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of cherries, red plums, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke, raw cocoa and *pigeon*. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and shows an excellent core for an AC, with a touch of suave tannin and fine length and grip on the soil-driven finish. Classy *villages*! 2020-2040. **89+.**

#### **2016 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Grands Liards”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

These sixty year-old vines in Grands Liards weathered the frost damage pretty well, “only” being down fifty percent in yield in 2016. The wine has turned out beautifully, offering up a complex, quite black fruity bouquet of cassis, black cherries, stony minerality, raw cocoa, a nice touch of currant leaf and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent in personality, with a fine core, modest tannins and a long, focused and tangy finish. This will want three or four years in the cellar to start to blossom, but should offer early accessibility for this *terroir* and be a lovely bottle over the course of its lifetime. 2021-2050. **90+.**

#### **2016 Aloxe-Corton- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

The 2016 Aloxe-Corton AC from Monsieur Rollin is also quite black fruity this year, with the nose jumping from the glass in a refined blend of black cherries, plums, bitter chocolate, gamebird, lovely, Aloxe spice tones, dark soil and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is suave, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with fine soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and a long, classy and nascently complex finish. This too is going to be a simply delicious village wine with a bit of bottle age. 2021-2050. **90.**

#### **2016 Pernand Vergelesses “les Vergelesses”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

The 2016 les Vergelesses *chez* Rollin is outstanding, with only the short yields here the blemish on the vintage for this bottling. The bouquet is black fruity, pure and shows already impressive complexity in its constellation of cassis, black cherries, espresso, venison, dark soil tones and a fine topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a sappy core of black fruit, excellent focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and a long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. Fine, fine juice in the making. 2026-2060+. **92.**

#### **2016 Pernand Vergelesses “les Fichots”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

As I have mentioned in the past, these are the oldest vines that the Rollin family cultivates, with two-thirds of the vines more than sixty years of age and the other third now in



excess of eighty years-old. As Monsieur Rollin noted, the yields here in 2016 were not a whole lot different than most vintages, as these old vines never give a large crop. The wine is going to be outstanding in this vintage, with the nose jumping from the glass in a superb blend of sweet dark berries, black cherries, a touch of currant leaf, bitter chocolate, gamebird and a complex base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and perfectly balanced, with lovely, old vine sappiness in the mid-palate, superb soil signature and a long, focused and ripely tannic finish. 2026-2060+. **92+**.



*Rémi Rollin in his tasting room at his fine domaine in Pernand-Vergelesses.*

### ***And One 2015 Rouge***

#### **2015 Pernand Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils**

As I missed visiting Domaine Rollin last spring, due to knee surgery, Monsieur Rollin kindly opened up the 2015 Île de Vergelesses for me to taste at the end of our visit. This is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a ripe and very precise bouquet of red and black cherries, venison, stony minerality, espresso, a bit of bonfire and a topnote of Corton spice tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent for the vintage, with a rock solid core, tangy acids and ripe, well-integrated tannins perking up the long and youthful finish. This will be excellent, but the inherent structure that lies under the plush fruit of 2015 is already quite apparent here and this will need some extended cellaring to start to stir. But, it will be an excellent example of the vintage when has blossomed. 2028-2075. **92+**.

### **Domaine Clos de la Chapelle (Beaune)**

*Mark O'Connell was very, very happy with the quality of his 2016s, but yields varied enormously from cuvée to cuvée, depending on the frost damage. Given all of the hail damage here (as has been the case with so many domaines with vines based primarily in Volnay and Pommard) since the 2011 vintage, it is unfortunate that the 2016 vintage was once again such a short crop – this year due to the severe frost. Only the 2015 vintage has had respectable yields since the debut vintage here of 2010, but as the vines were recovering from all of the hail in the preceding three vintages, the average yield at Domaine de la Chapelle in 2015 was hardly generous: twenty-two hectoliters per hectare! The domaine started harvesting on September 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2016 and had brought the entire crop in by the 29<sup>th</sup> of the month. As is the standard operating procedure at Domaine Clos de la Chapelle, all of the 2016s had already been bottled at the time of my March visit, with the wines having been bottled in January and early February of 2018, which is perhaps a month later than usual, but reflects the later start to the harvest in 2016. All of the 2016s from Domaine Clos de la Chapelle that I tasted here were outstanding, but some of the yields are absolutely miniscule, as for example, there is only a half cask of the beautiful Pernand Blanc premier cru bottling of Sous Frétilles in 2016, and the Beaune “Reversées” Blanc was down by fully fifty percent as well. The domaine’s parcel of vines in Corton-Charlemagne are located over on the Pernand-Vergelesses side of the hill, which was not a benefit in 2016, as this was the section that was hit hard by frost and there are only two barrels of Corton-Charlemagne 2016 in the cellars here this year. There is not much more wine in several of the premier cru reds as well at the domaine, with only a single barrel of Beaune “Teurons”, though yields were a bit better in their other Beaune premier cru of Champs Pimont this year. As Mark O'Connell noted, “regarding our Beaune wines, we were lucky that the rows of vines in Champs Pimont continue quite a way up the hill, and only the bottom third of each row was frosted- we ended up with thirty hectoliters per hectare here of really beautiful-looking grapes- but anything down at the bottom of the slope, like our parcels in Teurons and Reversées, were really hit hard by the frost.” In the commune of Volnay, things were not a lot better, as there are only six casks of the flagship Volnay “Clos de la Chapelle” but there were three barrels from their small slice of Taillepieds in 2016, so this was a bit better, as it is not too far off a normal crop for them. Happily, the domaine’s parcels in the two superb Pommard premier crus here (Chanlins and Grandes Epenots) were both untouched by the frost, and the Corton “Bressandes” was “only” down by thirty percent, which is not too bad in comparison to several of the other cuvées, so not all of the 2016 yields were microscopic at Domaine Clos de la Chapelle.*

*The other Corton red in the domaine’s lineup of the last several years, Rognet, was not produced in 2016, as it has been included in part of the trade to separate Domaine Clos de la Chapelle completely from Maison Champy with the latter having been purchased by new owners in 2016. As Mark O'Connell explained, “with the way French law is set up, we had to be pretty well-integrated legally into Maison Champy to allow them to farm our vineyards for us and for us to make wines in the same cuverie, so there had to be some give and take between us and the new owners of Maison Champy once they came in, to allow for a complete and fast separation between the two domaines.” He continued, “as we had been married to Champy in terms of the law, we had negotiated in advance that whoever came in and bought Champy knew that we were going to be divorced at that time- giving up Rognet was part of the settlement, though we received a bit more Reversées from Champy as part of the compensation for handing over our*

*parcel in Rognet to the new owners.” Consequently, Domaine de la Chapelle will have new cellars to work out of next year in Bligny-lès-Beaune and will be completely independent from here on out. The marriage of convenience with Maison Champy worked out very well from 2010 to 2016 for both parties and everyone parted quite amicably, but I am already looking forward to tasting the 2017s from Domaine de la Chapelle next year and seeing how the second chapter here unfolds! But, there will be no more Corton “Rognet” produced from the domaine after the lovely 2015 version.*

### ***Vins Blancs***

#### **2016 Beaune “Reversées” Blanc- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

Though the frost took half the crop here in 2016, the wine has turned out beautifully. The wine had been bottled exactly one month prior to my visit on March 5<sup>th</sup> and had recovered nicely, offering up a bright and elegant bouquet of apple, peach, a lovely base of soil tones, citrus peel and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely racy in profile, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, zesty finish. Lovely juice that will drink very nicely with just a year or two in the cellar. 2020-2035+. **90+**.

#### **2016 Pernand-Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles”- Domaine Clos la Chapelle**

The domaine only owns one-third of a *hectare* of vines in Sous Frétilles, so there is never a large number of bottles of this wine available, but the 2016, with only a half cask, is going to be very hard to find. But, given how well it was showing in March, it will be worth the extra effort to find a few bottles, as the wine is outstanding! The bouquet jumps from the glass in a beautiful blend of pear, passion fruit, a complex base of chalky minerality, a touch of vanillin oak and a floral topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a lovely core, great focus and grip and a long, snappy and perfectly balanced finish. Classy juice! 2020-2040. **92+**.

#### **2016 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

Yields here were brutally low because of the frost damage, with Mark O’Connell reporting that they were only able to realize fifteen hectoliters per hectare in the vineyard in 2016. This amounted to two barrels, with one of them new this year. The wine is outstanding, coming in at around 12.5 percent alcohol and offering up a stunning young nose of apple, pear, fresh almond, a very refined signature of limestone minerality, orange zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and rock solid at the core, with great mineral drive, bright, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the focused, pure and still quite primary finish. Great Corton Charlie in the making. 2022-2050+. **95**.

### ***Vins Rouges***

#### **2016 Beaune “les Teurons”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

The single barrel of Teurons here this year was raised in a one wine cask. The 2016 Teurons was still fairly closed from its bottling, but showed lovely promise in its aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, a touch of fresh thyme, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, gamebird and a bit of cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, balanced and very transparent in profile, with a good core, moderate tannins and impressive focus and grip on the long and well-balanced finish. 2026-2050. **89-90**.

#### **2016 Beaune “Champs Pimont”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

With only the bottom third of each row frosted in the domaine’s holdings in Champs Pimont, the yields here were a pretty respectable thirty hectoliters per hectare in 2016. This is

only the second vintage of this bottling from Monsieur O’Connell and his team and it is outstanding, wafting from the glass in a fine aromatic blend of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, gamebird, a lovely base of soil, a hint of cedar and a topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a sappy core, lovely soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and tangy finish. Superb Beaune premier cru! 2025-2060. **91+**.

**2016 Volnay “en Carelle”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

The 2016 en Carelle from Mark O’Connell and his team is a very, very promising example of the vintage. The bouquet is deep, pure and nicely black fruity in personality, offering up a refined blend of cassis, black plum, bitter chocolate, dark soil tones, venison, a touch of cedar and a lovely topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is transparent, focused, full-bodied and nicely sappy at the core, with suave tannins, excellent balance and a long, nascently complex and elegant finish. All this lovely bottle of Volnay will need is a bit of time in the cellar to blossom. 2026-2060. **91+**.

**2016 Volnay “Clos de la Chapelle”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

Only one of the six barrels used for the 2016 Clos de la Chapelle was new, and this is, to my palate, the single finest vintage of this *monopole* that the domaine has yet produced! The great nose soars from the glass in a sappy blend of cassis, sweet dark berries, *pigeon*, raw cocoa, a touch of currant leaf, a gorgeous base of soil tones and just a hint of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows superb mid-palate depth, with a very elegant and suave attack, lovely backend mineral drive, fine-grained tannins and a long, vibrant and very complex finish. This is a great young bottle of Volnay! 2026-2075. **94+**.

**2016 Volnay “Taillepieds”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

The 2016 Clos de la Chapelle was completely destemmed (as is the custom here for that wine), but the Taillepieds included fifty percent whole clusters this year. One of the three casks used for the *elevage* of the wine was new in 2016 and the wine has turned out beautifully as well. The bouquet delivers a fine blend of cassis, dark berries, espresso, currant leaf, a fine base of dark soil tones, gamebird and a fine, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with ripe, well-integrated tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long, poised and well balanced finish. This too is stellar in 2016! 2028-2075. **94**.

**2016 Pommard “Chanlins” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

Happily, there was no frost here in 2016, and as these vines close in on their ninetieth birthday (which will take place in the vintage of 2018), they are producing one of the most beautiful examples of Pommard in the village. The nose here wafts from the glass in a stunning blend of red plums, cherries, raw cocoa, gamebird, woodsmoke, a nice touch of mustard seed, a beautiful base of soil and just a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, transparent and sappy at the core, with great focus and balance, a very elegant structural chassis and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. The inherent elegance of the 2016 vintage is very much on display here! 2028-2060+. **94**.

**2016 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

The 2016 Grands Epenots from Domaine de la Chapelle is also a stellar young wine. The aromatic constellation delivers scents of red and black cherries, *pigeon*, woodsmoke, a very complex base of soil, espresso and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and potentially very, very complex, with a rock solid core, fine-grained tannins, outstanding focus and balance and a long, youthful and elegant finish. This is every bit as refined in profile as the

Chanlins old vine bottling, and will probably just edge it out by a nose over their long lives in bottle. Simply great Pommard in the making! 2028-2065. **94+**.

### **2016 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

With thirty percent of the crop lost to frost damage in 2016, there are two and a half barrels of Bressandes in the cellars here this year, with one of the full casks new. This is another outstanding wine in the making, offering up a deep and very pure bouquet of red and black cherries, a complex base of stony minerality, coffee, venison, raw cocoa, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with great backend mineral drive, ripe, suave tannins and superb length and grip on the focused and utterly classic finish. 2028-2075+. **95**.

### **Maison Louis Jadot (Beaune)**

*This was my first visit in a couple of vintages of Maison Louis Jadot and my timing was not ideal, as about half of their white lineup was in the process of being bottled, so the range of 2016s we tasted from this side of their ledger was a bit more limited than usual. All of the Pulignys and most of the Chassagne bottlings were in the midst of their mise and unavailable to taste, so we had to content ourselves with the wines from Meursault and the other communes of the Côte de Beaune. With all of the wines of Puligny and Chassagne (as well as the Corton-Charlemagne) right in the middle of bottling, this of course meant that none of the grand crus were available to sampling on the white wine side of the ledger, which was too bad, but timing is everything. I should note that I had a chance to taste the Meursault “Perrières” as well on this trip, but as it had just been assembled into tank in anticipation of bottling a few weeks down the road, it was shaken and out of sorts, so I did not take a note on the wine. However, we did have the chance to work through a very significant slice of the red wines in the cellar at Maison Jadot and the 2016 reds here are absolutely superb, which immediately took away any of the sting from a more limited lineup of white wines from the vintage. On this visit I had the pleasure to meet and taste with Amandine Brillanceau, Maison Jadot’s new assistant Chef de Cave, and our tasting was very enjoyable. I did not ask to taste any specific wines prior to arranging this visit and left it to the discretion of the maison which wines they would like to prepare samples of for the tasting, so some of my favorite bottlings from Louis Jadot were not sampled on this visit. As readers may recall from the large historical feature I wrote on Louis Jadot a few years ago, the domaine owns a very large percentage of the vineyards that they work with each year, though given the history of the estate, the ownership is split between vineyards owned by the Jadot family themselves from the earliest years of the maison, those purchased by Maison Jadot after the Kobrand Corporation purchased the estate, and those owned by the Gagey family. In the notes that follow, for the wines produced from vineyards owned by the Jadot family themselves, I have noted this by appending “Les Héritiers Louis Jadot” at the end of the title of the wine. For the wines produced from vineyards purchased by Maison Jadot after Kobrand bought this fine house, I have labeled these wines as hailing from “Domaine Louis Jadot”. For wines made from parcels owned by the Gagey family, this is noted by the appendage of “Domaine Gagey” to the name of the wine, and for wines made from purchased grapes or wine bought in cask, these wines are labeled as “Maison Louis Jadot”. As always, the wines were all very good, but special mention must go to the supremely elegant, terroir-specific and classic red wines from Maison Jadot this year, as they have captured every ounce of potential inherent in the vintage for red wines and will be absolute classics down the road!*



### ***Vins Blancs du Maison Jadot***

#### **2016 Santenay “Clos de Malte” Blanc- Domaine Louis Jadot**

There was no frost damage in the Clos de Malte this year and the wine has turned out very well indeed. The bouquet is very pretty, wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, lemon, a nice base of minerality and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and has a juicy core of fruit, with good acids and fine focus on the long, zesty finish. A lovely *villages* bottling. 2018-2030. **89.**

#### **2016 Santenay “les Gravières” Blanc- Maison Louis Jadot**

I really like the *terroir* of les Gravières, as I find it very accommodating to both chardonnay and pinot noir. The 2016 Blanc from Maison Jadot is a bit more properly reserved than the Clos de Malte Blanc, but shares the same zesty acidity and good mineral undertow. The bouquet offers up scents of apple, pear, chalky minerality, vanillin oak and a nice dollop of lime zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and quite long, with a rock solid core, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and very well-balanced finish. This will need a couple of years to blossom, but it is very good juice in the making. 2020-2035+. **90.**

#### **2016 Santenay “Clos Faubard” Blanc- Maison Louis Jadot**

The Clos Faubard is a new wine for Maison Jadot, as they purchased this vineyard in early 2017. This 2016 version was not vinified by the team at Jadot, but was brought in as part of the sale as a wine already in cask and made by the previous owners. It is a good wine, but we will really have to wait until 2017 to see what the real Louis Jadot version looks like from this premier cru. The nose is wide open and nicely expressive, delivering scents of lemon, pear, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-

bodied and succulent, with a good core and fine length and grip. Good solid juice, but not quite in the league of the les Gravières Blanc in 2016. 2018-2028. **88.**

**2016 Saint Romain Blanc- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 2016 Saint Romain Blanc from Maison Jadot is a lovely village wine. The team here decided to ferment half of this cuvée in stainless steel and half in barrel, giving the blend a nice, zesty personality on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a very attractive blend of pear, apple, lemon, a touch of *crème patissière* and a gentle base of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and juicy, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a nice tug of tension between the pure fruit and the bright acids on the long finish. Lovely wine. 2018-2030. **89+**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “Murgers des Dents de Chien”- Maison Louis Jadot**

Frost damage in Saint Aubin was quite substantial in 2016, so there are only three barrels of Murgers in the Jadot cellars this year. It is too bad, as the wine is really lovely, wafting from the glass in a fine aromatic blend of pear, apple, chalky soil tones, acacia blossoms and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, beautifully balanced and vibrant finish. 2019-2035. **90+**.

