

# VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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**CHÂTEAU HAUT-BAILLY**  
**ONE OF THE GRAVES' FINEST AND MOST ELEGANT WINES**



Château Haut-Bailly is one of my favorite estates in the region of Pessac-Léognan, just south of the limits of the city of Bordeaux. Château Haut-Bailly is located in the southern sector of the appellation in Léognan, with its closest neighbors being Château La Louvière just to its north and Château Larrivet Haut-Brion just to its west. Léognan is quite different from the suburban sprawl that one finds today in much of Pessac, as the metro area of the city of Bordeaux has subsumed most of the former vineyard land in Pessac into neighborhoods (really only Pape-Clément, La Mission and Haut-Brion remain here today), though underneath these suburban neighborhoods lies some of the very finest *terroir* in all of Bordeaux and several hundred years ago, these were considered amongst the very finest vineyard sites in all of the Bordeaux region. Happily, the growth of the city's suburbs has not reached further south into Léognan where Château Haut-Bailly is located. In contrast, Léognan has managed to retain far more of its rural heritage than Pessac, with vineyard land tucked in amongst widespread forested areas, and several of the wine estates here, such as Domaine de Chevalier, used to derive more income from timber harvesting than they did from wine production less than a century ago. For the last two hundred years, the two flagship estates in Pessac have been Château Haut-Bailly and Domaine de Chevalier, though there are dozens of other very fine producers located in this section of the Graves.

The wines of Haut-Bailly are amongst the most elegant to be found in all of Bordeaux, on either bank of the Gironde River, with the wine long being renowned for its silky texture, lovely perfume and fine complexity and breed without undue weight on the palate. Happily, the ownership and management of Haut-Bailly have long cherished the refined style of wine historically produced here and have not given into the temptation to hire one of the Über consultants based in the Right Bank who have descended upon so many other estates in the Graves in recent times and scarred so many other wines produced in the region. In fact, as we will discuss a bit further below, Haut-Bailly has been home to many of the most famous, traditionally-minded consultants that the region has ever produced, beginning all the way back in the 1950s with the famous Émile Peynaud, and consequently, Château Haut-Bailly remains one of the top classically-styled estates in Bordeaux. It has now been a handful of years since I participated in the *En Primeur* tastings in the region each spring, so I have lost touch a bit with the evolving styles of some estates since that time, but in my last visit to Bordeaux in the spring of 2013 to taste the 2012 vintage out of cask, even the twin towers of Châteaux Haut-Brion and La Mission Haut-Brion seemed to be flirting with a more extracted, flamboyantly modern style, and if they have indeed continued down this road, then Haut-Bailly may well be the most traditional estate remaining in Pessac-Léognan today. Certainly the wines here are far more classically-oriented in style than the red wines at Domaine de Chevalier and Château Pape-Clément these days.

Like many of the greatest estates in the Graves region, Château Haut-Bailly's history goes back many centuries, as this area right outside the city limits was first recognized for its superb *terroir* for vine cultivation as far back as the fourteenth century. The estate of Haut-Bailly, as we know it today, began to first form its nucleus as the fourteenth century unfolded, as starting in 1530 the Goyanèche and Daitze families began to purchase parcels of vines here and consolidate these holdings into what would eventually become the present day Haut-Bailly. The Daitze family would own the property and produce wines here for the next hundred years, before the estate was purchased in 1630 by two businessmen, Nicolas de Louvarde and Firmin Le Bailly. The Louvarde family was originally from Picardy and had made their fortune as merchants trading agricultural products, such as seed, foodstuffs, and of course, wine. Monsieur Le Bailly was a Parisian banker and the two gentlemen formed a wine company to purchase the estate that would soon become known as Château Haut-Bailly. According to today's President of Haut-Bailly, Véronique Sanders, the estate first began to be called Haut-Bailly in 1660, taking its name from the Bailly family and also reflecting its place as perched upon the highest elevation in all of Léognan (hence the "Haut" in Haut-Bailly).

The property would stay in the hands of Firmin Le Bailly's family for a full century, with the family clearing more of the surrounding forested parcels on the property and planting further vineyards to augment what has been consolidated over the previous hundred years. Eventually, the estate would reach thirty-three hectares in size during their ownership, where it remains to this day. However, though the Le Bailly family has donated its name to the modern château, it was not really until the next owner purchased the estate in 1736 that it began to build a bit of an international reputation for its wines. The new proprietor of the estate in 1736 was Thomas Barton, who was one of the most influential wine merchants of his era in Bordeaux and whose name still graces that of Châteaux Léoville-Barton and Langoa-Barton in St. Julien. The Barton family was originally from Ireland and quickly made Haut-Bailly a wine of repute beyond the

local confines of the city of Bordeaux, as they did for all of the properties that they owned in the region. Despite the strides made under the ownership of the Barton family, it would still be nearly another century and a half before Château Haut-Bailly would see its apogee of popularity, as in 1872 the estate was purchased by Alcide Bellot des Minières, who was one of the most important Bordeaux proprietors during his era and would lead Haut-Bailly to a level of respect and popularity that the property had never previously experienced.

It was Monsieur Bellot des Minières who would construct the château on the property that continues to grace the estate to this day. The period of Haut-Bailly's ownership under Monsieur Bellot des Minières was its first golden age (we are fortunate to be reaping the benefits of its second golden age right now), as the wines were extremely popular in the market and fetched prices at this time that rivaled those of Haut-Brion, La Mission Haut-Brion and the First Growths of the Médoc. Alcide Bellot des Minières was responsible for the increased quality of the wines at Haut-Bailly, but he also presided over the estate as phylloxera was descending upon the Bordeaux region and he was extremely skeptical of following the trail of his fellow estate owners and start to plant over the vineyards at Haut-Bailly onto phylloxera-resistant American rootstocks. As Véronique Sanders, today's President of Château Haut-Bailly, comments about this era at the estate, "during his whole career, Bellot des Minières showed a fierce opposition to the widely accepted solution to phylloxera, which was to be grafting over onto American rootstock" and would often comment that "using these American rootstocks would destroy centuries of French viticulture." Monsieur Bellot des Minières continued to utilize other methods to try and slow the spread of phylloxera at Haut-Bailly, including spraying copper sulfate in the vineyards, rather than grafting them over onto American rootstocks. It is interesting to note that though the vineyards at Haut-Bailly were clearly suffering from phylloxera at this time, as the treatments employed were only slowing the spread of the louse, the wine must have remained excellent in quality, as this period also coincides with Haut-Bailly's stretch of its greatest renown and its highest relative prices in the Bordeaux market.

Monsieur Bellot des Minières passed away in 1906, with ownership of the property first passing onto his widow and then his daughter, but the level of meticulous care that Haut-Bailly enjoyed under Monsieur Bellot could not be completely sustained after his passing. It is interesting to note that up until his death, Alcide Bellot des Minières never wanted to start grafting over his vines onto American rootstocks, even a couple of decades after almost all of the other châteaux owners in Bordeaux had done so, and Haut-Bailly continued to be produced from vines planted on their original, *franc de pied* roots up until just before his passing. One has to imagine that the yields were steadily declining during this period, as the alternate treatments against phylloxera at the time would only mitigate the damage in the vineyards, not stop the louse from spreading, but for Monsieur Bellot des Minières, it was a fundamental tenet of his that wines produced from vines grafted onto American rootstocks would be inherently and dramatically inferior to those produced from *franc de pied* and it was not going to happen at Haut-Bailly on his watch. As Véronique Sanders remarks, "Bellot des Minières resisted this method until his death by using only ungrafted vines" and, consequently, Haut-Bailly was one of the very last estates in all of Bordeaux to start to replant onto American rootstocks and permanently stop the spread of phylloxera in its vineyards. But, as already alluded to above, this period coincided with the estate's wines basking in their warmest appreciation by the market and

fetching their highest prices, so perhaps, Monsieur Bellot des Minières' observation about the superiority of wines produced from ungrafted vines was actually correct!

In any case, after his passing on November 1<sup>st</sup> of 1906, the estate's ownership passed first to his wife, Fanny, who ran the property until her own passing in 1910. Haut-Bailly then passed onto her daughter, Valentine Herwig, who owned and managed the property until 1918, when she in turn, sold it to Frantz Malvezin. Monsieur Malvezin had been a close friend of Alcide Bellot des Minières and had greatly admired what he had been able to accomplish during his tenure at Haut-Bailly, so the estate still remained within the circle of the family and friends of Monsieur Bellot des Minières under the trusteeship of Frantz Malvezin. I have read in some British sources from the 1960s and 1970s that Monsieur Malvezin's era of ownership was not one of the high points at the estate, but in fact, there were some very fine wines produced here during this period at Haut-Bailly. According to research that Véronique Sanders has conducted (and which was presented to the *Académie Internationale du Vin*), Frantz Malvezin was a great admirer of Louis Pasteur, whom he had met in his youth when the scientist was visiting Pauillac, and he felt that pasteurization of wines could be beneficial and spent much of his early career experimenting with the technique as it applied to fine wine. It was due to his association with pasteurization of wine that some commentators frown upon his period of ownership of Haut-Bailly, but in fact, he was a very important wine figure in Bordeaux during his career and an accomplished developer of technical devices for winemaking and published several scholarly papers on these subjects. In 1892, Monsieur Malvezin opened a factory that created a machine for pasteurizing barrels (which he dubbed "Pastor" after the father of pasteurization) and which also developed pumps for moving wine in the cellar and for pasteurizing bottles prior to bottling a new vintage. In 1893 he began publishing an important wine journal in the region, *l'Oenophile*, focused on winemaking and viticultural topics.

Frantz Malvezin experimented with pasteurization of wine quite extensively during the last decade of the nineteenth century and his experiments with pasteurization techniques for wine proved so successful that according to a contemporary source, he was even able to convince Monsieur Bellot des Minières to pasteurize Haut-Bailly in the 1899 vintage. When I asked Véronique Sanders if Monsieur Bellot des Minières had continued utilizing pasteurization at Haut-Bailly beyond the 1899 vintage, she noted that the historical records at the estate do not say one way or another if any further vintages were pasteurized here prior to Monsieur Bellot des Minières' death in 1906, and there is also no information on whether this technique was used during the administration of the estate by his surviving widow Fanny or, in turn, her daughter, Madame Herwig. Véronique Sanders does note that the historical records at the estate show that Monsieur Malvezin did pasteurize the 1918 vintage here, once he had bought the property, and Madame Sanders goes on to also mention that she has had a chance to drink this vintage in relatively recent times "and it is still a beautiful wine today." So, the claims that the pasteurization of Haut-Bailly at this era greatly damaged the quality of the wines are not accurate, at least for the 1918 vintage! As the oldest vintage of Haut-Bailly that I have had the pleasure to drink is the 1928, which is one of the great wines of this timelessly brilliant vintage, so I cannot personally speak to the quality of the wines between 1918 and 1928, which may well have all been pasteurized during the tenure of Monsieur Malvezin.

In any event, Frantz Malvezin passed away in May of 1923 and Haut-Bailly initially passed on to his two children. However, they in turn, sold the property within a year to the Comte de Lahens and Paul Beaumartin. With the arrival of new ownership at Haut-Bailly, the practice of pasteurizing the wines here appears to have come to a close, though again, I mention that the historical record at the property does not state this one way or the other and there is no specific evidence that Monsieur Malvezin did pasteurize the wines here, though one must assume that he did so, based on his long research on how to apply the technique properly for fine wines. Consequently, if pasteurization was indeed used here for each vintage between 1918 and 1923, that period was quite short-lived. By the time the twin legends of the 1928 and 1929 vintages rolled around in the Bordeaux region, Château Haut-Bailly was once again (still?) making outstanding wines, and I have had the pleasure to drink the 1928 here on three or four occasions over the years and can certainly vouch for just how superb the wines were at the estate by the end of the 1920s. While the global economic collapse of the Great Depression arrived a few years later in France than it did in the United States, by the mid-1930s Haut-Bailly was part of the general global contraction of the wine business and investments in the vineyards and cellars were probably not possible during this time and the number of hectares of productive vineyards here shrunk considerably from the thirty hectares in production during Monsieur Bellot des Minières' time at the helm.



*Madame Véronique Sanders, President of Château Haut-Bailly.*

In 1955, after a few different owners, the property was bought by Daniel Sanders, a wine *négociant* from Belgium and the second golden age at Haut-Bailly commenced (and which continues on to this day). Monsieur Sanders was a passionate fan of the wines of Haut-Bailly (history has it that it was after drinking a bottle of the brilliant 1945 vintage here that he finally decided to pursue the purchase of the estate) and during his long tenure at Haut-Bailly's proprietor the château's wines reached a level of market recognition (though not the same pricing!) to match the first golden age here under Alcide Bellot des Minières. From the passing



of Monsieur Bellot des Minières in 1906 until Monsieur Sanders purchased Haut-Bailly, the estate had been through a relative rough patch, with several different owners and little possibility of investment in the property. But, of course, as these times were coincident with the enormous upheavals caused by the global economic crises of the 1930s and the immense destruction and dislocations caused by World War II, the struggles at Haut-Bailly were mirrored at a great many other estates in Bordeaux and throughout the rest of the world. There had still been some excellent wines produced here during this stretch (including the brilliant 1928, a 1937 that is often cited as amongst the best wines of the vintage and very good wines in 1945, 1947 and 1949), but it was still a period of contraction for the estate and things did not really get back on track here until Daniel Sanders took control of the property in 1955. At that point, the estate was down to only ten hectares of functioning vineyards on the property and one of Monsieur Sanders' first projects was replanting vineyard acreage that had been lost during the downturn in Haut-Bailly's fortunes, and he also invested in modernizing both the *chais* and the cellars soon after his arrival so that the wine would have a proper technical home in which to be crafted.

Among the first things that Daniel Sanders did at Haut-Bailly after his purchase of the property in 1955 was to bring in Émile Peynaud as a consultant at the estate, with Monsieur Sanders hiring Monsieur Peynaud in 1956. Monsieur Peynaud was one of the most important figures in Bordeaux during his long and illustrious career, with many citing his work as fundamental in laying the foundation for the Bordeaux that we know today, and in many ways, he is the Godfather of the modern era on the Gironde. Émile Peynaud would continue to consult at the property up through the harvest of 1990, and, as Véronique Sanders recalls, "Haut-Bailly was one of the last properties he kept working with before he stopped completely" and "I attended the *assemblage* of the 1990 with him" here at Haut-Bailly, which was very "memorable!" However, despite the immediate progress initiated at the estate by Daniel Sanders, his first handful of years here were not without further hurdles. The property was hit by brutal frosts in both the winter of 1956 and the spring of 1961, which devastated the vines so badly that both the '56 and the vintage of 1961 here were produced from tiny, tiny crops. The frost damage from the winter freeze of 1956 damaged the vines badly at Haut-Bailly, and it was not really until the 1961 vintage that the vines had recovered sufficiently from that brutal freeze to once again deliver a crop of exceptional quality (albeit quite a small harvest, due to the spring frosts again in this year). I have never had the good fortune to drink the 1961 Haut-Bailly, but it is widely referenced in the works of top English wine writers from this era as one of the greatest wines ever produced at the property!

Château Haut-Bailly prospered during the early years of Daniel Sanders' ownership of the property, but he was very much a "hands on" owner and as he became older, he was loathe to hand over much of the responsibility to his son, Jean Sanders, and consequently, the decade of the 1970s saw a few less successful wines produced during this timeframe, though one must remember that the decade of the 1970s also had its share of difficult vintages in 1972, 1973, 1974, 1976 and 1977, so this too must be factored into the historical accounts of Haut-Bailly losing a bit of its luster during this decade. Certainly the 1970 and 1971 vintages here are quite good- suave, perfumed and very complex wines that very much reflect the style and quality of their respective vintages, and I have enjoyed bottles of the 1975 as well in the past (though I have not tasted it recently). In any event, Daniel Sanders would pass away early in 1980 and his son Jean was able to finish the *elevage* of the 1979 vintage here, which immediately turned out to

be one of the top wines of the vintage on the Left Bank (reportedly Jean Sanders declassified one-third of the crop at Haut-Bailly to make a great wine in the 1979 vintage) and the decades of the 1980s was extremely successful at Haut-Bailly and perhaps one of the best ten year runs in the history of the property. Jean Sanders would continue to run the estate with great success for the next twenty years after taking over for his father in 1980.

In the summer of 1998, Château Haut-Bailly followed the path set by Château Haut-Brion several decades earlier and was sold to an American, the banker Robert Wilmers of Buffalo, New York. Monsieur Wilmers was born in the US, but spent his childhood in Belgium, prior to returning to the states to attend Harvard University. He had a very successful career as a banker, first in New York city and then returning to Belgium as the Director of the branch of J. P. Morgan in Brussels in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He was the long-time Chairman of the M & T Bank in Buffalo, New York, when he purchased Haut-Bailly in 1998. Bob Wilmers desired to have continuity at the property after his purchase and convinced Jean Sanders to stay on as General Manager for a few years. Since 2000, the day to day direction of the estate has since passed on to his grand-daughter, Véronique Sanders, who has continued to run Haut-Bailly with great distinction as the property's President. One of the first projects undertaken by Bob Wilmers and his wife Elisabeth after their purchase of Haut-Bailly was a complete renovation of the cellars here, which had not really had a major face lift since Jean Sanders had undertaken an expansion of the cellars in the decade of the 1980s. The new cellar project was completed in 2000. Unlike almost all of its other famous neighbors in the appellation of Pessac-Léognan, Château Haut-Bailly produces solely red wines, and there has not been white wine produced on the property in a long, long time. Back in the eighteenth century the estate did indeed produce a small quantity of white wine, though this has now been discontinued for more than two hundred years, as subsequent proprietors determined that the *terroir* at Haut-Bailly was best-suited to producing red wines. While there has been no Haut-Bailly Blanc for many generations, since 2004, the estate has made a Rosé de Saignée in certain vintages, where bleeding off a bit of Rosé from the vats has been deemed beneficial for concentrating the red wines here.

Château Haut-Bailly's Technical Director today is Gabriel Vialard, who took over the position in 2002. Monsieur Vialard's family is from the Médoc and once owned Château Clerc Milon in Pauillac. Monsieur Vialard began his career working at Château Mouton-Rothschild, but moved south and settled into the Graves region when he began working at another estate here in 1990. In 2002 he took over the position of Technical Director at Haut-Bailly and has helped preside over the continuation of the estate's second golden age since that time. Monsieur Vialard's responsibilities include not only overseeing the winemaking and cellar work at Haut-Bailly, but also managing the viticulture on the estate. Since last year, Monsieur Vialard has been aided in the vineyards by his new assistant for viticulture, Romain Racher. As I mentioned above, Haut-Bailly was distinguished by its association with the renowned Émile Peynaud as consultant here from 1956 until 1990. From 1991 until 2009, Haut-Bailly also worked with Professor Pascal Ribéreau Gayon, Émile Peynaud colleague and successor, who was the consulting oenologist for the property after Monsieur Peynaud. Once the Wilmers family purchased the estate in 1998, they also hired Denis Dubourdieu as an additional consultant-continuing the legacy of highly-acclaimed, very classically-oriented consultants at the property. Monsieur Dubourdieu and his team worked with Haut-Bailly right up until his passing in 2016, and since that time, the consulting arrangement here has been one of continuity, as today



Christophe Ollivier and Axel Marchal from the Institute of Wine and Vine Sciences work with Haut-Bailly. As President Véronique Sanders likes to say of Messieurs Ollivier and Marchal, “they walk in Denis Dubourdieu’s footsteps, since they were already his collaborators and regularly came to Haut-Bailly with him” during his time consulting at the estate. In addition, the famous Jean Delmas also was part of the team here after he left Château Haut-Brion, having also participated in the consultancy from 2004 to 2011. So, Haut-Bailly has had quite the all-star consulting lineup dating all the way back to Émile Peynaud’s retention in 1956!

Today, the entire estate of Haut-Bailly comprises thirty-three hectares, with thirty of them once again planted under vine. This represents a return to the peak of production here back during the era of Monsieur Bellot des Minières’ ownership of the estate. The property sits on the top of a fine gravel plateau and is the highest point in all of Pessac. As I mentioned above, when Daniel Sanders purchased Haut-Bailly in 1955, producing vineyards on the estate had shrunk down to merely ten hectares. By the end of the 1970s, Monsieur Sanders had brought back another thirteen hectares of vines into production, so that as the decade of the 1980s dawned, Haut-Bailly was up to twenty-three hectares of vines. By the time of the sale from the Sanders family to the Wilmers family in 1998, that figure had climbed up to twenty-eight hectares in production and today, Haut-Bailly is back up to full capacity at thirty hectares of working vineyard land on the estate. Most of the vineyards here are now planted to sixty percent cabernet sauvignon, thirty-four percent merlot and three percent each of cabernet franc and petit verdot. These percentages in the vineyards have changed a bit in more recent times, as the percentage of cabernet sauvignon has dropped just a bit, the percentage of merlot planted has gone up and the cabernet franc has dropped from its former ten percent to its present day level of three percent.

However, when I note the blend of varieties planted here at Haut-Bailly, this is for only twenty-six of the thirty hectares currently under vine, as there remains a four hectare parcel of very, very old vines that date back to the very outset of the twentieth century and which were planted at the end of Alcide Bellot des Minières’ time at the helm at Haut-Bailly. This parcel of *Vieilles Vignes* was probably the very first to be replanted onto American rootstocks to negate the effect of phylloxera, as one assumes that the prescriptive methods employed by the estate, rather than replanting on American rootstocks, had started to finally lose the battle against phylloxera at the end of the nineteenth century. For Haut-Bailly to have retained this four hectares of very old vines is absolutely unique in Bordeaux, as no other estate in the region can boast vines that date back more than one hundred years! In this old vine parcel, which sits at the highest sector of the plateau on the property, it is planted with the four grape varieties mentioned above, as well as two of the important red grapes from Bordeaux of the nineteenth century: Malbec and Carmenère. All of the varieties are planted to the measure Monsieur Bellot des Minières proscribed for Haut-Bailly during his long period of ownership here: seven-twelfths of cabernet sauvignon and one-twelfth each of merlot, cabernet franc, petit verdot, malbec and carmenère. This four hectares of very old vines are planted in the manner of the nineteenth century, with the different grape varieties co-planted, rather than laid out in separate blocks by variety, so the old vines are a traditional field blend that was used back in the old days across most of France as an insurance against any vine diseases that might affect one particular grape variety in a given growing season, as *vignerons* would always have the other grape varieties with which to produce a wine that year.

This parcel of *Vieilles Vignes* is the crown jewel in the vineyard patrimony of Haut-Bailly and it is always the foundation of each vintage of the *grand vin*, with the old vines comprising between fifteen to twenty percent of the final blend for the wine here. However, with its six different grape varieties co-planted in a field blend, it does present a bit of a challenge leading up to harvest time for the vineyard team at Haut-Bailly. The estate's Technical Director, Gabriel Vialard, is in charge of both the vineyards and the cellars at Haut-Bailly, and so to him falls the responsibility of how to tackle the harvesting of these old vines that are planted in a field blend. For many years now, the preferred harvesting method at Haut-Bailly in general has been to pick the merlot vines on the early side, which according to Véronique Sanders, allows us "to keep freshness and vivacity in the fruit", while allowing the cabernet sauvignon vines to ripen up substantially more, providing for better physiological maturity of the tannins and to help give Haut-Bailly's its signature silkiness on the palate when the wine is mature. Typically at Haut-Bailly, the harvest will amount to twelve to fifteen days of picking fruit on the estate, but because of these different harvesting philosophies for the merlot and the cabernet sauvignon, these harvesting days can be spread out over anywhere from three to five weeks at the property!

With this varying approach to the harvesting dates tied to the relative ripeness of each grape variety planted at Haut-Bailly, the four hectares of very old vines are obviously a challenge, given that the different grape varieties are co-planted together, where a cabernet sauvignon vine might well be sandwiched between one of merlot and another of carmenère! The team at Haut-Bailly undertakes painstaking work as the summer rolls on each year in this parcel of *Vieilles Vignes*, as they are constantly out in these four hectares, taking notes on each individual vine at the moment it goes through *veraison* (when the bunches first start to turn from green to red) and marking the vine with a red tag with the date of this change of color. By doing so, the technical team is able to keep track of the relative maturity of each grape variety and individual vine in the field blend here and chart a harvesting plan to pick the grapes in the proper order. With seven-twelfths of the old vines planted to cabernet sauvignon, this still leaves nearly half of the *Vieilles Vignes* that need to be tracked and planned to be picked on their own individual schedules in this co-planted parcel. It is a labor of love to approach these old vines in this manner, and one can imagine that this a monumental organizing project each year. In fact, the team at Haut-Bailly has only been approaching their *Vieilles Vignes* in this manner since the 2000 vintage, as previously, the old vines were picked at the time of the cabernet sauvignon on the rest of the estate.