**2016 Pernand-Vergelesses “Combottes” Blanc- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

I cannot recall having ever tasted the Combottes bottling from Pernand during my previous visits to Maison Jadot, so perhaps this is a relatively new purchase by the Gagey family. The wine is very good in 2016, offering up a bright bouquet of lemon, pear, chalky soil tones, *crème patissière* and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and quite wide open in personality, with good bounce and grip on the long and zesty finish. There was quite a bit of frost damage in Pernand in 2016, and perhaps the very open style of this wine is a reflection of this? This will drink very well from the outset, but probably not make particularly old bones. 2018-2025. **89+**.

**2016 Pernand-Vergelesses “la Croix de Pierre” Blanc- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The 2016 la Croix de Pierre Blanc has more cut and grip than the Combottes in this vintage, while sharing the same perfumed and classy aromatic profile. The nose delivers a fine blend of apple, pear, a touch of orange zest, lovely minerality and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, elegant and nascently complex finish. Fine juice. 2018-2030. **91.**

**2016 Ladoix “Clou d’Orge” Blanc- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

This is another bottling that was new to me on this visit and I expect this too is another relatively new purchase by the Gagey family. The bouquet is very pretty and quite floral in profile, delivering scents of apple, pear, a load of spring flowers, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and quite vibrant in personality, with a good core, a wide open profile and very good length and grip on the zesty finish. This is an excellent village wine and will be a superb value. 2018-2028. **90.**

**2016 Savigny-lès-Beaune “Clos des Guettes” Blanc- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

As readers will recall from my November visit, probably no commune was hit worse with frost damage than Savigny-lès-Beaune in 2016, and the damage here shows a bit in a slight lack of energy in this wine, *vis à vis* many of the other white wines in the lineup this year. This is still a very tasty wine, but it will want drinking fairly early on, as it offers up scents of apple, pear, fresh almond, a nice base of soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite concentrated in the mid-palate, with solid framing acids and good length and

grip, but without the lift and zesty bounce found in so many other 2016 whites here this year. 2018-2025+. **89.**

**2016 Beaune “Bressandes” Blanc- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

The 2016 Beaune “Bressandes” Blanc from the Gagey family vineyard parcel is a lovely wine, with an open-knit personality that exudes charm and succulence. The nose wafts from the glass in a fine blend of apple pastry cream, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, juicy and ready to drink, with a good core, fine soil signature, bright acids and a long, poised and zesty finish. Good juice. 2018-2028. **90.**

**2016 Meursault “Narvaux”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The Narvaux from Louis Jadot is not a new wine here, but it began a new chapter in the 2016 vintage, as the maison was finally able to purchase the plot of vines here that they have been buying grapes from and making the wine for many years. This is very good in 2016, showing a nice sense of reserve on both the nose and palate that augurs very well for fine development in the bottle. The bouquet delivers scents of apple, pear, lemon, stony minerality and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and tightly-knit, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and impressive backend mineral drive on the nascently complex finish. Lovely juice. 2020-2040. **91.**

**2016 Meursault “Blagny”- Maison Louis Jadot**

There was no frost in the Blagny side of Meursault and the inherent elegance of the 2016 vintage seems to have really blessed this vineyard this year, as this is not the first really fine example of Blagny I have tasted in 2016. The Jadot version is refined and classy on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up scents of apple, pear, Almond, chalky minerality, vanillin oak and a fine topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, long and quite open on the attack, with a good core, lovely cut and grip and a long, complex and zesty finish. Very tasty juice. 2018-2035. **91+.**

**2016 Meursault “Charmes”- Maison Louis Jadot**

This particular cuvée of Charmes will be Domaine Louis Jadot in the future, for this parcel of vines came along with the purchase of the Santenay “Clos Faubard” in early 2017. However, the 2016 version was already made and was brought into the Jadot cellars in cask, so this wine was not made by the fine cellar team here in this vintage. The wine is good, but not up to the customary quality of Meursault “Charmes” from Maison Jadot, as it offers up a plump nose of apple, pear, hazelnuts, chalk and vanillin oak. The wine is deep, full-bodied and a touch four-square, with a good core and pretty good length and grip, but not the cut and lift one usually finds in Jadot Charmes. Good, solid wine, but again, like the Clos Faubard, we will have to wait until the 2017 vintage, when the Jadot cellar team makes the wine, to see what this is really about. 2020-2035. **88.**

**2016 Meursault “Genevrières”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

This was my favorite white in the 2016 range that I had a chance to taste from Maison Jadot, and it made me wonder what other really fine examples I was missing with my limited range of samples this year! The bouquet here is outstanding, jumping from the glass in a mix of pear, apple, passion fruit, salty soil tones, chalky, orange zest, vanillin oak and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full and laser-like in its focus, with a lovely core, excellent mineral drive and a long, nascently complex and nicely racy finish. A fine, fine example. 2021-2050. **93.**



### **2016 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot Clos de la Chapelle”- L. Jadot (Duc de Magenta)**

Along with the Marquis de Laguiche bottling of Morgeot, the Duc de Magenta bottling is probably the best-known example from this vineyard, as it hails from the very heart of Morgeot, and as the name implies, the vines here lie right next to the ancient chapel. The 2016 is an excellent wine and had no trouble following up the outstanding Genevrières this year, as it offers up a fine and complex nose of apple, lemon, chalky minerality, apple blossoms, vanillin oak and a nice touch of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full and vibrant, with a lovely core, fine focus and grip, very good soil signature and a long, poised and zesty finish. 2021-2050. **92.**



*Vines in the magical vineyard of Montrachet, under the fresh cover of a March 1<sup>st</sup> snow.*

### ***Vins Rouges du Maison Jadot***

#### **2016 Chorey-lès-Beaune “Beaumonts”- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

The 2016 Chorey-lès-Beaune “Beaumonts” from vines owned by the Gagey family is a lovely wine, offering up a bright and inviting bouquet of cherries, red plums, bonfire, a touch of caramel and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and very nicely soil-driven, with a good core, modest tannins and a nice sense of reserve out of the blocks that augurs very well for its future development. A fine value. 2021-2045. **88.**

### **2016 Santenay “Clos de Malte” Rouge- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The 2016 Clos de Malte Rouge is quite black fruity this year, at least at first glance, though a bit of nice red berry tones also emerge with some extended aeration. The bouquet is bright and complex, offering up scents of black cherries, cassis, dark soil tones, espresso, woodsmoke, a touch of fresh herbs and the aforementioned red berry element with a bit of breathing. On the palate the wine is full, focused and very well-balanced, with a good core, modest tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and bouncy finish. This is another very good value in 2016. 2022-2040+. **89.**

### **2016 Pernand-Vergelesses “Clos de la Croix de Pierre”- Les Héritiers Louis Jadot**

Despite significant frost damage in certain sectors of Pernand-Vergelesses, the Clos de la Croix de Pierre does not show any lack of energy or bounce, so I assume this vineyard was spared from the frost. The bouquet on the 2016 is excellent, offering up a beautiful mélange of cherries, red currants, woodsmoke, iron, coffee, just whisper of new oak and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full and complex, with a fine core, lovely transparency and focus, modest tannins and a long, vibrant and classy finish. Fine juice. 2022-2050. **90.**

### **2016 Savigny-lès-Beaune “la Dominode”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The 2016 la Dominode from Domaine Jadot is a very good wine, but the frost in Savigny this year seems to have given this wine a bit less energy than many of these other reds in the Jadot cellars. The bouquet is complex and nicely nuanced, offering up scents of red and black cherries, gamebird, a touch of Savigny spice tones, a good base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with suave, moderate tannins, good complexity and a long, nascently complex finish. Other than the lower energy level on the palate, all of the constituent components are in place for a fine evolution in bottle, and perhaps on its own, the frost diminution will not be quite so evident as it is in a full lineup of 2016 Jadot reds. 2026-2055. **89+.**

### **2016 Beaune “Grèves”- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

The parcel of Grèves here is owned by the Gagey family (I had previously reported incorrectly that these vines were owned by Louis Jadot), with the vines now forty years of age and the wine is quickly becoming one of my favorite premier crus from Beaune in the formidable lineup at Maison Jadot. The 2016 is outstanding, offering up a lovely bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a really superb signature of soil, gamebird, coffee and just a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, suave and very elegant in profile, with a sappy core of fruit, fine transparency and a long, fine-grained and vibrant finish. This is really, really good Grèves! 2024-2065+. **92+.**

### **2016 Beaune “Clos des Couchereaux”- Maison Louis Jadot (Les Héritiers Louis Jadot)**

The 2016 Clos des Couchereaux is another excellent wine in the making. The nose wafts from the glass in a classic and nicely red fruity constellation of cherries, gamebird, bonfires, complex soil tones, a touch of fresh thyme and a lovely topnote of coffee bean. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent in profile, with a fine core, ripe, suave tannins and impressive length and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. 2025-2065+. **92.**

### **2016 Beaune “Boucherottes”- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

The 2016 Boucherottes was a bit more reserved in personality than the Grèves or Clos des Couchereaux at the time of my visit, but also showing exemplary promise. The bouquet is a fine blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, fresh herb, *pigeon*, espresso and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthful, with a fine core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, tangy and nascently complex finish. 2026-2065+. **92.**

**2016 Beaune “Clos des Ursules”- Maison Louis Jadot (Les Héritiers Louis Jadot)**

The 2016 vintage of Clos des Ursules is outstanding. The wine is very, very red fruity in profile this year, which I find very exciting, as this is usually a very black fruity wine out of the blocks. The nose is complex and already quite expressive, jumping from the glass in a blaze of cherries, red plums, gamebird, a very complex base of soil, cedar and a lovely topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is pure, deep and transparent, with its full-bodied format quite seamless and refined. The core is sappy, the soil signature is outstanding and the fine-grained tannins and zesty acids promise a very long and very elegant evolution in bottle. A truly outstanding vintage of Clos des Ursules in the making! 2026-2075+. **94.**

**2016 Volnay “Clos de la Barre”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 2016 Clos de la Barre was showing very well indeed at the time of my visit. The bouquet is refined and already quite complex, offering up scents of red and black cherries, *pigeon*, dark soil tones, bitter chocolate, a touch of cedar and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely soil-driven, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and still fairly primary finish. This is going to be a lovely bottle of Volnay. 2026-2060. **91.**

**2016 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

I always like the Rugiens at Louis Jadot and the 2016 is another fine example in the making. The wine is properly reserved out of the blocks, but shows the elegant veneer of 2016 in its fine bouquet of cherries, red plums, incipient notes of venison, lovely spice tones, woodsmoke and a gentle framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full and nicely transparent, with a superb core of fruit, fine-grained tannins and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. All this needs is bottle age! 2030-2075+. **91+.**

**2016 Corton “Pougets”- Maison Louis Jadot (Les Héritiers Louis Jadot)**

Happily, with the frosts in Aloxe-Corton further down the hill of Corton, the Pougets from Maison Jadot was untouched by the freeze and the 2016 is going to be an outstanding vintage of this superb bottling. The bouquet is deep, pure and refined, offering up scents of cherries, red currants, bonfire, venison, coffee, a complex base of soil tones, cedar and a fine, spicy topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and very soil-driven in personality, with a rock solid core, ripe, seamless tannins and perfect balance on the long and nascently complex finish. This is a complete wine in every respect and simply needs some time in the cellar to start to blossom. 2031-2085. **93+.**

**2016 Nuits St. Georges “Boudots”- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

The Boudots bottling is always one of the best-kept secrets in the Louis Jadot cellars and the 2016 is another outstanding wine in the making. The bouquet is very red fruity out of the blocks this year, offering up a constellation of red plums, cherries, gamebird, a complex base of soil tones, bonfire and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off excellent mid-palate depth, with ripe, seamless tannins, bright acids and great backend soil drive on the long, tangy and beautifully balanced finish. A classic Boudots in the making. 2030-2065+. **93.**

**2016 Nuits St. Georges “Vaucrains”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 20167 Vaucrains from Maison Jadot is also a fine bottle in the making, but this is quite structured out of the blocks and is going to need some extended cellaring before it will start to stir. The youthful and black fruity nose offers up scents of black cherries, cassis, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, venison, fresh herbs and bitter chocolate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and chewy, with a rock solid core, ripe tannins and a long, primary and promising finish. As readers may recall, the band of premier crus south of the center of town in Nuits were heavily frosted, whereas the band on the Vosne border to the north were untouched. So, the more chewy

and reserved style of the Vaucrains *chez* Jadot this year is at least partly a result of the frost damage. 2031-2065. **91+**.

**2016 Vosne-Romanée “les Suchots”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 2016 Suchots from Louis Jadot was showing beautifully at the time of my visit, delivering a fine and classically black fruity bouquet of dark berries, cassis, espresso, woodsmoke, gamebird, Vosne spices and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a lovely core of sappy fruit, fine transparency, ripe tannins and a long, soil-driven and tangy finish. This is a lovely example of Suchots in the making! 2027-2060. **92+**.

**2016 Vosne-Romanée “les Beaux Monts”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 2016 Maison Jadot Beaux Monts is also outstanding this year. The bouquet is pure, precise and nicely black fruity, offering up scents of cassis, sweet dark berries, bitter chocolate, a bit of bonfire, *pigeon*, dark soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant in profile, with a lovely core, fine soil signature and a long, ripely tannic and nicely soil-driven finish. Very classy juice. 2028-2060. **92+**.