I asked Madame Sanders about the other four grape varieties planted in the four hectares of *Vieilles Vignes*, as I really had no idea about when one would pick the Malbec or the Carmenère in their preferred scheme of harvesting, as both of these grapes have virtually disappeared from the vineyards of Bordeaux since the second half of the twentieth century. She noted that "Malbec is an early grape variety, therefore we pick it earlier with the Merlots" and this is also generally true of the Cabernet Franc planted on all of the property, not just within the old vine parcel. She continued, "but the Carmenère and Petit Verdot are late grape varieties and we pick these with the Cabernet Sauvignon in the *Vieilles Vignes*." However, she mentioned that at least for the Petit verdot and Cabernet Franc in the other twenty-six hectares of vines on the property, which are planted in blocks of single grape varieties, the possibility exists to follow the ripeness of these grapes on their own and though they "are usually picked between the Merlot and the Cabernet Sauvignon, but it may depend on the growing conditions of the individual

vintage.” She mentioned that in the torrid growing season of 2019, the “ Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot” ended up being “harvested towards the end with the Cabernet Sauvignon- every year is different and we constantly adapt to the climatic conditions and their effect on the grapes.”

Given the wide window of picking dates between the various varieties planted on the estate, each *tranche* of harvested grapes are fermented on their own. The merlot, which comes in first, is the only grape variety that starts out each year with a pre-fermentation “cold soak” that will last from two to three days, prior to the onset of fermentation (I have read elsewhere that the cold soak can last two to three weeks at Haut-Bailly and includes all grape varieties- that information is incorrect). Fermentation takes place primarily in temperature controlled concrete vats, though there are also a battery of smaller stainless steel tanks available as well. Roughly twenty percent of the wine undergoes malolactic fermentation in barrel these days, with this practice at Haut-Bailly having been initiated in the 2000 vintage. The remaining eighty percent of the young wine here goes through malo in either the cement or stainless steel vats in which they have undergone their primary fermentations. The percentage of new oak used is tailored to the style of the vintage each year, but since the purchase of the property by the Wilmer family, the amount of new oak is usually somewhere between fifty and sixty-five percent each year. However, this is not a recent change at Haut-Bailly, for, as was the case at most other classed growths on the Gironde, the percentage of new oak used here for the wine began to increase in the decade of the 1980s and the superb and utterly classical 1990 vintage of Haut-Bailly was also raised in sixty-five percent new oak.

The blending begins here in February of the year following the harvest, after a series of rigorous tastings that start in December. The final blend for the *grand vin* is settled upon during the month of February, so that the wine can start to harmonize ahead of the *En Primeur* tastings a bit later in the spring. Haut-Bailly’s *elevage* in modern times is anywhere from sixteen to eighteen months in barrel prior to bottling, which is probably a bit shorter than was the case back in the early decades of Daniel Sanders’ ownership of the estate, as the percentage of new oak used today is probably a bit higher than was the case in the past, though as Véronique Sanders notes, “unfortunately our records here do not indicate how much new oak was used back in this era at Haut-Bailly”. As I mentioned above, anywhere from fifteen to twenty percent of the *grand vin* each year comes from the production from the four hectares of very old vines on the property, as this serves as the cornerstone for each vintage of Haut-Bailly. This significant contribution of old vine fruit to the *grand vin* at Haut-Bailly is utterly singular in Bordeaux today and certainly one of the key building blocks of the compelling personality of the wine here. As Véronique Sanders comments about the contribution of these old vines to the finished blend, they “will bring both power and balance- lots of silkiness and elegance to the wine.” Sometimes it has been written that the four hectares of old vines at Haut-Bailly were planted and remain on their original, *franc de pied* roots, but when I asked Madame Sanders about these assertions, she noted that this parcel is most assuredly planted on American rootstocks, not *franc de pied* and reports to the contrary are not accurate.

While Château Haut-Bailly produces a very elegant expression of Bordeaux, it is still a traditionally-styled example of claret and is emphatically built for a long and very positive evolution in the cellar. For my palate, the wine really needs a minimum of fifteen years’ worth of bottle age to start to blossom, even in lighter vintages, and for the greatest vintages here, two

decades is really the minimum of time I would let pass from the vintage before I even entertain the thought of opening bottles of Haut-Bailly out of my own cellar and thirty years is even better. For example, I have a decent supply of the fine 1990 vintage of Haut-Bailly in my collection, but after opening a bottle on its twenty-second birthday (in conjunction with an article I was writing on the 1989 and 1990 vintages on the Gironde), I had no inclination of opening another bottle for many more years (though I did pull another for this feature, so as to have an up to date note on the wine's evolution). It is not that Haut-Bailly is not quite delicious in its relative youth, but that I prefer to wait for all of the silkiness that this wine is rightly famous for to arrive fully before I start pulling corks. In terms of potential longevity for the wines from the estate, I would say that these days, seventy-five to one hundred years of life in the bottle is probably the life expectancy for Haut-Bailly in any top vintage. Perhaps this was not quite the case back in the last decade of Daniel Sanders' trusteeship at the head of the estate, as the wines from the decade of the 1970s were probably not quite as potentially long-lived as the wines are today, but the fact that the 1970 vintage remains still firmly in its plateau of peak maturity today at age fifty shows that even during that decade, the wines possessed plenty of longevity. From what I have tasted of Haut-Bailly from the decades of both the 1980s and 1990s I see no reason not to expect a hundred years' potential for the top vintages from those two decades and today the wines here are as good as they have ever been.



As readers know, I have not attended *En Primeur* tastings in Bordeaux for the last six vintages, so I do not really have a sense of how the wines at Haut-Bailly have performed in these most recent vintages. My gut instinct would be that the wines are excellent examples of their respective vintages (which would make the 2016 the legendary vintage amongst these in that stretch, as it is the great classic year of the last several). However, I have started my notes below with the 2009 vintage and worked back from there, as that is the last vintage of Haut-Bailly I have tasted as a finished wine out of bottle; for the vintages of 2010, 2011 and 2012, I have only had the opportunity to taste Haut-Bailly as barrel samples during *En Primeur* campaigns. As I mentioned in my last few reports from *En Primeur*, I started to find more bottle variation among samples in the last two springs of my visits to taste the 2011 and 2012 vintages, and I began to wonder how representative samples were that were presented to journalists during those large, Union des Grands Crus tastings during that week in the spring in Bordeaux. It was not an issue of unrepresentative blends or the like, but rather simply that keeping as many sample bottles fresh and showing well as is required for the huge number of visitors that routinely participate in *En Primeur* is a daunting logistical task and more and more samples started to crop up that were either reduced or oxidized, so today I do not completely trust my impressions of the barrel samples that I tasted from Haut-Bailly from the *En Primeur* campaigns that featured the 2012, 2011 and 2010 vintages. Consequently, I reason that it is better not to post the notes from those barrel samples, as I would suspect that the wines would all show better in their finished forms today out of bottle than they did during those spring tastings, a mere six months out from each harvest.

There are a couple of significant holes in the tasting note roster that follows. As I mentioned in passing above, I have never had the good fortune to taste the 1961 vintage of Château Haut-Bailly, and this is one of the most historically important vintages at the estate in the twentieth century. Additionally, I do not have a recent note on the very, very fine 1964 vintage at Haut-Bailly (though I have very much enjoyed it in the past). I have never tasted it, but I suspect that the 1962 here is also quite strong and I am always on the lookout for that wine as well. In the decade of the 1980s, I am surprised that I have never crossed paths with the 1989 Haut-Bailly, which I also imagine is excellent. I really do not know how I have never tasted it, as readers know how much I love this vintage in Bordeaux these days! I am also missing tasting notes on the vintages of 1996, 1995 and 1994 at Haut-Bailly (1994 is really quite strong in the Graves region, though quite indifferent elsewhere on the Left Bank, with the exception of Château Latour), which I am quite sorry not to have in this article. I would love to have recent notes on the wines, but this was the era when I was first a sommelier and then a merchant specializing almost exclusively in the wines of Burgundy and Piemonte and my own personal cellar still reflects this in the composition of wines in my collection from the vintages of the 1990s. It is too bad, as I suspect this was a very, very strong run of vintages at Haut-Bailly and I really should have bought some of those wines when they were readily available in the market. I have had this article in the works for a handful of years now, and if the coronavirus had not descended upon us all like a plague this spring, I would have tried to pool resources and organized a vertical tasting of Haut-Bailly with friends in my tasting groups, to try and fill in a few of the vintage holes in this report, but with the ways of the world still lying shut at the present time, this article will have to stand on its own with those few significant holes as yet unfilled. At least they will be something to look forward to when life returns again to a semblance of normalcy on both sides of the Atlantic.

### **2009 Château Haut-Bailly**

I did not love the 2009 Haut-Bailly in its very earliest days in bottle, as the wine struck me as borderline overripe in personality. This, of course, was not an impression that was exclusive to the Haut-Bailly in this vintage, as many of the other 2009s also seemed to show overt signs of *sur maturité* to me in the first few years after bottling. However, when I last was served a bottle of this wine, it was most assuredly moving in the right direction! Today, the 2009 Haut-Bailly is one of my favorite wines from this vintage in the Graves, as the estate did a very nice job of sidestepping any potential issues with overripeness. The deep and chocolaty nose wafts from the glass in a stylish blend of black cherries, plums, chocolate, tobacco leaf, lovely soil tones and a nice framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a fine core, plenty of ripe, well-integrated tannins and impressive length and grip on the focused and nascently complex finish. A lovely example of the 2009 vintage, which is still a year I most emphatically do not love on the Gironde, as I find the 2008s across the board far more interesting to my palate. 2020-2060. **90+**.

### **2008 Château Haut-Bailly**

I had not tasted a bottle of the 2008 Haut-Bailly since I was in Bordeaux in the spring of 2011, so I was curious to see how the wine was progressing from that very early stage in its evolution. The quality remains excellent in this wine and it has nicely absorbed what was a fairly generous serving of fifty-five percent new oak, so that the oak component is now buried in the other constituents of the wine today. That said, the wine is also relatively closed at the present time and in need of further bottle age and my initial impression that it might start to stir around its tenth birthday now seems pretty inaccurate. The still fairly primary bouquet offers up a lovely mix of cassis, black cherries, cigar ash, gravelly soil tones, bitter chocolate and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and reserved, with a very good core, superb focus and grip, chewy, integrated tannins and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. The 2008 Haut-Bailly is certainly approachable today, but it is still a young wine and I am going to leave my bottles alone until it reaches its twentieth birthday. I should not that with each passing visit to this vintage of Haut-Bailly, my impressions have become more and more favorable! 2028-2075.

**93.**

### **2005 Château Haut-Bailly**

Along with 2008 and 2001, 2005 is my favorite vintage in this decade on the Gironde. I find the wines in Bordeaux quite similar structurally to those of Burgundy in this vintage, with a rare combination of ripe, pure and rock solid fruit components, coupled to fairly high acids and firm tannins. The combination seems likely to make for very, very long-lived wines, but patience is still required for those with bottles in the cellar, as this vintage is most emphatically not yet ready for primetime drinking. The 2005 Haut-Bailly shows enormous potential on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up a pure and precise blend of plums, red and black cherries, tobacco leaf, a marvelous base of gravelly soil tones, cigar smoke and a lovely framing of nutty and cedary new oak. On the palate the wine is pure and full-bodied and shows of stunning mid-palate depth, with great energy and grip, firm, buried tannins, tangy acids and laser-like focus on the very long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. To my palate, this is the finest vintage of Haut-Bailly since the stellar 1986 and the (quite underrated elsewhere) 1982, but it is still emphatically a young wine and needs at least another fifteen years in the cellar to really start drinking with generosity. Be patient, as once this wine blossoms, it is going to be dazzling and virtually timeless! 2035-2125. **94+**.

#### **2004 Château Haut-Bailly**

The 2004 Haut-Bailly is one of the least exciting recent vintages at this consistently fine estate that I have tasted, as the wine comes across as a bit over-extracted and dense in style, which makes me wonder if technology such as concentrators or reverse osmosis was used to try and beef up the vintage. The nose is a slightly meaty blend of cassis, tarry tones, cigar ash, soil and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, young and a bit charmless by Haut-Bailly's high standards of elegance, with a solid core, a fair bit of tannin in need of resolution and good focus on the long, chewy and pretty structured finish. There is enough fruit here to eventually outlast the tannins, but this wine really is missing a bit of the suave polish of most vintages of Haut-Bailly. 2017-2035. **86+**.