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “les Baudes”- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

The domaine’s yields in Baudes were down fully fifty percent in 2016, but the wine has turned out very well indeed and the only bad news here is the small number of casks in the cellar. The nose jumps from the glass in a very refined blend of red and black cherries, gamebird, a lovely base of soil, a touch of mustard seed, woodsmoke, cedary oak and a lovely topnote of bitter chocolate. On the palate the wine is deep, full and very pure, with a lovely core, impressive complexity and a very long, ripely tannic and vibrant finish. This will need a full decade out from the vintage to blossom, but it will be excellent once it is ready to drink. 2026-2060. **92+**.

**2016 Chambolle-Musigny “les Fuées”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The yields in 2016 in les Fuées were even a bit shorter than in les Baudes, but again, the wine has turned out very well indeed. The aromatic constellation is a fine blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, chalky soil tones, gamebird, mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a tad more reserved in profile than the Baudes, with a fine core of fruit, tangy acids and very refined tannins adding grip and structural integrity to the long and complex finish. Fine juice. 2025-2060. **92**.

**2016 Morey St. Denis “Clos des Ormes”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The Clos des Ormes is one of my favorite premier crus in Morey, but I do not taste it with all that much regularity, as the domaines I typically visit in the village do not have holdings here. So, I was very happy to try the 2016 version from Louis Jadot, which is flat out stunning in its potential. The bouquet is pure, sappy and soil-driven, soaring from the glass in a refined blend of red and black cherries, a touch of plum, gamebird, lovely elements of *terroir*, mustard seed, cedar and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core, seamless, suave balance, fine-grained tannins and a very long, tangy and energetic finish. Great juice in the making! 2026-2075. **93+**.

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Estournelles St. Jacques”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

I cannot recall tasting a better young vintage of Estournelles St. Jacques from Maison Jadot than this outstanding 2016, which is very, very close in quality to the Clos St. Jacques this year! The bouquet is precise and sappy, delivering scents of red and black cherries, grilled meats, stunningly complex minerality, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, mustard seed and a deft touch of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a sappy core, stunning mineral drive and a long, seamless and vibrant finish. The tannins here are fine-grained and

beautifully integrated and this wine is going to be stunning when it is fully mature. 2026-2070+. **93+**.

#### **2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The bottling of Clos St. Jacques is one of Maison Jadot’s iconic wines and the 2016 is another stellar example. The aromatic constellation is a mix of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, dark chocolate, grilled meats, mustard seed, cedar and a stunning base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, long and very refined out of the blocks, with a rock solid core, suave, ripe tannins and outstanding grip and length on the complex and beautifully balanced finish. A great Clos St. Jacques in the making. 2029-2075. **94+**.



#### **2016 Chambertin- Maison Louis Jadot**

There is only a single barrel of Chambertin in the cellars this year at Maison Jadot. Our sample was a touch reduced and needed a bit of coaxing to show its true colors, but eventually offers up scents of cassis, dark berries, roasted meats, espresso, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and a deft framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite reserved in profile, with a fine core, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex and focused finish. This is a fine wine in the making, but it was a bit difficult to taste it in its closed down state after the singing example of Clos St. Jacques, so my score may end up proving just a touch on the conservative side. 2029-2065+. **92+**.

### **2016 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Domaine Louis Jadot**

In contrast to the youthfully closed down Chambertin, the 2016 Clos de Bèze *chez* Jadot was really showing well at the time of my visit. The bouquet is pure, complex and vibrant, wafting from the glass in a fine mix of red and black cherries, grilled meats, dark soil tones, espresso, woodsmoke, bitter chocolate and spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid in the mid-palate, with suave, ripe tannins, tangy acids and laser-like focus on the very long, soil-driven and complex finish. Great juice. 2031-2090. **95.**

### **2016 Clos de la Roche- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 2016 Clos de la Roche from Maison Jadot was also showing very well indeed in late February. The bouquet is pure, elegant and very deep, offering up scents of red and black cherries, venison, woodsmoke, coffee, a complex base of soil and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a sappy core of fruit, excellent soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a very, very long, very pure and promising finish. Impressive. 2028-2075. **93.**

### **2016 Clos St. Denis- Maison Louis Jadot (Domaine Gagey)**

The 2016 Clos St. Denis is another stellar bottle in the making from this outstanding vintage. The bouquet is pure, perfumed and youthfully complex, offering up a fine constellation of red plums, cherries, mustard seed, gamebird, coffee, cedar, glorious soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a sappy core, great transparency, fine-grained tannins and a very, very long, reserved and nascently complex finish. This will need a good decade more of bottle age to start to stir, but it is going to be a superb wine when it is ready to drink. 2028-2075. **94.**

### **2016 Echézeaux- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The domaine's holdings in Echézeaux hail from the *lieu à dit* of les Rouge du Bas and happily, there was no frost damage in this section of the vineyard in 2016. This too is an excellent wine in the making, offering up a fine bouquet of red and black cherries, venison, coffee, dark soil tones, bonfire, a touch of fresh herbs and a lovely framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven in personality, with a good core, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and youthful finish. This is an excellent wine and I may be underrating it just a tad, as it followed hard on the heels of the brilliant 2016 Clos St. Denis! 2028-2065+. **92+.**

### **2016 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Louis Jadot**

The Jadot version of Bonnes-Mares is composed of a fifty-fifty split of *terres rouges* and *terres blanches* and is brilliant in 2016. The bouquet is deep, pure and sappy, offering up scents of red and black cherries, venison, a stunningly complex base of soil tones, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and already quite complex, with a sappy core, great focus and grip, suave, seamless tannins and outstanding length on the poised and perfectly balanced finish. Great juice. 2031-2085+. **95.**

### **Maison Jaffelin (Beaune)**

*Winemaker Marinette Garnier has worked wonders at Maison Jaffelin since she took over the winemaking duties here several years ago, and this is now one of the very best addressed in all of the Côte d'Or for valued-priced red and white Burgundies. As I have mentioned in the past, the philosophy at Maison Jaffelin is to focus on old vine parcels in less well-known and less costly appellations, with an eye towards becoming one of the “go to producers” for Burgundy lovers looking to buy excellent quality wines at very fair prices. With*

*the explosion in Burgundy prices since the 2005 vintage, this strikes me as a very good marketing strategy, and it does not hurt Maison Jaffelin at all that their winemaker is one of the most talented of the younger generation in Burgundy! The 2016s here had all been bottled earlier in the year, but were recovered nicely at the time of my visit and were showing very well indeed. The frost damage amongst the parcels that Maison Jaffelin works with varied quite dramatically from cuvée to cuvée, with wines such as the Chorey-lès-Beaune only moderately frosted and down thirty percent in yield, whereas the Aloxe-Corton was hit hard and there was only a single barrel made this year from yields that only amounted to nine hectoliters per hectare! Similarly, there is only a single cask of Savigny “les Vergelesses” in 2016 (six hectoliters per hectare!), and the lovely Auxey-Duresses “les Duresses” was also made from microscopic yields of eight hectoliters per hectare in 2016. Even the maison’s flagship Beaune bottling of Clos Ste. Anne from the outstanding premier cru Sur les Grèves was cropped at only twenty-five hectoliters per hectare, so there are some very small cuvées in the cellars here this year. There is no Chambolle villages at all. But, other wines had little frost issues and are closer to a normal crop, so there is pretty good quantity of the Gevrey “Vieilles Vignes” in the cellars this year, the excellent Santenay “les Gravières” also has pretty good yields, and there was only a touch of frost in the Saint Romain blanc and none in the Côte Chalonnaise bottlings. As readers may recall, Marinette Garnier trained at Domaine Méo-Camuzet for several years before taking over the reins at Maison Jaffelin, and she likes a bit of new oak in her wines, but I noted that several of her 2016s were made with slightly lower percentages of new wood this year, to allow the more elegant side of the vintage to take center stage. Given my palate predilections, I hope that this is a trend that will continue in coming vintages, as the wines here always carry their new oak well, but I have a gut feeling that there could be even more terroir front and center if the percentages of new oak were a bit lower for each and every bottling. But, I say that everywhere I go! Marinette Garnier has produced some really, really good Burgundies this year from several less well-known appellations, and they are once again excellent values in 2016! If you have not yet discovered the new and exciting level of quality at Maison Jaffelin, this is a perfect vintage to dip your toe in the water!*

### **Vins Blancs**

#### **2016 Bourgogne Blanc- Maison Jaffelin**

Though this is labeled as Bourgogne Blanc, it is actually all fruit from the top Mâconnais vineyard of Viré-Clessé. Mariette Garnier barrel-fermented this wine and raised it in ten percent new oak in 2016 and the wine has turned out very nicely, offering up a bright and classy bouquet of apple, pear, fine underlying minerality and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, full, long and nicely racy, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a very well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2018-2025. **88+**.

#### **2016 Rully- Maison Jaffelin**

Marinette has thirty year-old vines in this parcel of Rully, which she describes as “from a very mineral *terroir*.” The 2016 version is excellent, offering up a fine nose of peach, apple, smoke, lovely minerality, a touch of fresh almond and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full and classy, with a fine core, lovely backend soil signature, bright, zesty acids and impressive cut and grip on the long finish. Very, very fine Rully! 2018-2030. **90+**.

### **2016 Ladoix Blanc- Maison Jaffelin**

This is only the second vintage of this bottling from Maison Jaffelin, but I did not taste the inaugural version, due to my knee surgery last spring. The 2016 was one of the most closed wines from the recent *mise* at our tasting, but with a bit of coaxing, it was clear that it is a very good example. The bouquet offers up a primary blend of white peach, apple, a touch of fresh almond, chalky soil tones and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still quite tightly-knit on the palate, with a good core and an especially impressive, energetic and focused backend. This will need a year or two to blossom, but will be a lovely bottle. 2020-2035. **90.**

### **2016 Saint-Romain Blanc- Maison Jaffelin**

There was very mild frost damage in Saint-Romain in 2016 and I have tasted some very lovely examples of the vintage from this village. The 2016 Maison Jaffelin is excellent, offering up scents of pear, apple, a touch of anise, fresh almond, chalky minerality and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still in the midst of absorbing its new oak today (or is showing a bit more wood from the recent *mise*), but with a lovely core, racy acids and excellent focus and grip on the very promising finish. Marinette used thirty percent new wood for this cuvée this year, and it will need a year in the cellar to fully absorb the wood, but has plenty of stuffing to do so and will be lovely with a bit of patience. This will be an excellent value! 2019-2035. **90+.**



*Maison Jaffelin's young and very talented Chef de Cave, Marinette Garnier.*



### **2016 Saint Aubin “Sur Gamay”- Maison Jaffelin**

I did not note how much the yields were cut back in Sur Gamay with the Maison Jaffelin parcels, but the wine was showing beautifully, with superb backend energy and mineral drive, so I am guessing that their vines were not hit hard by the frost. The bouquet here is classic, jumping from the glass in a vibrant blend of pear, apple, a touch of hazelnut, citrus zest, complex, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven in personality, with a rock solid core, excellent cut and grip and a very long, complex finish. Very classy Saint Aubin! 2020-2040. **92.**

### ***Vins Rouges***

#### **2016 Bourgogne Rouge- Maison Jaffelin**

The vines for this bottling are situated primarily in Santenay, with a bit of Rully tossed in. The wine is entirely barrel-fermented and saw fifteen percent new oak. It is very pretty and red fruity in 2016, delivering a fine constellation of strawberries, cherries, a good base of soil and just a touch of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and nicely balanced, with a good core, vibrant acids and just a touch of backend tannin to resolve in the long finish. A fine example. 2018-2030. **88+.**

#### **2016 Givry “les Grandes Vignes”- Maison Jaffelin**

This bottling hails from eighty year-old vines and is one of the great sleepers in the cellar this year at Maison Jaffelin, as the wine has turned out beautifully. There are seven casks, of which two are new. The wine is deep and pure on the nose, delivering a fine and red fruity blend of cherries, *fraises du bois*, lovely soil tones, a touch of orange peel, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and quite complex out of the blocks, with a good core, fine transparency, modest tannins and a long, well-balanced finish. This is showing its new wood a bit, but I am sure this is just a reflection of its recent *mise* and the wood will be re-absorbed back into the body of the wine as it gets a touch of distance from the bottling. Fine juice. 2020-2045+. **90+.**

#### **2016 Chorey-lès-Beaune “les Champs Longs”- Maison Jaffelin**

Marinette Garnier noted that the Chorey “was mildly frosted this year, but not too bad.” The wine ended up being raised in thirty percent new oak and delivers a fine aromatic constellation of strawberries, cherries, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil and a touch of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, tangy and impressively transparent, with a lovely core of red fruit, impressive focus and grip, modest tannins and a long, tangy finish. Good juice in the making. 2021-2045. **90+.**

#### **2016 Aloxe-Corton- Maison Jaffelin**

The frost damage was quite severe here in 2016, so there is only a single cask of this wine in the cellars this year, which was fermented in an old *demi-muid* and raised in a one wine cask. With only nine hectoliters per hectare, this is quite a broad-shouldered and concentrated example of Aloxe *villages*, offering up a fine and quite complex nose of red and black cherries, venison, dark soil tones, a nice touch of stem spices and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with ripe tannins, fine focus and balance and a long, soil-driven and tangy finish. Good juice that will need some time in the cellar to blossom. 2024-2055. **90+.**

#### **2016 Santenay “les Gravières”- Maison Jaffelin**

Marinette Garnier works with forty year-old vines in this lovely premier cru in Santenay and her 2016 has turned out splendidly! The wine was raised in thirty percent new wood and is a

fine, black fruity example in this vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a classy blend of black cherries, a touch of dark berry, gamebird, espresso, chalky soil tones, a touch of fresh thyme and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved out of the blocks, with an excellent core of fruit, good soil signature, tangy acids, fine-grained tannins and a long, balanced and nascently complex finish. As this has been recently bottled, it may be that its tightly-knit personality is more a function of the recent *mise* than the style of the wine this year, but either way, this is solely a question of when it will start drinking well, as its lovely quality was readily apparent! It may well prove that it will start to blossom two or three years before my window, once it has recovered from the bottling. 2023-2055. **91+**.

**2016 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Vergelesses”- Maison Jaffelin**

As I have noted elsewhere, Savigny-lès-Beaune was one of the most heavily-frosted villages in all of Burgundy in 2016, and the damage in the Jaffelin parcel of les Vergelesses reduced their crop to a very meager six hectoliters per hectare! Consequently, there is only a single barrel here this year, which was raised in a “one wine” cask, with the fruit completely destemmed. The vines here are eighty years of age and seem to have weathered the frost pretty well, as though the yields were so tiny, there is absolutely no signs of the diminution of energy here that plagues some of the most heavily-frosted examples of the vintage. The nose is pure and sappy, offering up scents of cherries, red berries, stony soil tones, gamebird, Savigny spices and a topnote of bonfires. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, tangy and very, very transparent in profile, with a superb core, fine-grained tannins and a long, vibrant and quite complex finish. Fine juice. 2026-2060+. **92.**

**2016 Auxey-Duresses “les Duresses”- Maison Jaffelin**

The parcel of les Duresses that Marinette works with in this village are the oldest vines in their lineup, as these vines are fully ninety years of age and routinely crop at a quite low level, which is typically twenty hectoliters per hectare. The frost did not spare these old vines, so the final yield for this wine was only eight hectoliters per hectare in 2016! This resulted in two and a half barrels, with the half barrel made out of new oak and the other casks a one and a two wine barrel. Marinette used twenty-five percent whole clusters for the 2016 les Duresses, which has turned out beautifully, offering up a deep and sappy notes of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, gamebird, raw cocoa and a hint of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, complex, full and quite sappy at the core, with excellent backend soil drive, fine-grained tannins and a long, vibrant and complex finish. This is very, very good Auxey premier cru! 2024-2055+. **92+**.

**2016 Beaune “Sur les Grèves” Clos Ste. Anne- Maison Jaffelin**

The Clos Ste. Anne bottling from Maison Jaffelin was moderately frosted in 2016, so yields were down to eighteen hectoliters per hectare in this vintage, but as these are eighty-five year-old vines, they do not produce all that much more in normal vintages in any case! There are three casks this year, of which one is new and Marinette used twenty-five percent whole clusters for this excellent young wine. The bouquet delivers scents of red plums, cherries, raw cocoa, *pigeon*, a touch of mustard seed, very chalky soil tones and just a dollop of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full and very sappy at the core, with excellent transparency, fine focus and grip, suave tannins and a very long, classy and complex finish. Superb juice. 2026-2065+. **93.**

**2016 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Maison Jaffelin**

Madame Garnier decided to de-stem this cuvée this year, which was raised in four new casks out of nine, so a bit under fifty percent in 2016. This is a lovely wine in the making,

offering up scents of cherries, red plums, mustard seed, a fine base of dark soil tones, gamebird and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, fine focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and promising finish. This too is still showing its new wood a bit so soon after the *mise* and will need a couple of years in the cellar to properly blossom. 2021-2050. **90+**.

#### **2016 Fixin “les Hervelets”- Maison Jaffelin**

The village of Fixin was not frosted anywhere near as severely as its next door neighbor of Marsannay in 2016, and this has given Marinette’s example of les Hervelets all of the inherent elegance of the unfrosted side of the vintage. Most young examples of les Hervelets are quite black fruity out of the blocks, but Marinette has fashioned a very red fruity, transparent example of this premier cru and the wine was absolutely singing at the time of my visit. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex blend of red plums, cherries, a touch of strawberry, mustard seed, superb soil tones, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is full, complex and beautifully balanced, with excellent soil signature, a fine core of red fruit, suave, seamless tannins and a long, refined and vibrant finish. This is Madame Garnier’s favorite wine in the cellar this year, and I can easily see why! 2024-2055. **92+**.

#### **Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay (Volnay)**

*Bernard Glantenay was in good humor at the time of my visit in early March this year, which I marveled at, once he told me that he had lost fully seventy percent of his normal cropload in 2016, due to the extensive frost damage. I am not sure I would have been so sanguine about this, if our roles had been reversed, but the strong and generous crop of 2017 in the cellars certainly helped ameliorate some of the sting of the very, very small yields of 2016. His overall yields averaged only thirteen hectoliters per hectare, with his Bourgogne Rouge the shortest of all, cropped at only eight hectoliters per hectare! The Volnay AC bottling this year ended up being fully one-third premier cru, as Monsieur Glantenay had to put his Brouillards fruit into this bottling, as there was simply not enough to make a proper cuvée in the heavily-frosted premier cru. Most of the wines here had already been assembled at the start of the year and Monsieur Glantenay was in the midst of bottling at the time of my visit, so some wines were just bottled, others due for bottling in the next several weeks, with only the fine Pommard AC bottling of la Riotte behind the others in terms of evolution, as this wine was the very last to finish up its malo and was still a bit reduced and grumpy at the time of my visit. But, everything else from 2016 was in fine form and showing marvelously well.*

#### **2016 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

As I mentioned last year, the Glantenay family’s parcel of Bourgogne lies down near the RN-74 in the village of Volnay, and on this flatter section of vineyard land, the frost damage was the most severe in 2016. There is very, very little of this wine in the cellars in this vintage, but the wine has turned out beautifully, offering up scents of plums, black cherries, cocoa, woodsmoke and a nice touch of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, fairly complex and quite sappy at the core, with lovely focus and grip, just a touch of tannin and a long, classy finish. Like several other examples, this is truly excellent Bourgogne this year, though this is hardly a surprise at such draconian yields! 2018-2030. **88**.

#### **2016 Volnay- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

The Volnay *villages* cuvée *chez* Glantenay always includes two small parcels of premier cru in the blend, as these two plots of vines are too petite to be bottled on their own, and

Monsieur Glantenay is of the opinion that he would rather have them adding depth and dimension to the AC bottling than try to vinify them on their own. However, the very short yields of 2016 have forced Bernard to also include the crop from les Brouillards in the cuvée this year, which has made for a simply outstanding *villages!* The bouquet here is excellent, jumping from the glass in a refined mix of cassis, sweet dark berries, a touch of currant leaf, espresso, dark soil tones and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, vibrant and shows off beautiful sappy depth at the core, with excellent soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. Impressive AC. 2024-2060. **91.**

#### **2016 Pommard “la Riotte”- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

As I noted last year, this very well-situated *climat* lies just to the north of Château de Pommard and across the street from Grands Epenots. At the time of my visit on March 6<sup>th</sup>, this wine had not yet recovered from its very late malo and was the only grumpy wine in the cellar, as it was still fairly reductive on the nose, though very pure on the palate. There is plenty of sappy black fruit and soil tones underneath the reduction, but it was hard to get a precise note on the aromatics here. On the palate the wine was much easier to read: deep, full, sappy and quite soil-driven, with suave, chewy tannins and impressive length and grip on the backend. I am sure this will a superb *villages*, but I did not catch it at a good time and it may prove that it will drink sooner than I have noted here, as it was a bit unhappy at being tasted at the time of my visit. 2026-2060. **90-91+.**

#### **2016 Volnay “Santenots”- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

Bernard Glantenay mentioned last year that the ripeness in Santenots in 2015 got a bit further along than he would have liked, and he would have preferred to have harvested it just a tad earlier. This was not an issue with the 2016, which is very, very pure and a classic example of this outstanding vintage. The bouquet is pure and focused, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of cassis, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, gamebird, a complex base of dark soil tones and a lovely topnote of violet. On the palate the wine is deep, precise and very elegant in profile, with a superb core, excellent transparency, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and refined finish. The vines here are thirty-five years of age and in their prime and they have produced a really, really good Santenots in 2016. 2026-2065+. **92.**

#### **2016 Pommard “les Saussilles”- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

The premier cru vineyard of les Saussilles lies right on the Pommard-Beaune border, with its immediate neighbor across the boundary the Clos des Mouches. The Glantenay family has ninety year-old vines in les Saussilles and the wine has turned out beautifully in 2016. The bouquet is black fruity and displays great purity in its blend of cassis, black cherries, raw cocoa, gamebird, a very complex base of soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with great focus and grip, seamless tannins and a long, tangy and perfectly balanced finish. Monsieur Glantenay decided to use thirty percent whole clusters in the 2016 les Saussilles. This had only been bottled the week before my arrival, but it had not yet shut down post-bottling and was absolutely singing. Great juice. 2028-2070+. **92+.**

#### **2016 Volnay “Caillerets” - Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

The 2016 Cailleret from Domaine Glantenay was due for bottling a couple days hence and was showing very well. Bernard Glantenay decided to use fifty percent whole clusters in this cuvée in 2016, as the stems were beautifully lignified. The bouquet is superb, offering up a classic constellation of dark berries, cassis, stony minerality, espresso, woodsmoke, *pigeon* and a nice, youthful touch of the stems (which will turn into cinnamon-like spice tones with extended bottle age). On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off excellent mid-palate depth,

with excellent focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and a long, balanced and tangy finish. Just a beautiful young example of Caillerets. 2028-2070. **93.**

**2016 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

The Glantenay family’s vines in Rugiens are situated at the very bottom of the upper section of the vineyard, which is a fine location, as the soils here are similar to Rugiens *Bas* and not as meager as those at the top of the vineyard. Last year I mentioned that these were forty-one year-old vines, but I got this information incorrect, as it turns out that the vines are substantially older than this, having been planted in 1935! This too had not yet been bottled and was showing beautiful potential, wafting from the glass in a superb blend of plums, black cherries, a touch of red currant, a great base of minerality, venison, woodsmoke, cedar and a nice touch of upper register spiciness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with great focus and balance, ripe, seamless tannins and superb backend mineral drive on the very long and nascently complex finish. Monsieur Glantenay used thirty percent whole clusters here this year. Great juice and one of the very finest examples of Rugiens I have tasted from the vintage. 2028-2075. **94.**



*Bernard Glantenay outside of his cellar door in Volnay- his 2016s are stellar!*

**2016 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

As I mentioned last year, the domaine’s vines in Clos des Chênes lies just above those of the Lafarge and Lafon families, with half of the parcel fifteen years of age and the remainder more than eighty years-old. The 2016 version is stellar, soaring from the glass in a complex and vibrant blend of cassis, black cherries, currant leaf, espresso, a complex base of dark soil tones, gamebird and a deft touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly classic

in profile, with a sappy core, great soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a very long, vibrant and transparent finish. Utterly classic Clos des Chênes! 2028-2070. **94.**

### **2016 Puligny-Montrachet “Folatières”- Domaine Bernard et Thierry Glantenay**

The 2016 Folatières from Bernard Glantenay was also one of the later wines to finish up its malo and the wine was still in *cuve* at the time of my visit and destined for bottling in a few days. This is a lovely example, offering up a succulent nose of peach, apple, spring flowers, a good base of chalky soil tones, just a whisper of vanillin oak and a gentle topnote of nuttiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a good core, bright acids and fine length and grip on the zesty finish. Good juice. 2018-2030. **91+.**

### **Domaine Joseph Voillot (Volnay)**

*This was my first visit to Jean-Pierre Charlot's Domaine Joseph Voillot, but I had intended to make an appointment here for several years now, as I have always liked the domaine's wines when I have had a chance to drink them- often at the neighboring restaurant of le Cellier Volnaysien, which sits just next door to the domaine in the center of Volnay. Finally, the domaine's US importer prodded me with samples of a range of lovely 2015s from Monsieur Charlot, which got me motivated to clear a slot in my spring itinerary for a visit to Domaine Voillot and a taste of their outstanding 2016s. And I am very, very happy that I did so, as the entire range was excellent in quality and this is very clearly one of the top addresses for first class Volnay and Pommard premier crus in all of Burgundy! Jean-Pierre Charlot is the son-in-law of the late, Joseph Voillot, who passed away in 2014. The two worked side by side for fifteen years, up until Joseph Voillot's official retirement after the 1995 vintage. Monsieur Charlot has just recently been joined by his nephew, Etienne Chaix, who will eventually succeed to the head of the domaine when Monsieur Charlot retires. I had the pleasure to taste with Monsieur Chaix on this visit, as Jean-Pierre had to be away on the day that scheduled a rendez-vous. The domaine has not been able to escape the long shadow of adversity faced by many vigneron in Volnay in recent times, with the heavy hail damage in the village in the three successive vintages of 2012, 2013 and 2014, the domaine was forced to sell its parcel in the premier cru of les Brouillards to help meet expenses. Happily, they still have superb holdings in Fremiets, Caillerets and Champans in Volnay and Pézerolles and Rugiens in Pommard, with their vines here all situated in the lower, Rugiens Bas section of the vineyard and having been planted in 1959.*

*Jean-Pierre Charlot changed a few things at Domaine Voillot once he took over the direction of the estate from his father-in-law, cutting back the percentage of new oak from thirty percent to between ten and twenty percent for the premier crus in most vintages. He also started destemming the fruit completely, where his father-in-law might retain a percentage of the stems for certain cuvées. Jean-Pierre Charlot also shorted the average time for the elevage of the premier crus here, so that they typically will spend fourteen or fifteen months in cask these days, followed by assemblage in stainless steel tanks for a month prior to bottling. Joseph Voillot typically would leave the wines in cask for a longer elevage. For the 2016 vintage, Monsieur Charlot decided to use no new oak at all for the wines. The 2016 Bourgogne rouge and villages level wines had been bottled at the end of August of 2017, with the premier crus here all bottled in January of 2018, so the wines had all bounced back nicely from their mise and were showing uniformly well at the time of my visit on the last day of February of this year. The domaine has a few additional bottlings beyond which those I tasted on my visit, and I look forward to trying*

*those in the more generous yielding vintage of 2017. While Domaine Joseph Voillot is best-known for its fine range of Volnay bottlings, the Pommards here are equally superb and were supremely elegant examples in the mold of the 2016 vintage. It was a lovely day to visit, with snow flurries drifting down on the vineyards in Volnay as I drove up to the center of town for an early afternoon appointment, and I found myself wishing I had made a reservation for dinner at Cellier Volnaysien during my trip (as the cuisine here is classically Burgundian and always excellent) to drink a bottle of older Domaine Voillot with the meal. Though this was my first visit to taste with the Charlot family, it will most assuredly not be my last, as the wines here were excellent across the board!*

### **2016 Bourgogne- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

The pinot noir vines for this bottling hail from the village of Volnay and are fifty years of age. Monsieur Charlot augments this by blending in a small parcel of Beaune premier cru as well, as the parcel is too small to make a proper cuvée. The 2016 Voillot Bourgogne is a fine example, offering up a very pretty and red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, a good base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, succulent and nicely balanced, with a good core, fine focus and just a touch of backend tannin perking up the finish. Give this a year or two in the cellar to blossom properly. 2019-2030. **87.**

### **2016 Volnay “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

The domaine has just under two *hectares* of vines in their four parcels of Volnay *villages* level vineyards, with the average age of the vines here fifty years of age. The 2016 version was showing beautifully, offering up a pure and youthful bouquet of red and black cherries, *pigeon*, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and raw cocoa. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and already quite suave on the attack, with an excellent core, fine soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This will be lovely with a bit of bottle age. 2022-2050. **90.**

### **2016 Pommard “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

The Pommard old vine cuvée from Monsieur Charlot also hails from four different parcels, but these are a bit smaller and the combined total is just over 1.2 *hectares* of vines. These are just a touch older than the Volnay average, being fifty-five years of age. This too was showing really, really well on the last day of February of this year, delivering a very elegant and sappy nose of red plums, cherries, a hint of dark berry, gamebird, woodsmoke and a complex base of soil nuances. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and really shows off the elegance of 2016 on the attack, with a sappy core, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and soil-driven finish. This is a very, very classy bottle of Pommard V.V. in the making. 2025-2060+. **90+.**

### **2016 Volnay “Fremiets”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

Fremiets is often a very black fruity example of Volnay, but the Domaine Voillot version shows a lovely touch of red fruit as well in the 2016. The domaine has three differently aged parcels in Fremiets, all located at the top of the slope, where there is more chalk in the soil, which may account for the red fruity element in the 2016. The vines were planted in 1978, 1950 and 1932, so this too is an old vine cuvée, with the 1932 vines having still been planted in the *provignage* style with a can from the “mother vine” having been bent down into the soil to produce neighboring plants. The 2016 Voillot Fremiets is lovely, wafting from the glass in a vibrant blend of red and black cherries, sweet dark berries, *pigeon*, dark soil tones, raw cocoa, bonfire-like smokiness and a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and

very elegant in profile, with a superb core, fine-grained tannins and excellent focus and impressive length and grip on the nascently complex finish. Lovely wine. 2026-2060+. **92.**

**2016 Volnay “Caillerets”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

Monsieur Charlot’s parcel of Caillerets is his smallest, as he only has fourteen *ares* of vines here, which were planted in 1984 and are just hitting their stride at age thirty-two. The 2016 version here is excellent, offering up a classic aromatic constellation of cherries, a touch of red plum, stony soil tones, a bit of iron, coffee, gamebird and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with ripe, firm tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and grip on the complex and youthfully structured finish. This will be an outstanding example of Caillerets with sufficient bottle age. 2027-2065+. **93.**