#### **2003 Château Haut-Bailly**

2003 has to be one of the most overrated Bordeaux vintages in recent memory, and the '03 Haut-Bailly is a classic example of this rather pedestrian and overripe year. The deep and very roasted nose offers up scents of baked black cherries, cassis, game, coffee grounds and cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very roasted in personality, with a fragile, low acid structure and a dull, blunt and stewy finish. This is not all that bad an effort for the vintage, but hardly a memorable bottle of Haut-Bailly and I pity the folks who believed the erroneous early and glowing reports of the quality of this vintage and actually purchased the wines. I have not had the 2003 Haut-Bailly in several years now, but based on how it last showed, I would think that it would want drinking up now. 2012-2020+? **82**.

#### **2002 Château Haut-Bailly**

The 2002 vintage of Château Haut-Bailly is drinking very nicely as it closes in on its twentieth birthday and is a beautiful example of a middleweight vintage. I had never tasted the 2002 here previously and was very impressed with its refined aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, Cuban cigar wrapper, a gorgeous base of gravelly soil tones, a deft foundation of cedary new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely balanced, with fine intensity of flavor and focus, modest tannins and fine grip and quite respectable length on the quite tasty finish. This is not a great vintage, but it is a great example of how good a lesser vintage can be at a top, old school estate! 2020-2040+. **88**.

#### **2001 Château Haut-Bailly**

The 2001 vintage of Haut-Bailly is really quite lovely and the wine is just about reaching its peak period of drinkability, but I would be inclined to give it just a few more years to allow all of its secondary layers of complexity to blossom. The deep and very classy nose offers up scents of black cherries, cassis, a touch of nutskin, lovely soil tones, bitter chocolate, a deft framing of spicy new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with fine focus, a very good core of fruit, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the classy finish. A very fine example of the 2001 vintage, the '01 Haut-Bailly should drink very well indeed for at least a couple of decades. 2017-2035+. **91**.

#### **2000 Château Haut-Bailly**

The 2000 vintage at Haut-Bailly is quite strong, but like so many of the wines from this vintage, it remains still very young and shut down today on both the nose and palate. The bouquet reluctantly offers up scents of black cherries, cigar wrapper, dark soil tones, smoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, well-integrated, sturdy tannins and very good length and grip on the still quite closed finish. This will probably never had the charm of vintages such as 2008 or 1982, but it is a very good Haut-Bailly in the making and all that is needed is further bottle age. 2025-2075. **92**.



### **1998 Château Haut-Bailly**

Despite the 1998 vintage's reputation resting squarely on the shoulders of the Right Bank wines, the '98 Haut-Bailly is an outstanding success and one of the best Left Bank wines that I have tasted in quite some time from this vintage. The lovely bouquet offers up a blossoming blend of plums, cassis, nutskin, cigar smoke, complex soil nuances and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite suave on the attack, with a very good core of fruit, fine focus and balance and very good length and grip on the still fairly tannic finish. This is a bit more tannic at this point in its evolution than the 2001 that was served alongside of it and I wonder if it did not see a touch more new wood than the 2001 version. A fine bottle that still needs a few years in the cellar to more fully soften on the palate. 2020-2050. **92+**.

### **1990 Château Haut-Bailly**

I last drank a bottle of the 1990 Haut-Bailly out of my cellar almost a decade ago, where the wine showed lovely promise, but was still several years away from blossoming, so I was very happy to have the excuse of this article to open another bottle and see how the passage of time has affected the wine. At age thirty, the wine has now entered its plateau of peak maturity and is drinking splendidly well, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in an absolutely classic combination of black cherries, Cuban cigars, a superb base of gravelly soil tones, hints of the chipotle pepper to come with further bottle age, gentle spice elements, tobacco leaf, a suave framing of new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe, pure and full-bodied, with a very fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, buried tannins that are just starting to melt away, excellent focus and grip and a long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. Though the 1990 Haut-Bailly is really beginning to drink well, there is most emphatically no hurry to consume this wine, which easily has another forty to fifty years of positive evolution ahead of it. Fine, fine juice. 2020-2060+. **93**.

### **1988 Château Haut-Bailly**

I really like the 1988 Haut-Bailly, which offers up a very suave, complex and elegant middleweight personality on the palate and excellent purity on the nose. The excellent bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of cassis, violets, cigar box, chocolate, a lovely base of soil tones, a touch of gamebird and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and medium-full, with lovely intensity of flavor, melting tannins and excellent length and grip on the pure and nicely "cool" finish. The '88 Haut-Bailly is not as thoroughly ripe as vintages such as 1989 or 1990, but it is a very classy, complex and perfectly balanced example of its vintage that has nothing to apologize for. 2016-2030+. **92**.

### **1986 Château Haut-Bailly**

The 1986 Haut-Bailly is a really terrific example of the vintage and is starting to really drink beautifully at age twenty-four. The deep, complex and very pure nose offers up a mix of cherries, orange zest, tobacco leaf, lovely minerality, summer truffles and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and strikingly transparent, with a lovely core of fruit, superb intensity of flavor, modest tannins and outstanding length and grip on the beautifully balanced finish. Just a lovely and very refined example of the '86 vintage. 2013-2035+. **93**.

### **1985 Château Haut-Bailly**

The decade of the 1980s was a remarkable stretch for Château Haut-Bailly and the 1985 is another outstanding wine from this stunning string of wines. The superb and very perfumed nose offers up an expressive blend of black cherries, red plums, menthol, a touch of citrus, cigar ash, a lovely base of gravelly soil tones, black truffles and a bit of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly suave on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, perfect

focus and balance and a very long, complex and softly tannic finish. Like so many of the 1985s, this wine has put on weight over the last decade and really shows some depth and stuffing today! The '85 Haut-Bailly is now at its apogee, but is so beautifully balanced that it should have no trouble keeping and drinking superbly well for several decades to come. 2014-2035+. **93+**.

#### **1983 Château Haut-Bailly (served from magnum)**

The 1983 Haut-Bailly in magnum is an absolutely beautiful wine and is drinking brilliantly at age twenty-eight. The utterly classic nose jumps from the glass in a complex and refined mélange of plums, a touch of dark berry, cocoa powder, summer truffles, tobacco leaf, lovely soil tones and a smoky topnote of Cuban cigars. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very refined, with excellent complexity, lovely mid-palate depth, just a whisper of remaining tannin and excellent focus and grip on the tangy and very long finish. This is a classic vintage for Haut-Bailly, and I can think of nothing better to have done with the last magnum in my cellar than to have served it to Marie-Andrée Mugneret and her family when they were visiting New York, as both Mugneret sisters have inherited a great taste for classic Bordeaux from their father, who was a serious claret collector- in addition to being one of the Côte d'Or's greatest winemakers of his generation. 2010-2030+. **92**.

#### **1982 Château Haut-Bailly**

The 1982 vintage of Haut-Bailly is one of my favorites from this underrated estate in the decade of the 1980s. The bouquet is precise, complex and just starting to really blossom completely, as it offers up scents of red plums, cherries, nutskin, cigar wrapper, a beautiful base of soil, smoke and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and marvelously transparent down to its *terroir*, with a lovely core, modest tannins, nice, tangy acids and fine focus and grip on the complex finish. Like all top Haut-Baillys, this is not a blockbuster, but a perfumed and refined bottle of utterly classic claret. 2018-2040+. **93**.

#### **1981 Château Haut-Bailly (served from magnum)**

I really love the style of the 1981 Haut-Bailly- particularly in magnum- as the suave and customarily middleweight style of the wines from this fine estate perfectly dovetails with the strengths of this vintage. The wine out of magnum offers up a superb nose of red berries, tobacco leaf, summer truffles, a bit of singed paraffin, coffee and lovely soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and intensely flavored, with perfectly respectable depth at the core, melting tannins and impressive complexity on the focused and very silky finish. This may be getting a bit long in the tooth out of regular-sized bottle (it has been many years since I tasted this wine out of normal format), but out of magnum, it was drinking beautifully back in 2005 and showed every sign of continuing on in fine form for many years to come. 2005-2020+. **91**.

#### **1979 Château Haut-Bailly**

I really like the 1979 Château Haut-Bailly, as the vintage is probably stronger in the Graves than anywhere else in Bordeaux. However, even at age forty, the wine has not yet settled into that stage of velvety peak maturity that defines this property, and I am not sure if it will ever really gain this characteristic. That said, there is still a ton to enjoy about this wine at age forty, as it offers up a deep and complex bouquet of black cherries, cassis, tobacco leaf, a hint of chipotle pepper, cigar ash and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and almost robust in personality (by the very elegant standards of Haut-Bailly), with fine focus and grip and still a bit of backend tannin to resolve on the long and vibrant finish. Like the 1979 Domaine de Chevalier, the '79 Haut-Bailly is a deep and complex wine that packs more mid-palate stuffing than almost any other wine on the Left Bank of Bordeaux in this vintage. This was Jean Sanders first vintage after his father's passing and he declassified one-

third of production into the second wine here in 1979. First class juice, if perhaps, not a classical Haut-Bailly in terms of personality. 2019-2050. **92.**

### **1978 Château Haut-Bailly**

I was very happy to have a chance to buy a bottle of the 1978 Haut-Bailly while doing the research for this article, as previously, I had only tasted this vintage from a case I bought more than fifteen years ago. As the wine came from the secondary market, I was never sure of how well it had been stored during the decades prior to my purchasing it, and those bottles always showed “okay”, but I had a sneaky suspicion that there might be better examples out there. Happily, I can now report that this is indeed the case. This was the very last vintage that Daniel Sanders saw through from start to finish, as his son Jean took over halfway through the *elevage* of the 1979, declassified one-third of the barrels and crafted his first vintage of Haut-Bailly on his own. The 1978 did not see the same draconian selection process and is more of a stylish middleweight in personality, but this bottle is still more precise and vibrant than my ill-fated case of yesteryear. That said, it is also a wine that is now getting to the far end of its plateau and probably starting to slide down the far side, so it is time to drink it up in regular-sized format. The bouquet is still the best part of the wine today, wafting from the glass in a lovely and *à point* blend of red and black cherries, tobacco leaf, a complex base of gravelly soil tones, a savory touch of celery salt, gentle notes of chipotle pepper, discreet cedary oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and complex, with good intensity of flavor, melted tannins, still good acids and a moderately long, refined and classy finish. This is not a great vintage of Haut-Bailly, but it is a good solid one that is starting to lose a bit of grip as it nears the end of its run and should be drunk up over the near-term. 2020-2030. **87.**



### **1971 Château Haut-Bailly**

The 1971 Haut-Bailly has been fully mature for decades, but the wine is starting to get closer to the far side of its plateau and will probably start its gentle decline in the not too distant future. Today, the wine remains a beautiful and complete middleweight, offering up a pure and perfumed nose of plums, mocha, Cuban cigar, a hint of red curry, woodsmoke, lovely soil tones and a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, suave and silky, with solid depth at the core, melted tannins and very good length on the wide open and fully mature finish. I would be inclined to drink this very pretty wine up over the next dozen years or so in regular sized formats, as I think it is getting towards the end of its beautiful run of peak maturity. Good juice. 2017-2030. **89.**

### **1970 Château Haut-Bailly**

I had not tasted a bottle of the 1970 Château Haut-Bailly since 2005, so imagine my immense pleasure when I went down in the cellar looking for bottles of Haut-Bailly with good labels to take photos of for this piece and found a bottle of the '70 that I had not put in my inventory! Happily, this allowed me to put a very current tasting note in the article! I first started drinking the 1970 Haut-Bailly way back in my merchant days in the latter half of the 1980s, and the wine was already drinking very nicely at that time. At age fifty, the wine continues to cruise along very well indeed, offering up a complex and utterly classic bouquet of cherries, nutskin, a hint of blood orange, cigar wrapper, lovely spice tones, a gorgeous base of soil and a plenty of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, velvety and fullish, with melted tannins, no hard edges, still a lovely core of fruit and backend grip and a long, elegant and beautifully complex and seamless finish. This would have probably been at its apogee by 1990 or so, given the accessible style of the 1970 vintage, but it continues to drink beautifully and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. This bottle is definitely superior to the one I drank back in 2005 and I clearly underrated the wine as a result! A lovely middleweight that is now starting to edge towards the far side of its plateau, but it remains firmly ensconced up on top and is in no danger of sliding down the far side in the near future. 2020-2040. **90.**

### **1966 Château Haut-Bailly**

I love the 1966 vintage of Haut-Bailly, which is another one of those top wines from the '66 vintage that travels well below the radar today and I cannot recommend this wine highly enough for those who may come by it at auction. The wine offers up a pure, refined and still marvelously vibrant nose of red and black cherries, Haut-Bailly's frequent signature note of blood orange, cigar wrapper, a beautiful base of gravelly soil tones, chocolate and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, suave and still has lovely depth at the core, with melted tannins, excellent tangy acids and impeccable balance on the long, complex and focused finish. This is a classic example of Haut-Bailly and the still underrated 1966 vintage and I wish I still had a few bottles left in the cellar! 2016-2030. **92.**

### **1928 Château Haut-Bailly (Nicolas bottling)**

The last bottle I crossed paths with of the 1928 Haut-Bailly a few years ago was sadly undone by a poor cork and was slightly oxidized and not a shadow of its proper self. Happily, I have had the good fortune to taste this wine on a few prior occasions and find it to be one of the great, relatively unknown wines of this era in Bordeaux. The bouquet is beautifully deep and complex, offering up a vibrant and mellowed blend of plums, black truffles, meaty tones, coffee, sweet cigar wrapper fresh herbs (including a touch of fennel) and a beautiful base of chocolaty old Graves earth. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite powerful for its age (and very much in keeping with the style of this vintage), with thick fruit, still a fair bit of well-

integrated tannin and stunning length and grip on the focused and very, very complex finish. This is probably the greatest vintage of Haut-Bailly I have ever had the pleasure to taste, and though this note dates back to the early 2000s (as the most recent example was a poor bottle), I have little doubt that this wine will continue to dazzle until at least 2025 (and probably beyond)! It is a pity that fully eighteen years have gone by since I last drank a sound bottle of the 1928 Haut-Bailly, as I have been fortunate to drink the wine a few times over the years and have always been absolutely dazzled by its quality and its ability to weather the years without seemingly being touched by the passage of time. 2002-2025+. **95.**

## CHAMPAGNE AND SPARKLING WINE INDEX SPRING 2020



### ***Non-Champagne Sparkling Wines***

**Bertha (Josep Torres Sibill)-** 2017 Cava Reserva Brut Nature; 2009 “Gran Reserva” Cardús Brut Nature; 2007 Cava “Gran Reserva” S.XXI Brut Nature;

**Bruno Danguin (Crémant de Bourgogne)-** “Cuvée Blanche” Brut NV; 2017 “Prestige de Narcès” Brut Millésime; 2017 “Prestige de Constance” Extra Brut Millésime;

**Eudald Massana Noya-** Cava “Família” Brut Nature NV;

**Poe Wines (Sonoma County)-** 2015 Vintage Brut Rosé;

**Roederer Estate (Anderson Valley)-** Brut NV; Brut Rosé NV; 2013 L’Ermitage Vintage Brut; 2012 L’Ermitage Vintage Brut Rosé;

### ***Coteaux Champenois***

**Robert Barbichon(Celles-sur-Ource)-** 2017 Coteaux Champenois Rouge;

**Emilien Feneuil (Sermiers)-** 2015 Coteaux Champenois “Les Basses Croix & Les Gillis” Blanc; 2015 Coteaux Champenois “Les Goulats” Chamery Rouge;

**Olivier Horiot (les Riceys)-** 2013 Rosé des Riceys “En Valingrain”;



## **Champagne**

**Robert Barbichon (Gyé sur Seine)-** *Blanc de Noirs Brut NV;*

**Bêrêche et Fils (Ludes)-** *“Brut Réserve” NV; 2015 “les Beaux Regards” Extra Brut; 2015 “Rive Gauche” Extra Brut;*

**Francis Boulard et Fille (Faverolles)-** *“les Murgiers” Brut Nature NV; 2015 Blanc de Blancs “Vieilles Vignes” Extra Brut; 2011 “les Rachais” Extra Brut;*

**Christian Bourmault (Avize)-** *“Grand Eloge” Blanc de Blancs Brut NV; “Lettre à Terre” Blanc de Blancs Brut NV; “Clos Bourmault” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV; “Hermance” Brut NV; “R de Rosa” Rosé Brut NV; 2012 “Les Fêtes” Blanc de Blancs Brut;*

**Le Brun Servenay (Avize)-** *“Mélodie en C” Grand Cru Brut NV;*

**Vincent Charlot (Mardeuil)-** *2014 “Vossenelles” Vieilles Vignes Extra Brut;*

**Champagne Corbon (Avize)-** *Blanc de Blancs Brut NV; 1986 “Grand Millésime” Blanc de Blancs Brut;*

**R. H. Coutier (Ambonnay)-** *“Cuvée Tradition” Brut NV; Brut Rosé NV;*

**Demièrre-Ansiot (Oger)-** *2006 Blanc de Blancs Brut;*

**Emilien Feneuil (Sermiers)-** *2015 “Les Basses Croix & Les Gillis” Blanc de Blanc Non-Dosé; 2015 “Cuvée Totum” Non-Dosé; 2015 “Les Puits” Blanc de Noir Non-Dosé; 2015 “Les Goulats” Rosé de Macération Non Dosé;*

**Gatinois (Aÿ)-** *“Brut Tradition” NV; Brut Rosé NV;*

**Gosset (Épernay)-** *“Grand Blanc de Blancs” Extra Brut NV;*

**Grognet (Étoges)-** *Blanc de Blancs Brut NV;*

**Olivier Horiot (les Riceys)-** *2013 “5 Sens” Non-Dosé;*

**Jacquesson (Dizy)-** *“Cuvée No. 743” Extra Brut NV; “Cuvée No. 742” Extra Brut NV; “Cuvée No. 738 DT” Extra Brut NV; 2009 “Avize- Champ Caïn” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut; 2009 “Dizy- Corne Bautray” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut; 2008 “Avize- Champ Caïn” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut; 2009 “Aÿ Vauzelle Terme” Extra Brut;*

**Georges Laval (Cumières)-** *2017 Base Year “Cumières” Brut Nature NV; 2016 “les Chênes” Blanc de Blancs Brut Nature; 2015 “Cumières” Brut Nature (served from magnum); 2015 “les Hauts Chèvres” Brut Nature; 2012 “les Longues Violes” Blanc de Noirs Brut Nature;*

**Sadi Malot (Villers-Marmery)-** *“les Crêtes” Blanc de Blancs Brut NV; “Terre d’Origine” Blanc de Blancs Brut NV; “Rosé Nature” Brut Nature NV; 2012 Blanc de Blancs Brut;*

**Champagne Marguet (Ambonnay)-** *“Shaman 16” Extra Brut NV;*

**Pierre Moncuit (Mesnil-sur-Oger)-** *Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV; “Grand Cru” Brut Rosé NV;*

**Moutard Père et Fils (Buxeuil)-** *“Grand Cuvée Brut NV;*

**Dom Pérignon (Épernay)-** *2008 Brut;*

**Philipponnat (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)-** *“Royal Réserve” Non-Dosé NV; “Royal Réserve” Brut NV; “Royal Réserve” Rosé Brut NV; 2009 “Grand Blanc” Extra Brut; 2012 Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut; 2009 “Cuvée 1522” Extra Brut; 1994 “Clos des Goisses” L.V. Brut;*

**Piper-Heidsieck (Reims)-** *2002 “Rare” Brut;*

**Ployez-Jacquemart (Ludes)-** *“Granite” Extra Brut NV; Extra Brut Rosé NV;*

**Champagne Ponson (Coulommès-la-Montagne)-** *“la Petite Montagne” Extra Brut NV;*

**Champagne Tarlant (Oeuilly)-** *“Zero” Brut Nature NV; “Cuvée Louis” Brut Nature; 2004 “la Vigne d’Or” Brut Nature;*

**Champagne Marie Weiss (Ludes)-** *Brut NV;*



## RECENTLY- TASTED CHAMPAGNE AND SPARKLING WINES SPRING 2020



*One of Marc Chagall's beautiful stained glass windows inside the cathedral in Reims.*

I cannot overstate how delighted I am to have been able to put together this report on Champagne and Sparkling Wines for this issue, as when the pandemic first closed down vast swaths of the globe in the early spring, I feared that the last category of wines that I was going to be able to write about on its regular schedule was going to be Sparkling Wine. The first several weeks of global “shelter at home” orders were extremely disruptive for all concerned and my early requests for samples from distributors for wines such as Bollinger and Krug fell on deaf ears (no doubt they were wondering if anyone was ever going to drink Champagne again in the saddest days of March and April), but as May rolled around and some of the worst news about the virus was mitigating, I was pleased to find that some distributors and importers would be happy to have their newest arrivals reviewed in these pages. I fully understand and sympathize with the distributors who declined to send samples, as the sparkling wine market in the US continues to be driven mostly by on-premise sales and celebratory purchasing, and with the big spring and summer celebrations of graduations and weddings on hold, the timing of my requests were far from ideal. Of course, I continue to hope that one day the American sparkling wine market becomes a bit more sophisticated in its purchasing, eschewing the more seasonal aspects of graduations, marriages and the end of the year holiday season to wake up to the fact that

Champagne and Sparkling wines are some of the finest wines for long-term cellaring to be found on the market and deserve a significant corner of cellar space in every well-stocked collection.

As I have written in the past, it took me a long time to realize that Champagne deserves its own section of my cellar, and I wasted an awful lot of time not collecting these wines right from the outset of my cellar-building days, and I have been preaching about the great benefits of cellaring sparkling wines ever since the light finally went on and I understood just how much better properly-aged sparkling wines can be. Probably, back in the old days when I was first starting to lay down wines for my cellar in the mid-1980s, Champagne was a bit pricier than some of the other long-term cellaring options that I was buying at the time and it was hard to spring for a case of Veuve Clicquot non-vintage Brut at \$20 a bottle, when I could buy 1985 Lynch-Bages or 1984 Caymus cabernet sauvignon for even less. But, these days, Champagne and sparkling wines are some of the better long-term cellaring values to be found in the market, particularly if they are compared to contemporary wine prices for top wines from Burgundy, Bordeaux and the fanciest estates in the Rhône Valley or Piemonte. And, this reality is even more starkly presented in wine markets outside of the US (where we pay disproportionately high prices for our Champagne and sparkling wines, due to the three tier system), for when I go wine shopping in France or Germany, I am always struck by what great values many of the best Grower Champagne bottlings are in those countries. Even non-vintage bottlings from the best Grande Marques are still very good values, when you look at what bottles of non-vintage Brut from Charles Heidsieck, Louis Roederer, Bruno Paillard, Pol Roger or Philipponnat cost these days.

In any event, I have been cellaring sparkling wines now for well more than a decade and I have been absolutely delighted with the results and hope to continue to prod more readers to think about doing the same, if you have not already started to do so. As I have mentioned in the past, I approach my Champagne cellaring along the lines of my Burgundy cellaring, equating non-vintage bottlings from most top producers as equivalent to a very good *villages* level Burgundy bottling for cellaring potential, vintage-dated cuvées as analogous to laying down premier crus and *Têtes de Cuvées* as the sparkling wine equivalents of grand crus. Given the inexorable march upwards in price of so many of my favorite Burgundy bottlings over the last decade, one can see why I look at sparkling wines as reasonably good values for the cellar these days! Consequently, I have plenty of non-vintage bottlings in my cellar that have been down there for more than a decade and are cruising along beautifully and are significantly better drinks today than when I laid them down several years ago, and a goodly pile of vintage-dated wines that I am not even thinking yet about opening, even though they are also well over a decade out from their vintages now. I have also started adding to the sparkling wine corner of the cellar with some Cava from the Six Percent Club in the last few years and hope to include some of the really good American sparkling wines as well down there if the global economy ever gets rolling again and I can expand my cellaring budget a bit more. I have had on the backburner for a while now a feature on the superb California sparkling wine producer of Roederer Estate, as they have very kindly offered to put together a vertical of their top bottling of l'Ermitage when the world opens up again and I can get out for a visit to the cellars. I have no doubt that the results of that vertical are going to be exceptional and further underscore what a fool I have been thus far to not expand the number of different bottlings of sparkling wine I am currently cellaring!