**2016 Volnay “Champans”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

This is the flagship premier cru bottling from Domaine Voillot, as this is their largest parcel, totaling 1.7 *hectares*. The vines are mostly quite old, with a section having been replanted after the frosts of 1984, but the vast majority here either dating from 1971 or 1934. The 2016 Champans *chez* Charlot is superb, soaring from the glass in a complex and very pure blend of red plums, cherries, a hint of orange peel, smoke, fresh herb tones, *pigeon*, a lovely topnote of spice and just a whisper of cedary wood from its older casks. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and loaded with sappy red fruit at the core, with a very soil-driven personality, great focus and grip and lovely structural tension on the long and ripely tannic finish. This is the best example of Champans I have tasted from the 2016 vintage! 2026-2065+. **94.**

**2016 Pommard “Pézerolles”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

The domaine owns just over forty *ares* of vines in Pézerolles, with the parcel just over fifty years of age. The 2016 Pézerolles here is a great example of this underrated *terroir* (one of the most elegant premier crus in Pommard), offering up a deep and very pure bouquet of red plums, cherries, a nice touch of mustard seed, raw cocoa, venison, dark soil tones and a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a nice sense of sappiness, fine transparency, ripe, seamless tannins and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. This is first class Pézerolles! 2028-2065+. **93+.**

**2016 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

The Charlot family’s holdings in Rugiens are all in the *Bas* section of the vineyard, which has the superior *terroir* to the upper sector of Rugiens, with the vines here having been planted in 1959. This is a small holding for Jean-Pierre, as he has just over twenty-five *ares* of vines in Rugiens. The 2016 version is utterly classic and will be an outstanding wine when it is ready to drink. The nose jumps from the glass in a sappy and classy blend of red and black cherries, venison, a very complex base of soil, woodsmoke, mustard seed and just a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with great mineral drive, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and beautifully focused finish. Great juice. 2030-2075. **94.**

***A Couple of 2015s From Domaine Joseph Voillot***

*Both of these wines were tasted here in New York in April of this year. It seemed to me that they had closed down pretty dramatically since their release, as has been the case with a great many 2015 reds, and it may prove that my scores end up being a bit conservative for the wines, but they will need some patience before they start to blossom.*



### **2015 Volnay “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

The 2015 Volnay “Vieilles Vignes” from Domaine Joseph Voillot is a bit riper than the lovely 2016, but it is quite complex and focused. The sappy and quite attractive bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of red plums, cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of orange peel, venison and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full, ripe and nicely transparent in profile, with a sappy core, tangy acids and moderate, seamless tannins adding grip on the long finish. This is a bit bigger than the 2016 version, as well as more structured and in need of some bottle age to blossom, but it will be a very good bottle in its own right in the fullness of time. There is just a whisper of backend heat here that belies the torrid summer of 2015. 2023-2050+. **88.**

### **2015 Volnay “les Fremiets”- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

The 2015 Fremiets from Domaine Voillot is a bit less ripe and fruit-driven than the Vieilles Vignes bottling, offering up a very pretty nose of cherries, red plums, a touch of pomegranate, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, a nice dollop of fresh thyme and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite structured today, with a rock solid core currently bound up behind some firm tannins. The acids here are good and there is plenty of depth, but like many 2015s, this has shut down pretty dramatically since its bottling and will need several years in the cellar before it starts to emerge from hibernation. Like the Vieilles Vignes, this is showing just a tad of heat on the finish today. It will be a good bottle with sufficient cellaring, but I am drawn to the utterly classic style of the 2016 version, which aligns more with my palate’s stylistic paradigm. 2026-2060. **89+.**



### **Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet (Meursault)**

*This was my first visit to Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet, whose wines I have liked for many years now, but have never found the time previously to make an appointment to come and taste sur place. I almost did not make my morning appointment on March 1<sup>st</sup> this year, as a surprisingly deep and slippery snowstorm arrived in the wee hours of the morning and there was fully six inches of snow on the roads to negotiate that day! Finally, I arrived late at the domaine and was able to sit down with Yoann Hervey, Monsieur Fichet's second in command to taste through a fine range of 2016s, as Jean-Philippe was away on the day of my appointment. These are very lovely and minerally-infused examples of white Burgundy, with most of the family's wines hailing from their vineyards in their home village of Meursault. They have augmented their lineup in recent years with a handful of négociant bottlings that they make from purchased grapes. The 2016 harvest started chez Fichet on September 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year and a few of the wins were already bottled at the time of my visit in early March. There is only a single premier cru here, the Puligny-Montrachet "Referts", but the lineup of top lieux à dit bottlings from Meursault are first class and usually of premier cru quality in my experience. The frost damage here in 2016 varied quite a bit from village to village and parcel to parcel, with some cuvées down as much as sixty percent in production, while others were fairly close to a normal crop.*

### **2016 Bourgogne Aligoté- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The Bourgogne Aligoté bottling from Domaine Fichet is one of their *négociant* wines, with the wine fermented and raised in older *demi-muids*. The 2016 is generous and pretty, offering up scents of apple, spring flowers, a nice touch of lime peel and a good base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and nicely balanced, with a solid core and good grip on the backend. This wine had been bottled in November of 2017. 2018-2025. **87.**

### **2016 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

There are two Bourgogne Blanc bottlings from Jean-Philippe Fichet, with this one comprised of vines that are thirty years of age or younger, and which hails from four different parcels of vines scattered around the village of Meursault. The 2016 is quite good, offering up a bright and wide open bouquet of apple, lime, a touch of iodine and a fairly complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and quite long, with good focus and grip. These are all from fairly deep, clay soils, so this is a bit more fruit-driven in personality than the Vieilles Vignes version, but is quite tasty and well-made in 2016. 2018-2025. **88.**

### **2016 Bourgogne Blanc "Vieilles Vignes"- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The Vieilles Vignes bottling of Bourgogne here is quite serious and one of the great values in a lineup that offers plenty of well-priced options, which are very much to be applauded in this overheated Burgundy market. The vines for this bottling hail from two different parcels of vines, which are both planted with sixty year-old vines. The soils here are much more chalky than in the plots used for the wine above, and each of these two *lieux à dits* are ranked half as Meursault *villages* and half as Bourgogne Blanc, but the Fichets prefer to make a single, superb example of Bourgogne old vines, rather than take some of the production here and blend it into their Meursault. The 2016 version is excellent, offering up a refined nose of pear, apple, a nice touch of hazelnut, chalky soil tones and a bit of iodine in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and more reserved than the regular Bourgogne, with a good core, fine mineral drive and a long, zesty and beautifully balanced finish. A fine, fine example. 2012-2030+. **89+.**

### **2016 Haute Côte de Beaune Blanc- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The 2016 Haute Côte de Beaune Blanc from Domaine Fichet was one of their wines that was hit the hardest by frost damage and fully sixty percent of the yield was lost this year. These vines hail from parcels south of Auxey-Duresses and the wine is raised entirely in older *demi-muids*. The 2016 offers up a good nose of apple, a touch of pineapple, chalky soil tones and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, sound framing acids and good, solid length on the finish. Like many wines in this vintage that hail from parcels most severely affected by the frost, there is a bit less energy and grip in this wine than most of the other Fichet wines of 2016, but this will drink nicely in its youth. 2018-2022. **87.**

### **2016 Rully Blanc- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The Rully Blanc *chez* Fichet is another of their *négociant* wines, but the quality is excellent and quite similar to the domaine wines here. Rully was not touched by frost in 2016 and this wine sizzles with energy and a fine undertow of minerality, with the bouquet offering up scents of lime, apple, wet stone minerality, gentle smokiness and a nice topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, long and transparent, with a fine core, good cut and grip and a long, complex and quite serious finish. This is excellent Rully and another outstanding value. 2018-2030. **90.**

### **2016 Monthélie Blanc- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

These are Fichet family vineyards, but the frost damage here cut back yields by fully fifty percent in 2016 and the wine is just a touch *tendre* structurally as a result. The bouquet is very pretty and expressive, delivering a mix of lime, pear, spring flowers, chalky soil tones and spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and wide open in personality, with solid depth and fine focus on the complex, succulent and very tasty finish. Another year or two in the cellar will allow a secondary layer of complexity to unfold here and the wine should keep pretty well, as it is impeccably balanced, but I might be inclined to drink it fairly early on in its life in the bottle, as it does not show quite the same cut and grip as some of the other Fichet 2016s. 2019-2030+. **89.**

### **2016 Auxey-Duresses Blanc- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

I really like the Auxey-Duresses blanc bottling from Monsieur Fichet and the 2016 version is another excellent success. Frost damage here was a bit less than in their holdings in Monthélie, with production off by about a third in this vintage. The resulting wine is lovely, offering up a bright and classy nose of lime, green apple, chalky minerality, spring flowers and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and nicely round and generous on the attack, with a good core in reserve, fine mineral drive and grip and a long, zesty and soil-driven finish. This is very stylish and tasty. 2018-2030+. **90.**

### **2016 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The Chassagne *villages* bottling from Domaine Fichet is another of their *négociant* offerings, with the wine hailing from vines planted in clay soils. The 2016 version is quite good, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, spring flowers, a fine base of soil nuances and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and nicely reserved out of the blocks, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, youthful finish. This deserves a couple of years in the cellar to blossom properly. I like it very well, but it does not have quite the mineral drive and finesse of the Auxey this year. 2020-2055. **89+.**

### **2016 Meursault- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The blended Meursault *villages* from Domaine Fichet hails from five different parcels scattered around the commune and it is a very classy and mineral example in 2016. The complex and vibrant bouquet is deep and pure, offering up a superb blend of apple, lime, almond, chalky minerality and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and crisp, with a good core, fine cut and grip and a long, well-balanced and nascently complex finish. This will develop nicely with a bit of bottle age, but it is already drinking with style and verve today. 2018-2035+. **90+**.

### **2016 Meursault “Meix Sous le Château”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The 2016 Meix Sous le Château bottling here is a touch more reserved than the blended Meursault, but every bit as fine and will be excellent with a year or two in the cellar. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a very refined mix of apple, pear, hazelnut, a touch of citrus peel, gentle floral tones and a discreet touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and nicely concentrated at the core, with fine focus and grip, excellent acids and a long, pure and promising finish. Fine juice. 2021-2040. **91**.

### **2016 Meursault “les Gruyaches”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

Domaine Fichet’s 2016 les Gruyaches is excellent, delivering a superb aromatic constellation of apple, pear, lime blossoms, a fine base of chalky soil tones, fresh almond and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very precise this year, with a fine core, excellent transparency and grip and a long, nascently complex and very classy finish. As readers may recall, these vines were planted in 1930 and lie just down the slope from Charmes *Dessous*, making this a very well-situated, old vine bottling. It is premier cru quality without a doubt in 2016! 2020-2040. **92**.

### **2016 Meursault “les Chevalières”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The 2016 Meursault “les Chevalières” from Domaine Fichet is also excellent this year. The bouquet is pure, refined and complex, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of pear, apple, a complex base of limestone minerality, a touch of iodine, almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and racy, with outstanding backend mineral drive, a good core and a lovely girdle of acidity giving lift and grip on the long and vibrant finish. High class juice. 2020-2040. **92+**.

### **2016 Meursault “le Tesson”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The 2016 Tesson *chez* Fichet is my favorite of his lovely lineup of *lieux à dits* Meursault cuvées this year, as this wine is truly outstanding. The nose is pure, refined and zesty, delivering scents of apple, pear, hazelnuts, iodine, a quite complex, chalky soil signature, spring flowers and a lovely topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with excellent mid-palate depth, lovely focus and grip and a long, racy and exquisitely balanced finish. Fine, fine juice. 2020-2040+. **93+**.

### **2016 Puligny-Montrachet “Referts”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

The Fichet family’s Puligny “Referts” is also excellent in 2016. The wine is a lovely and quite expressive specimen on the nose, offering up a fine blend of white peach, apple, chalky soil tones, citrus zest, vanillin oak and a pungent topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite vibrant in personality, with a good core, fine focus and impressive lift and grip on the poised and classy finish. Another excellent example. 2021-2045. **93+**.



*Not your typical drive from Meursault to St. Aubin on the first of March this year.*

### **Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy (Saint Aubin)**

*Olivier Lamy's fine 2016s were still in cask at the time of my early March visit to the domaine this year, with bottling destined to begin in the next week or two. Malolactic fermentations were generally on the late side here this year. As was the case at a couple other top white Burgundy domaines in 2016, Monsieur Lamy decided to use no new barrels for the elevage of the 2016 whites in his lineup (Domaine Jobard in Meursault was another), and only a small percentage new oak was used for a few of his red wines. With vines in Saint Aubin, Santenay, Chassagne and Puligny, frost damage varied rather dramatically in Monsieur Lamy's vines from village to village and vineyard to vineyard, but happily, at least his vines in Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet were untouched by the frost. However, their holdings in the Chassagne premier cru of Macherelles were completely wiped out by the frost and this bottling will not exist in 2016 chez Lamy, with the very few bunches that they were able to gather going into the AC bottling. The wines here that originate in parcels that were hit by the frost vary a bit in style, with one or two just a bit laid back structurally and probably destined to be at their finest in the early going, whereas others are open-knit, but still precise and vibrant and will age very nicely over at least the next ten to twelve years. Other wines, either less affected or untouched by the frost, are racier and show a bit more early structure out of the blocks and will want a few years' worth of bottle age to start to unfold their secondary layers and really drink at optimal levels. A handful of these have a nice touch of sweet grapefruit in their fruit constellations, which I always*

*take as a very good sign for the future evolution in bottle of a given white Burgundy, but which is pretty rare in the vintage of 2016. The whole lineup here is excellent, with the very top premier crus from Saint Aubin truly stunning, not to mention the Chassagne “Chaumées” and the Criots. I also liked the red wines here very well in 2016, with particular attention needing to be paid to the two red Santanays, as they have really excelled in this vintage!*

### ***Vins Blancs***

#### **2016 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Domaine Lamy Bourgogne Blanc is a good example, offering up a bright and nicely youthful bouquet of apple, grapefruit, chalk, spring flowers and a bright touch of citrus zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full, crisp and nicely bouncy, with a good core and very good cut on the finish this year. Good juice. 2018-2028. **88.**

#### **2016 Saint Aubin “La Princesse”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

Monsieur Lamy’s La Princesse bottling is always one of the best village wine bargains in the world of white Burgundy and this is once again the case with the lovely 2016 version. The bouquet hops from the glass in a quite complex blend of lemon, pear, tangerine, chalky minerality, spring flowers and a touch of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and zesty, with a lovely core, fine backend tension and a long, vibrant and beautifully balanced finish. A fine, fine vintage for this cuvée. 2019-2030+. **90+.**

#### **2016 Chassagne-Montrachet “Le Concis du Champs”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

With the very severe frost damage in the vineyards of Chassagne in 2016, it is not surprising that the domaine’s Chassagne AC cannot quite match the vibrancy of the La Princesse, but this is still a good, solid effort for the vintage that will give lots of pleasure in its early years. The nose is wide open and inviting, offering up scents of apple, pear, a touch of nuttiness, a good base of soil and a floral topnote. On the palate the wine is full, succulent and quite long, with good depth and nascent complexity, but with a fairly gentle structural chassis and not the same backend energy as the above wine. 2018-2027. **89.**

#### **2016 Puligny-Montrachet “Les Tremblots”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 les Tremblots *chez* Lamy is very good and shows a bit more backend vibrancy than the Chassagne *villages* this year. The bouquet is bright and stylish, delivering scents of apple, white peach, chalky soil tones and a lovely topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and bouncy on the backend, with good, but not great depth at the core, fine focus and grip and a long, classy finish. This is a very tasty *villages* as well, but I have to give the La Princesse a slight nod in terms of complexity in this vintage. 2018-2030. **90.**