One of the highlights of preparing this report was tasting the wines for the first time from Emilien Feneuil, who has released his first vintage of 2015 this spring. Emilien Feneuil is a young Champagne grower in the village of Sermiers in the Montagne de Reims. The village of Sermiers lies on the southern face of the Montagne de Reims, in the area known as the *Petite Montagne*, with Chamery and Écueil being two of its better-known neighboring villages. The *Petite Montagne* is considered one of the two finest areas for growing pinot meunier in the Champagne region, as there is a complex soil mosaic here of sandy soils, clay, limestone and marl. Emilien farms 2.37 hectares of vines, spread amongst the villages of Sermiers, Écueil and Chamery, planted to forty-three percent pinot meunier, twenty-eight percent chardonnay, twenty-two percent pinot noir and seven percent petit meslier. He took over from his parents about ten years ago, but it was not until the 2015 vintage that he started producing his own wines, as for his first five years, he was content to focus on farming and sell all of his grapes off in the market. One of the better-known loyal clients for Emilien's grapes was Aurélien Laherte in Chavot. Emilien Feneuil has been farming his vines organically since he took over the family property and everything is now certified organic. He has the reputation in the region as a great farmer, doing most of the work in the vineyards himself and encouraging groundcover and even sapling trees to grow amongst his vines. His *vins clairs* are fermented with indigenous yeasts in a combination of older barrels and *tonneaux* and see no *dosage* and minimal sulfur usage at disgorgement.

Like many of today's younger *vignerons* in Champagne, Emilien believes in barrel-fermentation and a bit of extended *elevage* for his *vins clairs* prior to bottling the wines for their secondary fermentations. He uses both two hundred twenty-eight and four hundred liter barrels for this, with his *vins clairs* aging until the following September after harvest prior to being bottled up for their secondary fermentations. He purchased used casks for his first vintage of 2015, with the barrels ranging from five to six years of age when he bought them. All of his wines are vintage-dated. He tried to use a minimum of sulfur during the *elevage* and bottling and all of his wines are non-*dosé*. As his 2015s are his first wines and he has had to purchase barrels to raise the wines in, they all show just a touch of oak influence (though nicely discreet), even though they were five and six year-old barrels; I would anticipate that each subsequent vintage here will find the perception of oak fade further into the background, as Emilien has a chance to use his casks for more vintages. I go into the style of his various Champagne bottlings in their proper section below, but I should also mention that I had a chance to taste two of his still wine, Coteaux Champenois bottlings for this article, and they were excellent. My only caveat with the two still wines was that the *rouge* was bottled with little or no SO<sub>2</sub> and showed just a whisper of spritz to it, which may have been how it was bottled or might show that a touch more sulfur for the bottling of the still wines here would be rewarded. That said, the wines were very impressively complex and classy and I am looking forward to following Emilien's Coteaux Champenois cuvées down the road as much as I am his sparkling wine bottlings!

Emilien Feneuil was not the only new producer from Champagne that arrived at my doorstep for this article, as I also had the chance to try for the first time the wines from Sadi-Malot in the village of Villers-Marmery. The Malot family has been farming here for five generations, with the current proprietors being Franck Malot and his daughter Cindy, with the two joined now by Cindy's significant other, Fabien Villier. The family farms eight hectares of chardonnay in Villers-Marmery and two hectares of pinot noir in Verzy, with all of their vines in

conversion to organic farming. Villers-Marmery, though only accorded premier cru status, is one of my favorite villages on the Montagne de Reims, flanked by Trépail to its south and Verzy to the north, and it is a village with great *terroir* in the Grande Montagne section of the Montagne de Reims. Like Trépail, Villers-Marmery is chardonnay territory, though both are flanked by villages best-known for growing pinot noir here on the Grande Montagne. The Malot family is producing beautiful wines (at least based on the samples which I had a chance to try), with the *vins clairs* barrel-fermented in older wood, the wines based on a preponderance of old vines (fifty year range for the bottlings I sampled) and the wines are given plenty of time *sur latte* to develop prior to disgorgement, with their non-vintage Blanc de Blancs bottling of “les Crêtes” given fully four and a half years on its fine lees prior to being disgorged. They also have a non-vintage Blanc de Blancs called “Terre d’Origine” that includes a significant percentage of reserve wines from a solera the family started all the way back in 1985. I really like the expression of Villers-Marmery *terroir* in these wines, which has a bit more topsoil over the mother rock of limestone here, giving a rounder and more elegantly discrete undertow of chalkiness to the wines and which really has them stand out from so many Blanc de Blancs bottlings without this layer of topsoil. This is a very, very good producer!



Another very good new producer (to me) who I had a chance to sample for this report is Christian Bourmault in Avize. His domaine is located not far past the Hôtel les Avizés owned by the Seloisse family on the Rue de Cramant. Christian Bourmault is the fourth generation of his

family to farm these vineyards, primarily situated in the Côte des Blancs. The family started with parcels in the village of Cuis, but has added one hectare in Avize and other plots in the villages of Mareuil le Port, Cerseuil and Leuvrigny, so that the domaine now totals 6.5 hectares. Everything is farmed organically and nearly all of the wines are barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts and raised for ten months in cask prior to bottling up for secondary fermentation. Every cuvée is aged a minimum of three years *sur latte*. Christian's one hectare in Avize includes eighty *ares* in the monopole of the Clos Bourmault, which lies just above the church in Avize and which is barrel-fermented and aged nearly two years in cask prior to bottling up for secondary fermentation. It is aged under cork (*sur liege*) for a minimum of nine years prior to disgorging! The vines in the Clos Bourmault are still pretty young, having only been planted in 1996, but the family crops them very low here and the results are most impressive. I very much liked the entire range of samples I had a chance to taste through for this report from Monsieur Bourmault and feel that they are extremely ageworthy examples of Côte des Blancs Champagne and I was delighted to taste such a wide and impressive array of bottlings.

*The following notes are organized in my customary fashion, with non-Champagne Sparkling Wines grouped together at the outset. Within this section I have listed non-vintage wines first, followed by vintage-dated bottlings, and have not made any separations by country of origin. Instead, they are simply listed alphabetically by producer. As I have just written quite extensively about wines from Spain in recent issues, I did not make an effort to organize samples of many of my favorite Cava producers, as many of those wines currently in the market have been reported on recently and I have only included some new arrivals that knocked at my door in this report. After this section, one will come to the Coteaux Champenois bottlings, followed by Non-Vintage, Non-Dosage wines. Then follows Non-Vintage Blanc de Blancs, Non-Vintage Brut and Extra Brut, Non-Vintage Rosés, Vintage-Dated Blanc de Blancs, Vintage-Dated Brut, Extra Brut and Brut Nature and Vintage-Dated Rosé. Within each section, the wines are listed alphabetically, with the vintage-dated sections first arranged chronologically by vintage.*

### **Non-Champagne Sparkling Wines**

#### **Bruno Dangin “Cuvée Blanche” Brut NV (Crémant de Bourgogne)**

As I have mentioned in the past, Bruno Dangin's vineyards lie just outside of the Champagne appellation limits in the Aube, so though this is only “officially” Crémant de Bourgogne. He farms all of his vines organically and is a first class winemaker. His Cuvée Blanche is composed entirely of chardonnay and the current release is from the base year of 2017 and was disgorged in November of 2019. It offers up a lovely nose of apple, lemon, beautiful, chalky minerality, warm bread and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core, good soil signature, frothy *mousse* and fine balance and grip on the long and quite classy finish. This is better than a lot of industrial Champagne one finds on the market- particularly the stuff from some of the cooperatives that used to find their way onto airlines and bargain bins at UK supermarkets. 2020-2030+. **90.**

#### **Eudald Massana Noya Cava “Familia” Brut Nature NV**

The current release of Eudald Massana Noya Cava “Familia” Brut Nature is composed of a blend of sixty percent Macabeu, thirty percent Xarel-lo and ten percent Parellada, with all of the vineyards here certified organic. The wine is from the base year of 2018 and it was disgorged in March of 2020. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of bread fruit, tart orange, salty soil tones, fresh-baked bread and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied,



focused and complex, with a rock solid core, excellent soil signature, pinpoint bubbles and a long, well-balanced and classy finish. I do not have any information on how long this has been aged *sur latte*, but the wine shows lovely elements of secondary complexity that only come with bottle age. An excellent Cava. 2020-2035. **91.**

#### **Roederer Estate Brut NV (Anderson Valley)**

The current release of Roederer Estate non-vintage Brut is composed of a blend of sixty percent chardonnay and forty percent pinot noir and was aged at least two years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement. The *vins clairs* generally do not undergo malolactic fermentation and the wine is finished with a *dosage* of twelve grams per liter. The bouquet is bright and stylish, offering up scents of green apple, fresh-baked bread, salty soil tones, white flowers and a hint of mint in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and nicely balanced, with frothy *mousse*, good backend bounce and grip and a long, classy finish. This is good juice. 2020-2030+. **89+.**

#### **Roederer Estate Brut Rosé NV (Anderson Valley)**

The Roederer Estate non-vintage Brut Rosé is fairly pale in color, in the true Louis Roederer tradition and has a *cépages* of fifty-six percent pinot noir and forty-four percent chardonnay, with a small percentage of the pinot noir being a still red wine added to the blend prior to the second fermentation. It also ages two years or more *sur latte*, with the *vins clairs* not going through malo and the finishing *dosage* is eleven grams per liter. The wine offers up a lovely nose of wild strawberries, tangerine, salty soil, rye bread, a touch of brown spices and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with zesty acids, a good core, elegant *mousse* and a long, focused and complex finish. This too is quite lovely and is an excellent food bubbly. 2020-2030+. **90.**

#### **2017 Bertha Cava Reserva Brut Nature (Josep Torres Sibill)**

The 2017 Brut Nature Reserva from Josep Torres Sibill is a classic blend of Macabeu, Xarel-lo and Parellada and was disgorged in October of 2019. The wine offers up a bright and classy nose of lemon, sea salts, lovely, stony minerality, bread dough and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is vibrant, full-bodied and nicely snappy, with a good core, lovely mineral undertow, frothy *mousse* and good length and grip on the complex finish. This is a lovely example of Reserva, with the stuffing to age nicely for a decade for those so inclined. 2020-2030. **89.**

#### **2017 Bruno Danguin “Prestige de Narcès” Brut Millésime (Crémant de Bourgogne)**

The 2017 “Prestige de Narcès” from Bruno Danguin is composed entirely from pinot noir vines that were planted in 1970. The *vins clairs* are barrel-fermented in old casks and the 2017 was disgorged in November of 2019. The wine offers up a refined, youthful nose of white peach, apple, bread dough, chalky minerality and a delicate floral topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and frothy, with excellent mineral drive and grip, lovely balance and a long, youthful and classy finish. With its excellent base of Kimmeridgian limestone, the wine has good structure and really deserves a bit of time in the cellar to really start to blossom. Serious juice, like all of Monsieur Danguin’s cuvées. 2022-2045. **90+.**

#### **2017 Bruno Danguin “Prestige de Constance” Extra Brut (Crémant de Bourgogne)**

The Prestige de Constance bottling is also composed entirely of pinot noir (from the same *lieu à dit* as the Prestige de Narcès, La Grande Côte) and is finished as an Extra Brut and raised and bottled without any SO<sub>2</sub>. It was also disgorged in November of 2019. Interestingly, the wine is quite a bit more open aromatically than the 2017 Prestige de Narcès (perhaps from the lack of

sulfur?), with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a refined blend of apple, fresh-baked bread, lovely minerality, dried flowers and nice dollop of dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and has a lovely spine of minerality, with pinpoint bubbles and good length and grip on the complex finish. This will not make old bones, but it is very tasty for current drinking. 2020-2028. **90+**.

### **2015 Poe Wines Vintage Brut Rosé (Sonoma County)**

The 2015 Poe Wines Vintage Brut Rosé is sourced from two vineyards in Sonoma County: the Van der Kamp Vineyard on Sonoma Mountain, where Samantha Sheehan buys the pinot meunier for this bottling (thirty percent of the blend) and the Olcese Vineyard, which lies on the valley floor and was planted to pinot noir in 1972 (and comprised the other seventy percent of the cuvée). The grapes were picked the same day, crushed and barrel-fermented together with indigenous yeasts; they were given eleven months of *elevage* in older casks prior to bottling up for their secondary fermentation and spent just under three years aging *sur latte* prior to disgorgement. The wine is a lovely salmon color and offers up a refined and complex nose of rhubarb, tangerine, rye bread, a fine base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile, with a lovely core of fruit, fine mineral drive and grip, frothy *mousse* and excellent length on the complex and light on its feet finish. This is really good Brut Rosé! 2020-2035. **91**.





### **2013 L'Ermitage Roederer Estate Vintage Brut (Anderson Valley)**

The 2013 L'Ermitage bottling from Roederer Estate is composed of a *cépages* of fifty-two percent chardonnay and forty-eight percent pinot noir. It was disgorged in June of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of nine grams per liter. The wine offers up a very refined bouquet of apple, lemon, bread dough, a fine base of soil, a touch of lavender and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, zesty and full-bodied, with a tightly-knit personality, a good core, refined *mousse* and impressive length and grip on the nascently complex finish. The L'Ermitage cuvée is built for aging and the 2013 version is going to cellar beautifully. It is approachable today, but still really a puppy, and I would tuck it away in a cool corner of the cellar for three to five years and really let it blossom. 2023-2045+. **92+**.

### **2012 L'Ermitage Roederer Estate Vintage Brut Rosé (Anderson Valley)**

The 2012 L'Ermitage Brut Rosé from Roederer Estate is the first vintage of this bottling I have had the pleasure to taste. The wine is nearly a fifty-fifty mix of chardonnay and pinot noir, with just a whisper more chardonnay in the blend, and the very delicate salmon color is arrived at through the addition of a small percentage of still pinot noir. The wine was aged seven years *sur latte* and finished with a *dosage* of ten grams per liter. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of cranberry, orange peel, rye toast, salty soil tones, dried flowers and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely deep at the core, with frothy *mousse*, lovely focus and balance and a long, light on its feet and vibrant finish. This is a bit more open and ready to drink than the 2013 L'Ermitage, but it too should age long and gracefully. 2020-2045. **92**.

### **2009 Bertha “Gran Reserva” Cardús Brut Nature (Cava) Served from Magnum**

The 2009 Bertha “Gran Reserva” Cardús Brut Nature is composed of a blend of forty-five percent Macabeu, thirty-five percent Xarel-lo and twenty percent Parellada. It was aged for a minimum of five years on its fine lees prior to disgorgement (this magnum could have spent considerably longer). It offers up a bright and complex bouquet of bread fruit, menthol, lemon peel, salty minerality, wild fennel, bread dough and a topnote of ocean breeze. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and still quite youthfully zesty, with a good core, fine mineral drive, frothy *mousse* and a long, saline and complex finish. I really like this example of Cava, which reminds me strongly of the old days, before the virus, when it was tapas time in Barcelona and the whole night lay ahead! 2020-2035. **90**.

### **2007 Bertha Cava “Gran Reserva” S.XXI Brut Nature (Josep Torres Sibill)**

The 2007 Bertha Gran Reserva “S.XXI” was disgorged in March of 2020 after spending fully twelve years aging on its fine lees! The wine is a classic blend of Macabeu, Xarel-lo and Parellada, combined with Chardonnay. The 2007 is excellent and drinking splendidly today, delivering impressive aromatic complexity in its constellation of wizened peaches and apples, straw, salty soil tones, a nice touch of raw almond and a plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with fine *mousse*, lovely soil signature and grip and a fairly long, vibrant and very classy finish. This is a beautiful example of just how well top notch Cava can age! 2020-2030. **91**.

## ***Coteaux Champenois***

### **2017 Robert Barbichon Coteaux Champenois Rouge (Celles-sur-Ource)**

Robert Barbichon's 2017 Coteaux Champenois rouge is composed entirely of pinot noir, hailing from the *lieu à dit* of Les Côtes. It was aged one year in cask prior to bottling and comes in at twelve percent octane. The wine is nicely light ruby in color and offers up a bright and red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, woodsmoke, beautiful chalky minerality (remember this is the Aube, with Kimmeridgian soils similar to Chablis) and a very complex array of gentle botanicals that reminds me of old Chartreuse. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, vibrant and transparent, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine focus and grip, just a whisper of tannin and a long, complex finish. The acids are fairly modest here, so the wine does not have the backend bounce of Monsieur Barbichon's Champagnes, but it is stylish, soil-driven and complex. 2020-2030. **89.**

### **2015 Emilien Feneuil Coteaux Champenois "Les Basses Croix & Les Gillis" Sermiers Blanc**

The 2015 Coteaux Champenois Blanc from Emilien Feneuil is handled the same in the cellar as the vins clairs that go into his Blanc de Blancs Champagne bottling from these two lieux à dits, with the wines barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts in five and six year-old casks and then aged in the same barrels prior to bottling with a minimum of SO<sub>2</sub>. The 2015 offers up a deep and youthfully complex bouquet of lemon, pear, a refined base of soil tones, white flowers, a vibrant touch of citrus zest and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, young and full-bodied, with a rock solid core, fine soil signature, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. There is just a faint touch of natural wine wildness to this bottle when it is first opened, but a bit of time in decanter lets it stretch its wings beautifully and start to show very well indeed. It is certainly approachable today, but it is really built for the cellar and I would be inclined to leave it alone there for five or six years and really let it start to blossom fully. 2025-2050. **92.**

### **2015 Emilien Feneuil Coteaux Champenois "Les Goulats" Chamery Rouge**

The 2015 Les Goulats rouge comes in at 12.5 percent octane and is quite a bit darker in color than many of the Coteaux Champenois pinot noirs that I have tried previously. The wine offers up a deep and very serious nose of black cherries, sweet dark berries, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, a nice touch of fresh herbs, cinnamon and just a whisper of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and moderately tannic, with an excellent core of fruit, fine soil signature and grip and a long, black fruity and complex finish. This is really, really good juice, and my only reservation is that there was a touch of CO<sub>2</sub> here, which I am not sure was intended or indicative that it should have been bottled with just a touch more sulfur? But assuming that it is structurally stable, it should age long and gracefully and is a very auspicious first vintage of this bottling of pinot noir. 2023-2045. **91.**

### **2013 Olivier Horiot Rosé des Riceys "En Valingrain"**

I last drank a bottle of Olivier Horiot's Rosé des Riceys "En Valingrain" with Alice Paillard during a luncheon in Reims several years ago. She told me that "you have to try this wine, it is the best still Rosé made in the Champagne region" and I certainly agree. Somehow, I lost this sample bottle in my cellar when it was sent to me and just came across it while digging for older bottles for this report, so I am very happy to have a chance to report on the 2013 vintage of this lovely wine, which is made entirely from pinot noir and was bottled in July of 2014. This is one of two different single vineyard bottlings of Rosé de Riceys that Monsieur Horiot produces, as his other cuvée is "En Barmont", with the En Valingrain on soils with less

clay in them, so that it produces the more delicately-styled bottling. Today, the wine is fairly dark colored for a Rosé and offers up a lovely bouquet of pomegranate, desiccated strawberries, rose petals, chalky minerality, a touch of rhubarb and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and full-bodied, with a lovely core of fruit, fine mineral drive, impeccable focus and balance and a long, vibrant and classy finish. This is not particularly high in acidity today, but it has lovely balance and I see no reason that Monsieur Horiot's prediction that the wine can drink nicely up to fifteen years of age would not be accurate for this wine. I feel badly that I lost the bottle in my cellar for a couple of years, but delighted that I have a chance to report on it now at seven years of age, where it is absolutely singing! 2020-2030. **92.**



### ***Brut Nature and Non-Dosé Non-Vintage***

#### **Francis Boulard et Fille “les Murgiers” Brut Nature NV (Faverolles)**

The current bottling in the market of Francis Boulard et Fille “les Murgiers” Brut Nature is from the base year of 2016 and was disgorged in March of 2019. The cuvée is composed of its traditional blend of seventy-five percent pinot meunier and twenty-five percent pinot noir (after the 2015 version having been pure meunier), with all the grapes farmed organically. Half of the bottling is composed of reserve wines this year. The *vins clairs* are all barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts and raised in a range of older oak barrels and larger casks. The wine offers up a really beautiful bouquet of white peach, apple, fresh-baked bread, a fine base of soil tones, gentle smokiness and a topnote of meunier floral tones. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-

bodied, focused and plenty deep at the core, with very elegant *mousse*, fine balance and grip and a long, complex and vibrant finish. The acids here are nicely buffered and there is no shrillness from the zero *dosage*, with the higher percentage of reserve wines in the blend really adding to the breed of the bottling this year. Excellent juice. 2020-2040+. **91+**.

**Georges Laval “Cumières” Brut Nature NV (Cumières)**

The 2017 version of Cumières from Vincent Laval does not have the vintage date on the label, but rather a code on the back label that shows that it hails from this harvest. The wine is its more or less customary blend of fifty percent chardonnay and twenty-five percent each of pinot noir and pinot meunier and was disgorged in February of 2020. It offers up a very promising bouquet of white peach, apple, hazelnut, warm biscuits, a lovely base of soil tones, a touch of buttery oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully soil-driven in personality, with bright acids, a lovely core of fruit, pinpoint bubbles and superb balance and grip on the long, complex finish. I usually find Vincent Laval’s wines to always need some bottle age when first released, but the 2017 version of Cumières is actually drinking really well right out of the blocks! 2020-2050. **92**.

**Philipponnat “Royal Réserve” Non-Dosé NV (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

The Philipponnat “Royal Réserve” Non-Dosé is the exact same wine as their non-vintage Brut version, but with no *dosage*. The current release hails from the base year of 2015, includes thirty-five percent reserve wines aged in cask and is composed of a blend of sixty-five percent pinot noir, thirty percent chardonnay and five percent pinot meunier. It was disgorged in September of 2019 and offers up an excellent bouquet of white peach, apple, warm bread, a touch of nuttiness, a lovely base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is brisk, full-bodied, focused and complex, with an excellent core of fruit, fine mineral drive, elegant *mousse* and a long, youthful and fairly bracing finish. For non-*dosé* purists, I am sure this is already a lovely drink, but for my palate, I will give it a bit of bottle age and let those brisk acids relax a bit, as there is no buffering *dosage* here. 2023-2045. **91**.

**Champagne Tarlant “Zero” Brut Nature (Oeuilly)**

The new release of Tarlant “Zero” Brut Nature hails from the superb base year of 2012. It is its customary blend of one-third each of chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier and was disgorged in November of 2017. The wine offers up a beautiful bouquet of apple, pit fruit, brioche, hazelnut, a complex base of soil tones, gentle smokiness and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core and soil signature, refined *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the beautifully balanced finish. There are not many non-*dosé* bottlings that can offer such marvelously buffered acids, but Benoît and Mélanie Tarlant age their wines far longer on their fine lees than most producers these days! Fine juice and a great value. 2020-2040. **92**.

***Brut and Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs Non-Vintage***

**Christian Bourmault “Grand Eloge” Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Avize)**

The Grand Eloge cuvée of non-vintage Blanc de Blancs from Christian Bourmault is produced from fruit farmed in Cuis, and hails from the same two *lieux à dits* of Basses Vignes and Les Fêtes from which the Lettre à Terre emerges (please see below). However, the Grand Eloge comes from younger vine parcels in these two vineyards, so that the average age of the vines here is thirty to forty years of age, and a bit of the malo is also blocked for this bottling. This is also from the base year of 2014, but with thirty percent of the blend reserve wines from 2013, and it too is aged for thirty-six months *sur latte*. It was disgorged in October of 2018 and

finished with a slightly higher *dosage* of six grams per liter. The bouquet offers up a lovely blend of apple, pear, chalky soil tones, almond, brioche and a very discreet touch of oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and complex, with lovely balance and grip, pinpoint bubbles and good length and grip on the complex and stylish finish. This is not quite as long as the Lettre à Terre bottling, and the slightly lower percentage of reserve wines in the blend makes the perception of oak a bit less out of the blocks. This is the cuvée that is designed for earlier drinking and it is already very charming. 2020-2035+. **91.**

**Christian Bourmault “Lettre à Terre” Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Avize)**

Christian Bourmault’s Lettre à Terre bottling hails from vines that range from forty-five to sixty-seven years of age, all situated in the village of Cuis, and the current release is from the base year of 2014, but includes forty-nine percent of the previous vintage as reserve wine. It was disgorged in October of 2018 and finished with a *dosage* of three grams per liter. The wine offers up a lovely bouquet of apple, pear, fresh-baked bread, chalky minerality, a dollop of white flowers, a smoky topnote and a discreet foundation of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and zesty, with a fine core of fruit, good mineral drive and cut, frothy *mousse* and a long, nascently complex and very classy finish. I like the touch of oak here on the palate, which folds in seamlessly to the minerality and lovely fruit tones. The wine is quite approachable already, but it is built to age and will be an even better drink three or four years down the road! Fine juice. 2023-2040+. **92.**