#### **2016 Santenay “Clos des Gravières” Blanc- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

Since its first vintage a handful of years ago, I have found the Clos des Gravières to be an excellent addition to the Domaine Lamy lineup. The 2016 is really strong, but is still probably only the tip of the iceberg, as Monsieur Lamy notes that “eighty percent of this vineyard is still very young vines, with only twenty percent made up of vines in excess of sixty years of age, so as the young vines mature, it is going to get even more serious.” The 2016 Clos des Gravières is a really strong example of the vintage, offering up a very stylish nose of pear, lemon, citrus zest, chalky and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and a bit more reserved in profile today than the Tremblots, with a fine core, lovely soil signature and impressive grip and bounce on the long and focused finish. Truly fine juice and a real sleeper. 2019-2035. **91.**

**2016 Saint Aubin “Clos du Meix”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Clos du Meix is lovely, with a bit more depth and potential longevity than the very good Saint Aubin AC this year. The nose wafts from the glass in a vibrant blend of lemon, pear, chalky minerality, a dollop of *crème patissière*, lemon zest and a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and complex, with excellent focus and energy, a good core and fine balance and grip on the zesty finish. This will be approachable early, but deserves a couple of years in the cellar to allow that additional layer of premier cru complexity to fully emerge. 2020-2040. **91**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “les Frionnes”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 les Frionnes is absolutely classic in profile and depth this year and is a lovely wine in the making. The wine delivers an aromatic constellation of lemon, a touch of pink grapefruit, limestone soil tones, apple blossoms and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and poised, with lovely focus and balance, a good core and a long, vibrant and complex finish. 2020-2040. **91+**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “Derrière Chez Edouard” Blanc- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Derrière Chez Edouard from Olivier Lamy is even a step up from the very stylish les Frionnes and has the best depth and nascent complexity of any wine up to this point in the lineup. The first class nose jumps from the glass in a blend of pear, tangerine, sweet grapefruit, chalky minerality, citrus zest and a nice touch of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full and rock solid at the core, with fine soil signature, a racy personality and impressive cut and grip on the very long finish. This is superb. 2021-2040+. **92+**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “Clos de la Chatenière”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Clos de la Chatenière from Domaine Lamy is also a lovely wine, but it is more open and ready to go out of the blocks than the last couple of premier crus in the tasting. The bouquet delivers a fine blend of apple, tangerine, chalk, fresh almond, vanillin oak and acacia blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full, succulent and very nicely balanced, with a good core and a long, complex and zesty finish. This will be the premier cru in the cellars this year to drink first. 2018-2035. **91+**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “Murgers Dents de Chien”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Murgers from Monsieur Lamy is outstanding in quality and absolutely classical in structure and profile. The wine offers up a vibrant aromatic constellation of pear, apple, a touch of grapefruit, chalky minerality, hints of the *crème patissière* to come and a fine topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and nascently complex, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent focus and balance and a very long, vibrant and very promising finish. A superb young Saint Aubin in the making. 2021-2045. **93**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Remilly *chez* Lamy is equally outstanding. The vibrant bouquet wafts from the glass in a youthful mix of pear, apple, a touch of tangerine, a complex base of limestone, incipient pastry cream, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, long and still quite primary, with a rock solid core, great backend mineral drive and a long, zesty and seamlessly balanced finish. This needs a bit of bottle age to allow its inherent complexity to really emerge. Just a lovely wine. 2022-2045. **93+**.

**2016 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Chaumées”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

Olivier Lamy’s 2016 Chaumées is excellent and nicely structured out of the blocks, so it too will need a few years’ worth of bottle age to properly blossom, but it should prove to be a fine, fine drink when it is ready to go. The refined nose delivers scents of pear, apple, a hint of

grapefruit, a complex base of soil tones, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and shows lovely depth at the core, with bright acids, fine focus and grip and a long, youthful and promising finish. There is not quite the same potential here as in the two top Saint Aubin premier crus, but this is still an excellent example in the making. 2021-2045. **92**.

**2016 Puligny-Montrachet “Les Tremblots” Haut Densité - Domaine Lamy**

The 2016 Haut Densité version of les Tremblots is really lovely, with a greater sense of elegance than is found in the regular bottling, not to mention significantly more complexity out of the blocks. The excellent bouquet delivers scents of pear, apple, lemon zest, a touch of fresh almond, lovely soil tones, a dollop of vanillin oak and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, refined and focused, with a lovely core, great chalky mineral drive and excellent cut and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. *Tout en finesse*. 2020-2040. **93**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “Derrière Chez Edouard” Haut Densité - Domaine H. et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Chez Edouard bottling of Haut Densité is also exceptional in quality, but will probably want an additional year in the cellar to blossom. The aromatic constellation is vibrant and complex, offering up scents of lemon, pear, a touch of grapefruit, complex, limestone minerality, citrus zest, a touch of vanillin oak and orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and racy, with a rock solid core, great transparency, great balance and cut and a very long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. 2021-2045. **93+**.

**2016 Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

Olivier Lamy’s 2016 Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet is stellar. The superb nose delivers a pure and classy blend of white peach, apple, fresh almond, pastry cream, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and impeccably balanced, with a great core, fine focus and grip and a very, very long, complex and racy finish. This will need several years in the cellar to fully develop, but when it is ready, it will be a very pure, very refined and an utterly classic bottle of Criots-Bâtard. 2024-2060. **95+**.

***Vins Rouges***

**2016 Santenay “Clos des Hâtes”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Santenay “Clos des Hâtes” from Domaine Lamy is an excellent wine. Olivier used fifty percent whole clusters for this wine in this vintage and it was showing beautifully at the time of my visit, offering up a refined nose of red and black cherries, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, raw cocoa and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and suavely structured, with a good core, impressive transparency, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and bouncy finish. Lovely juice. 2022-2050. **90**.

**2016 Chassagne-Montrachet “La Gaujonne” Rouge- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Chassagne *rouge* bottling from Monsieur Lamy was one of the few wines in the cellar that saw a bit of new oak this year, as twenty percent of the casks were new. This is a very good wine as well, but much more black fruity in personality than the Clos des Hâtes, as the wine offers up a bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, bitter chocolate, a touch of venison, dark soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile for a young Chassagne red, with a good sappy core, ripe tannins and fine length and grip on the tangy finish. A very good example. 2022-2050. **89+**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “Derrière Chez Edouard” Rouge- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2016 Derrière Chez Edouard rouge is also quite black fruity in personality this year, but this was the very last wine in the cellars to finish its malo and was the only wine in the lineup that was still quite grumpy at the time of my visit. Perhaps more red fruit will emerge as the wine



gets a bit more distance out from the malo? The youthful nose wafts from the glass in a promising blend of cassis, dark berries, woodsmoke, gamebird and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows plenty of sappiness at the core, with ripe, fairly chewy tannins, tangy acids and a long, well-balanced finish. I am sure this will be quite good, but it was cantankerous enough at the time of my visit to score it within a range. 2024-2050. **89-90+**.

### **2016 Santenay “Clos des Gravières”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

Happily, the 2016 Clos des Gravières rouge was on form and showing very well in early March. The wine offers up a lovely sense of purity and sappiness on both the nose and palate, with the complex bouquet delivering scents of dark berries, black cherries, chalky soil tones, gamebird, raw cocoa, woodsmoke and a hint of fresh thyme in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full, transparent and sappy at the core, with moderate tannins, bright acids and lovely focus and grip on the complex finish. I assume that this is also a blend of young and old vines, with the combination seeming to have really excelled in 2016. 2025-2050+. **91**.

### **Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils (Saint Aubin)**

*I love the Prudhon brothers' wines, as they are beautifully soil-driven and seem to always capture the highest degree of potential inherent in each vintage. In 2016, they had their fair share of frost damage, with yields down as much as sixty percent in certain vineyards in this year. But, as Vincent and Philippe Prudhon both opined, it is easier to look at the very short crop of 2016 a bit more sanguinely, given that the quality has turned out so well and the generous yields of the following vintage of 2017 will make up a bit for what was lost in 2016. With a couple of exceptions, due to late malos, the range of Saint Aubin white wines had been bottled in August of 2017, with the Pulignys and Chassagne bottled in March of 2018. There is no Chenevottes in the family's cellars this year, as the frost damage of 2016 was so severe in this vineyard that they could not produce a wine. The Prudhon family's very good red wines had all been bottled between January and February of 2018. As Philippe Prudhon noted, "the yields for the red wines were actually a bit better in 2016 than they were in 2015, as we averaged a thirty percent drop in 2016, but in the previous year, we were off by forty percent in our red wine vineyards." I tasted here on the morning of March 1st this year, which meant there was plenty of snow to navigate on the climb up through the village of Saint Aubin to the family's cellars, and as the roads had not been plowed after this freakishly late dusting of snow, it was a bit of an adventure, but the quality of the wines waiting in the tasting room chez Prudhon made it well worth the trip up through the slippery roads. The 2016 whites here are not quite as racy and structured as the brilliant 2014s, but they are quite classically proportioned, transparent and offer up vibrant and pure fruit tones and lovely, girdles of zesty acidity to give them lift and bounce on the backend. They will give pleasure from the outset, but have the balance and spine of acidity to also age very gracefully and 2016 is another lovely vintage at Domaine Prudhon.*

### **Vins Blancs**

#### **2016 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The Bourgogne Blanc vineyards here were some of the hardest hit by the frost damage, with fully sixty percent of a normal cropload lost in 2016. The wine is a good, solid example, but it is a touch lower in energy than several of these other 2016s, as is the case in so many other cellars as well where the frost was more severe. The wide open bouquet offers up juicy notes of pear, apple, chalky soil tones, beeswax and white flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-

bodied and ready to drink from the outset, with a solid core and good length on the tasty finish. 2018-2025. **86+**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “le Ban”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The frost damage was far less in the Saint Aubin *villages* level parcels for the Prudhons, and the energy level in this wine jumps right up to the customary level for this domaine. The bouquet is bright, pure and classy, offering up scents of apple, pear, fresh almond, chalky soil tones, a touch of vanillin oak and a lovely topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, vibrant and classy finish. A fine *villages*. 2018-2030+. **89**.



*The Prudhon brothers, Vincent and Philippe, taking a break from shoveling in their tasting room in Saint Aubin.*

**2016 Saint Aubin “les Castets”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 les Castets is excellent. The bouquet is pure and nicely expressive out of the blocks, delivering a fine blend of pear, apple, chalky minerality, spring flower, a touch of beeswax and a discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, zesty and quite precise, with a good core, fine soil signature and good, crisp acidity. The finish is open and elegant, with already a nice sense of succulence to the fruit, nicely layered over good backend minerality. Fine juice and already very easy to drink. 2018-2030. **90**.

**2016 Saint Aubin “Sur le Sentier du Clou”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 Sur le Sentier du Clou *chez* Prudhon is also a lovely wine, with a bit more lift and grip on the finish than the more laid back les Castets. The bouquet is pure and bright, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of apple, pear, fresh almond, limestone soil tones, fruit blossoms and a gentle base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant in personality, with lovely mid-palate intensity, lovely minerality and a long, poised and very nicely balanced finish. Good juice. 2018-2030+. **91.**

**2016 Saint Aubin “les Perrières”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 Perrières from the Prudhon brothers is a lovely and quite classic young bottle of Saint Aubin, offering up a refined aromatic constellation of pear, apple, chalky soil tones, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, a bit of fresh almond, a dollop of iodine and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is very pure, full-bodied and complex, with a good core of fruit, lovely transparency, fine focus and grip and a long, vibrant and energetic finish. Fine, fine wine. 2018-2030+. **91+.**

**2016 Saint Aubin “Sur Gamay”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 Sur Gamay was the most reserved wine in the lineup, up until this point, and I like the nice structural chassis in this wine. The bouquet offers up scents of apple, lemon zest, chalky minerality, beeswax, fresh almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite closed in comparison to the previous premier crus, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, pure and nicely balanced finish. The 2016 Perrières seems to have just a touch more vibrancy than the Sur Gamay today, but perhaps this is just the more closed stage that the latter is in at the present time. In any event, this has depth, transparency and length and will be lovely with a bit of bottle age. 2020-2035. **91.**

**2016 Saint Aubin “les Chantennières”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The fifty year-old vines in Chantennières have turned out a fine wine *chez* Prudhon in 2016. The bright and classic bouquet jumps from the glass in a fine blend of apple, pear, incipient notes of pastry cream, chalky soil, fresh almond and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary, with a fine core, simply beautiful balance, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and energetic finish. This is a really lovely wine in the making in 2016. 2020-2035+. **92.**

**2016 Saint Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 Remilly from Domaine Prudhon is outstanding and probably the very finest white wine in the cellar this year, though Puligny “la Garenne” will give it a serious run for its money. The pure and absolutely classic bouquet jumps from the glass in a refined mix of apple, pear, lemon blossoms, chalky minerality, incipient notes of *crème patissière* and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and nascently complex, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent soil signature, bright, zesty acids and lovely bounce and grip on the very long and classy finish. This is a quintessentially successful 2016 white, with purity of fruit, generosity, fidelity to its underlying *terroir* and a lovely sense of zesty succulence. Gorgeous wine. 2020-2040. **93.**

**2016 Saint Aubin “les Murgers Dents de Chien”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 Murgers from the Prudhon brothers is also outstanding, but a bit more reserved out of the blocks than the Remilly this year. The bouquet is deep and pure, but still fairly tightly-knit, as it offers up scents of apple, pear, limestone minerality, spring flowers, citrus zest and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a lovely core of fruit, fine mineral drive on the backend and very good grip and focus on the long and primary finish. With a touch of bottle age, perhaps this will catch the Remilly? 2020-2040. **92+.**

### **2016 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Houillères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

I always laugh to myself when we arrive at the les Houillères in the Prudhon family’s lineup, as the soils here have a lot of clay in them and it never shows the same mineral complexity and lift that is found in the excellent range of Saint Aubin premier crus that precedes it, and yet, the wine sells for more, as it is from Chassagne! No one ever said there was intelligence in market mechanisms. The frost damage here took away fifty percent of a normal crop in 2016, but the wine has turned out very well and does not show any diminution of energy on either the nose or palate. The bouquet is a pretty blend of apple, white peach, fresh almond, spring flowers, beeswax and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite open in personality, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, bouncy finish. This is easy-going out of the blocks and very easy to enjoy. 2018-2035+. **89+**.

### **2016 Puligny-Montrachet “les Enseignères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 les Enseignères was the slowest wine to finish up its malo in the Prudhon cellars this year, and consequently, it had only been bottled two days before my visit. Happily, it had not yet shut down and was really showing well. Yields here were also off by fifty percent due to frost damage, but the wine has plenty of energy and bounce. The bouquet is pure and classy, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of peach, apple, complex, chalky minerality, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nicely reserved in profile, with a fine core, excellent focus and grip and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. This is really, really strong this year! 2021-2040+. **92**.

### **2016 Puligny-Montrachet “la Garenne”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The frost damage in la Garenne was less than in les Enseignères in 2016, with the crop down by a third in the domaine’s parcel. This is exceptional in this vintage, offering up a pure and classic bouquet of apple, white peach, orange zest, chalky soil tones, a nice touch of vanillin oak and a veritable potpourri of floral scents in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and absolutely classic in profile, with lovely mid-palate depth, laser-like focus and outstanding cut and grip on the very long and complex finish. A beautiful wine in the making. 2021-2045. **93**.

## ***Vins Rouges***

### **2016 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

This was bottled in December of 2017 and was showing very nicely, with a lovely, red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, woodsmoke, orange peel and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and nicely soil-driven, with a touch of tannin, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the fairly long finish. A fine example which will want a couple of years in the cellar to blossom. 2020-2035. **88**.

### **2016 Saint Aubin “les Argillers” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The inherent elegance of the vintage of 2016 has really worked nicely with the Saint Aubin *rouge* here at Domaine Prudhon, and this is going to be a really lovely wine in a few years. The bouquet is bright and nascently complex, offering up scents of red and black cherries, *pigeon*, woodsmoke, raw cocoa and a fine base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely reserved out of the blocks, with a sappy core, fine soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and very well-balanced finish. This was bottled at the start of February of 2018 and will need some bottle age to blossom, but it is going to be an excellent village wine when it is ready to drink. 2022-2050. **89+**.

### **2016 Saint Aubin “les Frionnes” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2016 les Frionnes *rouge* was bottled at the very start of the year and was showing very well indeed at the time of my visit. The bouquet delivers a fine and classy blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil, a touch of fresh thyme, espresso and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and quite soil-driven in personality, with a very good core, excellent focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and impressive length and grip on the vibrant and youthful finish. Good juice. 2024-2050+. **90+**.

### **2016 Saint Aubin “les Rouges Gorges” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The Prudhon brothers’ 2016 Rouges Gorges red was bottled a bit later, at the start of February, and was a bit more closed on the palate as a result of its recent *mise*. The bouquet is excellent, offering up a youthful blend of red and black cherries, a touch of sweet dark berry, woodsmoke, espresso, fresh herb tones and an excellent base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and quite primary today, with a lovely core, fine backend soil signature and a long, ripely tannic and very nicely balanced finish. All this needs is a bit of patience to allow it to blossom properly in the cellar. 2026-2050+. **91**.

### **2016 Saint Aubin “Sur le Sentier du Clou” Vieilles Vigne Rouge- Domaine Prudhon et Fils**

The Prudhon family’s seventy-plus year-old vines in Sentier du Clou have once again produced my favorite red wine in the cellar in 2016 and this is going to be an absolute steal! The bouquet is deep, pure and simply superb, delivering a fine constellation of sappy black cherries, espresso, gamebird, raw cocoa, a dollop of fresh thyme, woodsmoke and a gloriously complex base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a sappy core, superb transparency and a long, seamless and ripely tannic finish. Fine, fine juice in the making! 2026-2055+. **92**.

### **2016 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Chambres” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The Prudhon brothers’ les Chambres *rouge* bottling hails from a parcel of forty year-old vines and is again, a very elegant Chassagne red in 2016. The bouquet is refined and promising, wafting from the glass in a blend of sweet dark berries, black cherries, venison, dark chocolate, a fine base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly reserved out of the blocks, with a rock solid core, fine focus and grip, suave tannins and a long, classy and nascently complex finish. This too is a very good bottle in the making and will be an outstanding value! 2026-2055. **91**.

### **Domaine Bachelet-Monnot (Dezize-lès-Maranges)**

*Tasting through several of the Bachelet brothers 2015 white wine cuvées here in New York easily convinced me that I was long overdue for a visit to Maranges, and I was very happy to be able to taste through the domaine’s entire range of 2016s this past March. Marc and Alex Bachelet have been running their family domaine now since 2005, whose antecedent is Domaine Bernard Bachelet et Fils in Chassagne-Montrachet, which was started by their grandfather and where their father, Jean-François Bachelet made the wines for the vast majority of his own career. The Bachelet brothers farm twenty hectares of vines, through a combination of family ownership and long-term mettagage agreements. The family parcels of vines hail both from their father and uncle, with Marc and Alex now producing wines from amongst several of the top appellations of Maranges, Saint Aubin, Chassagne-Montrachet and Puligny-Montrachet. The domaine’s vines in Maranges suffered little frost damage, as the village was quite fortunate, but in the three other communes where they have vines, frost damage was pretty significant and varied from parcel to parcel. The 2016 white wines from the domaine had been fined at the time*

of my visit, but not yet filtered, and were destined for bottling a few weeks later. The 2016 red wines had been racked from barrel into tank, as the brothers prefer to leave the red wines in barrel for their first year, and then assemble them in cement tanks for an additional six months prior to bottling. I had only previously tasted a range of their white wines from the 2015 vintage and found the 2016 reds here to also be excellent, and given that they hail from two of the less well-known villages of Maranges and Santenay, they will offer up outstanding value and will be well worth a search of the marketplace to find. With the exception of the Santenay premier cru vineyard of les Prarrons, which is half planted with twenty year-old vines and half with sixty year-old vines, all of the pinot noir that the Bachelet brothers cultivate ranges from fifty to eighty-five years of age, so there is plenty of old vine sappiness to be found in their excellent red wines. However, the domaine is best-known for its excellent, soil-driven and very pure white wines and I found the entire range of 2016s extremely promising here. The white wines generally see around a quarter new oak, which seems like a perfect level to allow their lovely fruit tones and outstanding minerality to take center stage.



Marc and Alex Bachelet in their tasting room at the domaine in Dezize-lès-Maranges.

### ***Vins Rouges***

#### **2016 Maranges “la Fussièrè” Rouge- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The Bachelet family’s holdings in la Fussièrè are some of their most important, as they farm fully five *hectares* in this fine premier cru vineyard. Their pinot noir vines average fifty

years of age, and the 2016 version included twenty-five percent whole clusters and was raised in about a quarter of new oak. The wine was showing beautiful potential at the time of my visit, offering up a complex nose of dark berries, black cherries, woodsmoke, espresso, a touch of currant leaf and a classy base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant, with a fine core, lovely, suave structural elements and a long, focused and tangy finish. The tannins are ripe and present on the backend, but beautifully integrated and this will be a very tasty bottle with six or seven years' worth of bottle age. 2024-2055. **89+**.

**2016 Maranges “Clos la Boutiers” Rouge- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The family's plot of pinot noir vines in Clos la Boutiers are older than in la Fussière, with the average here fully eighty-five years-old and all planted on *selection massale*. There is more clay in the soils here than in la Fussière, which has a lot of chalk, so this is a bit broader-shouldered red, though the old vines here have imparted the same sense of elegance. The 2016 Clos la Boutiers was made with thirty percent whole clusters and the same percentage of new oak and is excellent, offering up a deep and youthful bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, gamebird, dark soil tones and a nice touch of bitter chocolate in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full and beautifully balanced, with excellent focus, a sappy core, fien-grained tannins and a long, nascently complex and soil-driven finish. This is a classy bottle in the making and will be a terrific value. 2025-2060. **90+**.

**2016 Santenay “les Charmes” Rouge- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The vineyard of les Charmes in Santenay is not a premier cru, but surrounded by them on the slope. The Bachelet brothers have fifty year-old vines here and the 2016 is excellent, wafting from the glass in a classy aromatic blend of red and black cherries, gamebird, chalky soil tones, woodsmoke and a nice touch of spice. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, elegant and very transparent in personality, with a fine core of fruit, just a touch of tannin and a long, vibrant and well-balanced finish. Lovely juice. 2021-2050. **90**.

**2016 Santenay “les Prarrons” Rouge- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The 2016 premier cru of les Prarrons from the domaine is more black fruity than the les Charmes, offering up a fine nose of black cherries, sweet dark berries, a touch of currant leaf, a fine base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off excellent mid-palate depth, with impressive soil signature, suave, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and perfectly balanced finish. Another really classy red wine in the making and a stellar value! 2024-2060. **91+**.

***Vins Blancs***

**2016 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The vines for the Bachelet brothers' Bourgogne Blanc are all planted in Puligny and are forty-five to fifty years of age. This is a very good example, offering up a bright bouquet of apple, quince, fresh almond, chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, wide open in personality and succulent, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, zesty finish. 2018-2025. **87**.

**2016 Maranges “la Fussière” Blanc- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The domaine's chardonnay vines in this fine premier cru are planted in the chalkier section of the vineyard, which is “trés calcaire” according to Alex Bachelet. The 2016 is going to be an excellent wine, as it offers up a bright and complex nose of white peach, apple, complex, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and a nice dollop of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and elegantly balanced, with a good core, fien cut and

grip and lovely backend mineral drive on the long and vibrant finish. Classy juice and another great value. 2018-2030+. **90.**

**2016 St. Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The Bachelets' parcel in Remilly was pretty heavily-frosted this year and they lost forty percent of their crop as a result. The wine is wide open and classy on both the nose and palate, but because of the frost, it does not quite show the same lift and bounce as found in the 2016 la Fussièrè this year. The bouquet is classy, offering up scents of apple, pear, white lilies, chalky soil tones, a bit of lemon zest and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, long and readily accessible, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, succulent and very tasty finish. 2018-2028. **90.**

**2016 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The domaine's Chassagne AC vines were the most heavily frost damaged in 2016, with the yields off by sixty percent this year. This is similarly structured to the Remilly, with a more open-knit personality that will make it most tasty in its youth. The bouquet is quite stylish, offering up scents of apple, pear, bee pollen, spring flowers and soil tones. On the palate the wine is long, full-bodied and already quite complex, with good depth in the core, fine framing acids and good length on the pure and wide open finish. Again, there is just a touch less lift and backend energy here than in the estate's white wines that had little or no frost damage in 2016. But, this is still very good for the near-term. 2018-2028. **90.**

**2016 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The Bachelets did not have frost damage in their Puligny AC vines and this is an outstanding village wine in the making in 2016. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a beautiful blend of white peach, apple, citrus blossoms, chalky minerality and just a touch of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and zesty, with a fine core, lovely focus, cut and grip and a long, vibrant and energetic finish. Classy juice. 2018-2035. **91+.**

**2016 Meursault “Clos Cromin”- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

In their parcel of Clos Cromin, the frost was only at the base of the hill, so it just touched the lowest portion of their rows of vines and yields were not off by very much in 2016. This is a lovely bottle in the making, with the bouquet jumping from the glass in a complex blend of apple, chalky soil tones, a touch of beeswax, hazelnut, spring flowers and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and still quite primary in profile, with a lovely core, fine focus and balance and a long, vibrant and youthful finish. This will need a few years to blossom, but will be excellent. 2021-2040. **91+.**

**2016 Puligny-Montrachet “les Referts”- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The vines here are fifty years of age and the wine is raised in twenty-five percent now oak each year. The 2016 is superb, delivering a fine aromatic constellation of apple, pear, fresh almond, a very complex base of white soil tones, spring flowers, vanillin oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, zesty and full-bodied, with excellent mid-palate depth, superb focus and grip and a very, very long, complex and energetic finish. A very classy example of Referts. 2020-245. **93.**

**2016 Puligny-Montrachet “les Folatières”- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The domaine's parcel of fifty-three year-old vines in Folatières are in the extreme northern end of the vineyard, sandwiched between les Truffières next door and Domaine Leflaive's parcels in the Folatières. The 2016 version here is a very, very minerally example of the vineyard, delivering a superb bouquet of apple, white peach, chalky minerality, gentle floral



tones, vanillin oak and a pungent topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full and racy, with impressive complexity a fine core, zesty and seamless acids and outstanding backend mineral drive on the long and complex finish. This is more elegant in profile than the very good 2016 Referts. 2020-2040. **93+**.

**2016 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot**

The Bachelet brothers were two of the luckiest *vignerons* with parcels of vines in Bâtard, as their vines were barely touched by the frost here and the yields were close to normal. This wine did not see any new oak in 2016, as it was raised in one and two wine barrels. It was still in cask and had not yet been assembled at the time of my visit on the third of March, and was showing beautifully on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a youthfully complex blend of pear, apple, a touch of grapefruit, a fine base of soil, white flowers and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very refined in profile, with a rock solid core, excellent transparency and focus, bright, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. A classic in the making. 2023-2050+. **94+**.

## THE INCOMPARABLE CORTON-CHARLEMAGNE OF DOMAINE COCHE-DURY



In late February of this year, I was very generously invited to participate in a vertical tasting of Domaine Coche-Dury Corton-Charlemagne and Weingut Keller G-Max organized in Beaune. The occasion was the sixty-fifth birthday celebration of the well-known Luxembourg collector, Claude Bicheler, who decided that he wished to drink two of his absolute favorite bottlings of white wine at a single tasting, and at the same time, introduce the Coche and Keller families to each other. All of the bottles of Corton-Charlemagne hailed from Monsieur Bicheler's own cellar. The tasting was held at the very elegant and comfortable 1243 Club in Beaune, with the dinner catered by the well-respected Japanese restaurant of Bissot in Beaune. I will report on the fine lineup of wines from Weingut Keller in a future issue, but wanted to feature in this article the eleven vintages of Coche-Dury Corton-Charlemagne that we drank with great pleasure. Both Raphaël and Jean-François Coche were in attendance for the evening, which allowed us to enjoy the insights of both generations of Coche *vignerons* as we worked back from the 2009 vintage to the 1999 Corton-Charlemagne. Raphaël Coche had worked alongside of his father Jean-François the family domaine since finishing up his oenological studies in 1999, and has been at the helm of the family estate in Meursault since his father's "official" retirement in 2010. Given my recent writing about the rather universal issue of premoix with white Burgundies

since the 1995 vintage, I was very happy to see how fortunate we were with our eleven bottles, as there was no signs of premature oxidation issues with the wines on this particular evening with ten out of the eleven examples. Only the 2008 vintage showed a few possible ill effects from the onset of premoxy, as the wine started out a bit short on the finish and with fairly modest grip for this wine in '08 when it was first poured, but as the wine had a chance to stretch its legs with a bit of aeration, it happily got longer on the backend and started to show some proper cut and grip. In the end, the bottle performed quite well indeed, and all of the other vintages were spot on and really drinking as they should be for their respective ages and points of evolution. It is good to be lucky.

Corton-Charlemagne is the appellation given to the finest parcels on the hill of Corton that produce white wine, with the name alleged to date back to 775, when the wife of Charlemagne interceded to get her husband to start drinking more white wine and stop staining his long, white beard with his consumption of red wine. It is at the very top of the hill of Corton, with its soil foundation of clay and chalky marl over a deep base of hard limestone that is the home of Corton-Charlemagne. The *lieux à dits* that are entitled to the Corton-Charlemagne AOC for their white wines (moving along the top of the hill from east to west from Ladoix to Aloxe to Pernand) include les Mourottes, le Rognet, les Renardes, le Corton, les Languettes, les Pougets, le Charlemagne and en Charlemagne. Not all sectors of these *lieux à dits* are allowed to be called Corton-Charlemagne, as it is only the top sections of most of these parcel that are well-suited to chardonnay cultivation, with much higher percentages of active limestone in their soils, while further down the hill in each vineyard, the deeper soils found here are more defined by clay and iron and best planted to pinot noir. Chardonnay planted on the grand cru section of the hill of Corton outside of these areas delimited for the appellation of Corton-Charlemagne (at the top of the slope) can also be quite good, but are labeled as Corton Blanc and are typically far less defined by their underlying minerality than true Corton-Charlemagne.

Until quite recently, the Coche family owned one-third of a *hectare* of vines in the appellation of Corton-Charlemagne, with their parcel located in the middle of the vineyard, near the nexus of the Pernand-Vergelesses and Aloxe-Corton boundaries in the *lieu à dit* of Le Charlemagne that lies in the commune of Aloxe. The family started farming this parcel in Corton-Charlemagne in 1986 under a *metayage* agreement, with the vines having been planted in 1960. It is this parcel that has been the source for the Domaine Coche-Dury bottling of Corton-Charlemagne since the inaugural vintage of 1986. During their *metayage* years with this plot of vines, the domaine typically produced only around one hundred and forty cases of Corton-Charlemagne per year. Finally, in 2011, the Coche family was able to purchase this original parcel of vines from the previous owner, which allowed for a doubling of the number of bottles available from the domaine, as they no longer had to share the production equally with the vineyard owner. Additionally, beyond this original parcel, the Coche family has been able to add to their vineyard patrimony in Corton-Charlemagne in recent times, having bought a second parcel of a third of a *hectare* of vines, also in the *lieu à dit* of Le Charlemagne in this same year of 2011, with this second parcel of vines having been planted all the way back in 1955. The following year, after the harvest, they were able to add another tiny parcel further down the slope in this same *lieu à dit* that was then planted to pinot noir and the Coche family actually made a red Corton from this plot in the 2013 vintage. After this, it was replanted to chardonnay, so that eventually, once these young vines come of age, the domaine will now be farming around three-

quarters of a *hectare* of vines in Le Charlemagne. This is a significant improvement from the days when they were bottling half of the production from that original thirty-three *ares* of vines that they were sharecropping!

The exposition of the Coche family's parcels here in Le Charlemagne is southwesterly. Traditionally Corton-Charlemagne has been broken down stylistically by where the vines lie on the top of the slope along an east to west axis. As the hill of Corton wraps around from an exposition of due east in the section in Ladoix-Serrigny to southeast on much of the Aloxe section of the hill, then due south in *lieux à dits* such as les Pougets, southwesterly in Le Charlemagne and all the way to a direct westerly exposition on the far side of the hill in Pernand-Vergelesses, there are wide differences of exposition between the various *lieux à dits* that are entitled to the Corton-Charlemagne appellation. These differences are both soil-related and due to variations of sun exposure, with the exposition of the vines the far more important factor in determining the style of the resulting wine. The vineyards which lie at the top of the hill on the Aloxe side, with their southeasterly to direct southerly exposure have always been the more opulent, fruit-driven and sumptuous examples of Corton-Charlemagne; this trait is particularly evident when the wines are young. As one moves west along the top of the hill in the direction of Pernand-Vergelesses, the exposition swings around towards a westerly direction, and these Pernand examples of Corton-Charlie have traditionally been the tighter, more minerally and "cooler" examples of the appellation, with a far more structured profile in their youth and in need of extended bottle age to start to blossom. The most dramatic examples of this latter style are the superb Corton-Charlemagne bottlings of Domaine Roumier, Domaine Simon Bize et Fils and Domaine Bonneau du Martray (which is the largest landowner in the appellation and based entirely in the Pernand-Vergelesses side of the hill).

Domaine Coche-Dury's parcels of vines in Corton-Charlemagne are in the sector that is often considered the heart and soul of the appellation, Le Charlemagne, as here the southwesterly exposition allows for both full fruit development and a great vein of underlying minerality to provide cut, grip and backend drive in the wine. Other Corton-Charlemagne producers in this area of the hillside near the Coche family include Domaine Rollin and Domaine Michel Juillot (who actually split the original *mettayage* parcel with the Coche family back in 1986, when the owner of the vines decided to rent out one half of their parcel to each of the two families). This one third of a *hectare* parcel of vines is located right at the top of Le Charlemagne. As is the case with all of the domaine's vineyard parcels in Meursault and elsewhere, the Coche family prefers to replant vines in Le Charlemagne on a plant by plant basis, rather than doing wholesale replanting of a section of the vineyard (with the exception, of course, of the new small parcel of pinot noir that they replanted entirely to chardonnay in 2014). They always use *selection massale* from their own vines for any plants that need to be renewed. Their original *mettayage* parcel was hit by a tragic accident in the summer of 1998, as a helicopter which had been spraying vines adjacent to theirs crashed in the vineyard, wiping out ten rows of Coche-farmed vines at that time. These were all replanted with *selection massale* plant material, but the crash created a small sector of their parcel of vines in Corton-Charlemagne that are now dramatically younger than the average in their other sixty-plus *ares* of vines (not counting the plot of pinot that was replanted to chardonnay in 2014).

The winemaking of the Coche family's Corton-Charlemagne is the same as for its other white wines, with the wines fermented with indigenous yeasts and given a fairly leisurely cask *elevage* of ten months prior to their first racking- typically in July following the vintage. The wines are then returned to barrel for another four months prior to fining in anticipation of bottling, and then bottled cask by cask after six months of settling in after their fining. The wines are not filtered. This is different than an estate such as Domaine Guy Roulot, where the wines are assembled in stainless steel tanks after their first racking and complete their *elevage* in tank, rather than being returned to barrel. Jean-François Coche was famous during his time at the helm of the family domaine for being one of the more reductive white winemakers in the Côte de Beaune, and his son Raphaël has continued this tradition. In my experience, and I have been fortunate enough to be drinking the domaine's wines since the vintages of the early 1980s, the tendency to bottle the wines here in a slightly more reductive state than many of their neighbors (this was particularly true in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, but many more producers in the Côte de Beaune are now following the lead of the Coche family and bottling a bit more reductively these days) allows the Domaine Coche-Dury white wines to evolve at a very measured pace in bottle and endows them with exceptionally long lives. This gently reductive style often gives the white wines from Coche-Dury a touch of iodine or flintiness on both the nose and palate and is a signature tone in the family's white wines. The cuvée of Corton-Charlemagne *chez* Coche is typically raised in fifty percent new oak, though this can vary a bit depending on the style of a particular vintage.

Fans of Domaine Coche-Dury will often champion either the Corton-Charlemagne or the Meursault "Perrières" as the finest white wine produced by the Coche family, and for many years, I have been in the Corton-Charlemagne camp on this question. I have always found the wine to be utterly brilliant and a classic example of the great *terroir* of Corton-Charlemagne, as well as so beautifully emblematic of the completeness found in the examples of this appellation that hail from the beautifully-situated *lieu à dit* of Le Charlemagne in the Aloxe sector of the hill. My first glass of Domaine Coche-Dury's Corton-Charlemagne was served to me from their inaugural vintage of 1986 in the late 1980s, and I will never forget just how brilliantly that wine showed on that evening (it was served double blind) and it was love at first sight. The precocious appeal of the 1986 notwithstanding (this was a vintage where the botrytis gave the wines gorgeous early accessibility), the Coche family's Corton-Charlemagne is generally a very long-lived wine that deserves at least fifteen years out from the vintage to properly blossom and start to hit on all cylinders on both the nose and palate. At our vertical tasting in Beaune, of the classically structured vintages, it was really only from 2004 back that the wines were truly drinking into their plateaus of peak maturity, and it was the more anomalous natures of the white wine vintages of 2006 and 2005 that allowed those wines also to be fully mature at our tasting in February. It is not that the Coche family's Corton-Charlemagne is not delicious to drink on the younger side, but one does really waste quite a bit of evolutionary potential in not letting the wine get a full fifteen years out from the vintage, and as Jean-François Coche's comments about the "1999 being the first truly mature vintage at our tasting" indicates, my preference for drinking this wine at a proper age are shared at the domaine. In terms of potential longevity in a perfect world, this is easily at least a fifty year wine in bottle.

Domaine Coche-Dury is not an old domaine by Burgundian standards, as Jean-François Coche inherited a third of his family's vines from his father, Georges Coche, in 1973, upon the

retirement of Coche *Père*. Georges had inherited his parcels of vines from his father Léon Coche, who started the family domaine after the First World War. The estate, as we know it today really came to be in 1975 when Jean-François Coche married his wife Odile Dury (who also brought some family vineyard parcels to the enterprise) and changed the name of the estate to Domaine Coche-Dury. For all of George Coche's career, the vast, vast majority of production here was sold off to *négociants*, but he began to make and bottle a bit of his wines himself in the latter years of his career for private clients, and Jean-François incrementally increased the amount of wine that he bottled and sold directly as the years went by from 1973 onwards. However, I can still recall vividly my conversations with Jean-François Coche during my early visits to taste at the domaine back in the mid-1990s, when I asked why he continued to sell a percentage of his production off to *négociants* when he had more than sufficient demand to sell everything in bottle. Monsieur Coche replied that "the *négociants* were there for us when we needed them to sell the wines, and it would be unfaithful to immediately turn our backs on them when we have more demand from our private clients for our wines in bottle." I do not know if these days the domaine continues to sell a bit of wine to *négociants* with long ties to the Coche family, but I suspect that they still do. The domaine has expanded over the years and today, Raphaël Coche farms just over nine hectares of vines, spread amongst the villages of Meursault, Auxey-Duresses, Monthélie, Puligny-Montrachet, Volnay, Pommard and Aloxe-Corton.



*Jean-François and Raphael Coche contemplate the fine lineup of their iconic bottling of Corton-Charlemagne.*

The following wines were all drunk together on February 26<sup>th</sup> of this year, celebrating the sixty-fifth birthday of our host, Claude Bicheler. My sincere thanks to Monsieur Bicheler for including me in the festivities and for so generously providing all of the wines for the evening. As I mentioned at the outset, this was only part one of our epic tasting evening, as we were also treated to a deep vertical of Klaus-Peter Keller's iconic G-Max bottling of dry Riesling following our vertical of Domaine Coche-Dury Corton-Charlemagne, and I am looking forward to reporting on those wines as well in a coming article.

#### **2009 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2009 Corton-Charlemagne from the Coche family is remarkably fresh and light on its feet for the vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a very refined and esthery blend of pear, apple, chalky minerality, bee pollen, a touch of acacia blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and very elegant for an '09, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip, bright acids and a long, complex finish. Good juice that is just hinting at drinkability today, but has many years of positive evolution still ahead of it. 2018-2040. **94.**

#### **2008 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2008 vintage is one of Jean-François Coche's favorites in recent times and his 2008 Corton-Charlemagne is just starting to blossom and drinking with the generosity of maturity. The bouquet is deep, pure and precise, offering up scents of pear, lemon, a touch of passion fruit, refined minerality, iodine and a deft base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and laser-like in its focus, with a lovely core, superb transparency, lovely balance and excellent cut and grip on the very long and classy finish. A classic vintage. 2018-2040+. **96.**

#### **2007 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2007 Corton Charlie from Domaine Coche-Dury does not have quite the same mid-palate amplitude as is found in the 2008, but it too is a nicely racy and mineral example of this fine *terroir*. The bouquet is a complex blend of pear, apple, fresh almond, hints of the *crème patissière* to come, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, snappy and very elegant in profile, with a good, solid core, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and zesty finish. This is starting to drink nicely, but will be an even better drink with just a few more years' worth of bottle age. 2018-2040. **94.**

#### **2006 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2006 vintage of white Burgundy has never been one of my favorites, but the Coche Corton-Charlemagne is impressively fresh and light on its feet for this slightly top heavy vintage and the wine is drinking at its apogee today. As Monsieur Coche observed at our tasting, "there is a bit of botrytis in the 2006, but it is not too bad and the wine is starting to drink well today." The nose wafts from the glass in a pretty and quite expressive blend of pear, a bit of pineapple, passion fruit, almond, chalky minerality, still a touch of iodine and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep and fairly powerful for this cuvée, with a good core, fine complexity and grip, crisp acids and nice backend mineral drive on the long and ever so slightly hot finish. This is truly well-balanced for a 2006, as so many white wines from this vintage are a bit alcoholic and not particularly elegant in profile. 2018-2035. **93.**

#### **2005 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

I was very impressed with how well the 2005 Corton-Charlemagne was showing at our vertical tasting, and this was one of the highlights of a very strong lineup. The bouquet of the 2005 is just coming into its own, delivering scents of pear, apple, iodine, a touch of tangerine, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and a lovely floral topnote redolent of lemon blossoms. On the

palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with bright acids, excellent focus and grip, lovely balance and a long, complex and vibrant finish. It is hardly a crime to be opening bottles of the 2005 Coche Corton Charlemagne, but this is a wine that will continue to gain in layers of complexity with further bottle age and is nowhere near its peak today! 2018-2040. **95+**.

#### **2004 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2004 vintage of the Coche family's Corton Charlie is absolutely stunning and the wine has opened up very nicely at age fourteen and is drinking with great verve and complexity. The brilliant bouquet delivers a superb blend of pear, passion fruit, bee pollen, a very complex base of chalky soil tones, spring flowers, fresh almond and a discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and zesty, with a lovely core, superb delineation and complexity, bright acids and a very long, very classy finish. Just a superb vintage for this wine. 2018-2040. **97**.

#### **2003 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

Jean-François Coche made very good wines in 2003 and they have aged surprisingly well. The 2003 Corton-Charlemagne offers up a complex nose of apple, almond skin, pear, lemon zest, dried flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and impressively fresh, particularly when one considers just how low the acids are here. There is plenty of depth at the core and good freshness on the long finish. This is a bit atypical in aromatic and flavor profile, as are almost all successful 2003 white Burgundies, but it is still a good wine that continues to drink very nicely and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. 2018-2030. **89**.

#### **2002 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

I had high expectations for the 2002 Corton Charlie from Domaine Coche-Dury, but our bottle at the vertical tastings was a bit reductively stillborn and really never seemed to offer up much complexity on the palate, despite still being quite fresh and vibrant on the nose. The bouquet is still a bit marked by reduction, but showing better development than the palate, as it offers up scents of apple, passion fruit, iodine, acacia blossoms, chalk, a hint of pastry cream, fresh almond and vanillin oak. On the palate, the flavor complexity cannot come anywhere near to matching the aromatics, as the wine is pure, full-bodied and fresh, but not really showing any developmental complexity. There is plenty of depth at the core and the wine is focused and balanced, with good acids, but somehow, the sum does not add up to the constituent components here. Will the complexity eventually emerge in the mouth, or is the wine somehow always going to stay relatively simple on the palate? I imagine that this showing may well be just a bit of bottle variation and there are 2002s out there that are stellar. But, this one, for whatever reason, was good, rather than great. 2018-2040. **92+?**

#### **2001 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2001 Corton-Charlemagne *chez* Coche is a bit marked by botrytis on both the nose and palate and is getting towards the far side of its plateau. The bouquet offers up scents of apple, pineapple, passion fruit, pastry cream, almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and getting a bit hot on the backend, with a good core and respectable acids, but not the elegance and complexity one gets in non-botrytized vintages here. This is okay, particularly in the context of the vintage, but it is time to drink it up and the wine was probably better a few years ago. 2018-2025+? **88**.





*Our gracious host, Claude Bicheler (center), flanked by the Keller and Coche family attendees.*

### **2000 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2000 vintage was showing very nicely at our vertical tasting. This is not the most powerful vintage of Coche Corton Charlie that I have ever tasted, but the wine is impressively complex and vibrant and is drinking very, very well today. The very complex nose jumps from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, tangerine, chalky minerality, citrus zest, spring flowers, a touch of almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and *à point*, with good, but not great depth at the core, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the perfectly evolved and wide open finish. There is still plenty of energy and backend lift here and the wine will continue to drink well for many years to come, but it is at its apogee today and there is no good reason not to be drinking the wine now, as it is flat out delicious. 2018-2030+. **94.**

### **1999 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 1999 vintage of Coche-Dury Corton-Charlemagne is also drinking very well today, and Monsieur Coche commented that finally “we have a vintage tonight that is really mature!” The bouquet is pure and complex, offering up scents of apple, passion fruit, hazelnut, chalky soil, citrus peel and iodine. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, fresh and still rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, bright acids and impressive length and grip on the still gently reductive finish. I wonder if there is just a shadow of the same issue here that the 2002 is showing today, with the palate complexity not quite able to keep pace with the bouquet in the 1999. This is a more satisfying bottle than our bottle of the 2002, but there is just a touch of similarity between the two regarding the slight disparity of aromatic and flavor complexity. But, this should not detract from the fact that the 1999 Corton-Charlemagne is a very, very good wine with tons of life still ahead of it. 2018-2035. **94.**