**Christian Bourmault “Clos Bourmault” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV (Avize)**

The Clos Bourmault bottling is from the vintage of 2005, though it does not mention this anywhere on the front and back labels. This is a tiny, eighty *ares* parcel of vines just above the church in Avize, with the vines having been planted in 1996. The vines are farmed organically and the yield is kept to a miniscule (for Champagne ) thirty hectoliters per hectare. The *vins clairs* are barrel-fermented, do not go through malo and were aged nearly two years in cask prior to bottling up in June of 2007 for secondary fermentation. The wine is aged under cork, rather than crown cap (*Sous Liege*) for eleven years, prior to disgorgement in October of 2018 and finished with a *dosage* of five grams per liter. The bouquet offers up a deep blend of pear, apple, hazelnut, chalky minerality, brioche, a bit of buttery oak and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and more expressive than the nose today, with a superb core and soil signature, refined *mousse*, still zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and beautifully *à point* finish. This is very unique stylistically and truly excellent Champagne! 2020-2045+. **93.**

**Le Brun Servenay “Mélodie en C” Grand Cru Brut NV (Avize)**

The current release of Le Brun Servenay “Mélodie en C” non-vintage Brut is from the base year of 2013 and was disgorged in November of 2017, after three-plus years aging *sur latte* and has also enjoyed a few years’ worth of bottle age now. It is composed entirely of chardonnay from the grand cru villages of Avize, Cramant and Oger, with the vines forty years of age. The wine is impressively composed of two-thirds reserve wines, from the previous three vintages. It was finished with a *dosage* of seven grams per liter and offers up a superb bouquet of white peach, pear, chalky minerality, brioche and a topnote of fresh almond. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and complex, with still a fine girdle of acidity, a good core of fruit and fine focus and grip on the long, frothy and well-balanced finish. This is really starting to drink nicely today, but it has plenty of structure to continue to age long and gracefully. Fine juice. 2020-2040+. **91.**

### **Champagne Corbon Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Avize)**

The new release of Agnès Corbon's non-vintage Blanc de Blancs is from the base year of 2015. It offers up a bright and youthfully complex bouquet of apple, pear, limestone minerality, raw almond, white flowers and a touch of brioche. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and nicely solid at the core, with frothy *mousse*, fine backend mineral drive, zesty acids and a long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. This is certainly drinkable today, but given how beautifully Agnès Corbon's wines age, tucking it away in the cellar for three or four years will pay handsome dividends! 2020-2045. **91+**.

### **Gosset "Grand Blanc de Blancs" Extra Brut NV (Épernay)**

This particular bottle of Gosset "Grand Blanc de Blancs" had been in my cellar for three or four years, but the back label did not include any pertinent information about base year, date of disgorgement or *dosage*, so I do not have a lot of information to go on about its foundations. In any event, the wine is aging beautifully and starting to really blossom and drink with generosity, as the nose offers up a refined blend of pear, apple, fresh-baked bread, chalky soil tones, a nice touch of acacia blossoms, almond and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and zesty, with a superb core of fruit, fine soil signature, elegant *mousse* and a long, complex finish that closes with excellent lift and grip. First class juice! 2020-2045+. **93**.

### **Grognon Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Étoges)**

The new disgorgement of Cecile Grognon's Blanc de Blancs non-vintage Brut was disgorged in June of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of eight grams per liter. It offers up a classic aromatic constellation of pear, apple, fresh almond, chalky minerality, brioche and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and nascently complex, with a lovely core, excellent backend mineral drive, frothy *mousse* and fine balance and grip on the still youthful finish. This is quite approachable today, but still a puppy and a few years in the cellar will pay impressive dividends. 2020-2040+. **91+**.

### **Sadi Malot "les Crêtes" Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Villers-Marmery)**

The Sadi Malot "les Crêtes" bottling of non-vintage Blanc de Blancs Brut is crafted from a parcel of vines that are forty-five to fifty years of age. The *vins clairs* are fermented and raised in six hundred liter casks and the wine is aged for fifty-four months *sur latte* prior to disgorgement in July of 2019. The current release is from the base year of 2014 and includes fifteen percent reserve wines. The pure and vibrant bouquet offers up a blend of apple, white peach, brioche, spring flowers, chalky soil tones and fresh almond. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and very elegant in profile, with a fine core, frothy *mousse* and lovely length and backend mineral drive on the complex finish. This is a lovely bottle. 2020-2035+. **92+**.

### **Sadi Malot "Terre d'Origine" Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Villers-Marmery)**

The Sadi Malot "Terre d'Origine" Blanc de Blancs non-vintage Brut includes forty-five percent reserve wines in the blend, made from a solera that was started in 1985. The new release is from the base year of 2015, was aged about three and a half years *sur latte* and disgorged in November of 2019, with a finishing *dosage* of eight grams per liter. The wine is really lovely on the nose, wafting from the glass in a mix of pear, apple, almond, chalky soil tones, bread dough and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core, excellent backend mineral drive, pinpoint bubbles and a fine girdle of acidity to carry the wine nicely in the cellar. This is very refined Blanc de Blancs. 2020-2035+. **91+**.





### **Pierre Moncuit Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV (Mesnil-sur-Oger)**

The new release of Pierre Moncuit non-vintage Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut was disgorged in July of 2019 and is from the base year of 2016. It hails entirely from vineyards in Mesnil and was finished with a *dosage* of 3.5 grams per liter. The wine delivers a lovely aromatic blend of pear, fresh almond, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, chalky soil tones and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and still nicely zesty, with a good core of fruit, fine mineral drive, pinpoint bubbles and good length and grip on the well-balanced and nascently complex finish. This is still a young wine and will drink with more generosity with a few years in the cellar. Good juice. 2020-2040. **91.**

### ***Brut and Extra Brut Non-Vintage***

#### **Robert Barbichon Blanc de Noirs Brut NV (Gyé sur Seine)**

The new release of Blanc de Noirs from Thomas Barbichon is composed of a blend of eighty-eight percent pinot noir and twelve percent pinot meunier. It is from the base year of 2015, but includes twenty-six percent from 2014 and one percent from 2013 as its base of reserve wines. It was disgorged in December of 2018 after two and a half years on its fine lees and finished with a *dosage* of five grams per liter. The wine has just a whisper of partridge eye blush to its color and offers up a lovely bouquet of apple, nectarine, chalky minerality, fresh-baked bread and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is vibrant, full-bodied and zesty, with an excellent core of fruit, beautiful mineral drive on the backend, refined *mousse* and a



long, complex and very well-balanced finish. This is truly excellent and built to age long and gracefully. 2020-2040. **92**.

**Bérêche et Fils “Brut Réserve” NV (Ludes)**

Raphaël and Vincent Bérêche are making simply brilliant Champagnes at the present time, and this excellence dips down to the family’s non-vintage Brut bottling as well. The current release of their Brut Réserve is bottled unfiltered and is composed of a *cépages* of thirty-five percent each of chardonnay and pinot meunier, augmented by thirty percent pinot noir. The bottling also includes one-third reserve wines and was aged on its cork, rather than under a crown cap. The wine was disgorged in November of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of seven grams per liter. It offers up a superb and complex bouquet of apple, white peach, hazelnut, a complex base of soil tones, fresh-baked bread and a hint of buttery oak in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a superb core of fruit, utterly refined *mousse*, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and very classy finish. This is simply stellar non-vintage Brut! 2020-2040. **92+**.

**Champagne Christian Bourmault “Hermance” Brut NV (Avize)**

The cuvée Hermance from Christian Bourmault is a blended wine that is actually, based primarily on pinot noir from the village of Mareuil le Port, with chardonnay from Cuis and pinot meunier from Mareuil le Port and Leuvrigny. The *cépages* of the current release is two-thirds pinot noir, twenty-three percent chardonnay and ten percent pinot meunier. The wine is from the base year of 2014 and thirty percent of the *vins clairs* are barrel-fermented, with the rest done in stainless steel. Like all of Monsieur Bourmault’s wines, the *vins clairs* underwent and extended *elevage* in the cellars prior to bottling for secondary fermentation in July of 2015; the wine was disgorged in October of 2018 and finished with a *dosage* of seven grams per liter. The bouquet is bright and classy, offering up scents of white peach, apple, lovely soil tones, gentle smokiness, brioche and a discreet topnote of meunier-like floral tones. On the palate the wine is vibrant, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a fine core of fruit, pinpoint bubbles, zesty acids and lovely focus and grip on the long, classy, and very gently oaky finish. This is very fine Brut NV! 2020-2040. **92**.

**R. H. Coutier “Cuvée Tradition” Brut NV (Ambonnay)**

The current release of Coutier non-vintage Brut is from the base year of 2013 and composed of a blend of its customary eighty percent pinot noir and twenty percent chardonnay. Forty percent of the cuvée is composed of reserve wines. It was disgorged in September 2019, after more than five years on its fine lees and finished with a *dosage* of 6.5 grams per liter. The wine is classic Ambonnay, offering up a complex bouquet of white peach, bread dough, superb minerality, a touch of hazelnut and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and soil-driven, with an excellent core of fruit, frothy *mousse* and superb focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This will age very nicely, and though it is already tasty, it will be even better with some further time in the cellar. 2020-2040+. **91+**.

**Gatinois “Brut Tradition” NV (Aÿ)**

The new release of Brut Tradition from Louis Gatinois is from the base year of 2016 and was disgorged in September of 2019. It is its customary blend of eighty percent pinot noir from Aÿ and twenty percent chardonnay. The *vins clairs* all go through full malo and the blend includes thirty percent reserve wines. The bouquet is deep, youthful and classic Aÿ in personality, offering up scents of peach, apple, hazelnut, chalky soil tones, bread dough and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, broad-shouldered, bright and zesty, with a fine core of fruit, frothy *mousse*, very good depth and complexity and a long, well-balanced

finish. The thirty percent reserve wines give this wine a nice patina of age on both the nose and palate. Good juice. 2020-2035. **90.**

**Jacquesson “Cuvée No. 743” Extra Brut NV (Dizy)**

Jacquesson’s “Cuvée No. 743” non-vintage Extra Brut is from the base year of 2015. As the house these days prefers not to share the exact *cépages* of each wine, but rather which villages the fruit hails from, it includes this year sixty percent fruit from the villages of Aÿ, Dizy and Hautvillers and forty percent from Oiry. The *vins clairs* were barrel-fermented and aged in older *foudres* and the wine was disgorged in August of 2019 and received no *dosage* this year. It offers up a superb nose of white peach, apple, almond, a beautiful base of soil tones, brioche and just a whisper of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is bright, deep, full-bodied and complex, with excellent focus and grip, refined *mousse* and excellent precision on the long, classy finish. Even though this is non-*dosé* this year, the acids are beautifully buried in the wine and there is no need for any buffering from *dosage*. The Cuvée 743 is certainly approachable today, as it is so exquisitely balanced, but this is a wine built for the long haul and ideally, I would leave it alone in the cellar for at least another five to ten years. This is simply an outstanding rendition of this iconic cuvée from Jacquesson! 2020-2050. **93.**

**Jacquesson “Cuvée No. 742” Extra Brut NV (Dizy)**

Another nine months have passed since I last had a chance to taste a bottle of Jacquesson’s “Cuvée No. 742” and the wine continues to blossom beautifully. The wine is from the base year of 2014 and the wine was finished with a *dosage* is of 1.5 grams, after its disgorgement in January of 2019 (which is six months later than the last example of the 742 that I tasted). The wine is excellent on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up notes of apple, chalky minerality, pear, fresh almond, spring flowers and a hint of oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and zesty, with an excellent spine of acidity, a fine core and soil signature, elegant, pinpoint bubbles and a long, complex and very classy finish. Like all of Jacquesson’s wines today, this is built for the long haul and will be an even better drink a decade down the road, but it is starting to stir and is already awfully easy to drink. I would still try to give it at least a few more years’ worth of bottle age to really let it open up. 2022-2055. **92.**

**Jacquesson “Cuvée No. 738 DT” Extra Brut NV (Dizy)**

These days, the Chiquet brothers prefer to discuss their blend in terms of villages where the fruit was sourced for this bottling, rather than the *cépages*, but as I had the pleasure to taste this wine on release, I still have the *cépages* breakdown as well. The mix of crus that this wine hails from includes Aÿ, Dizy, Hautvillers, Oiry and Avize and the wine is from the base year of 2010. The *cépages* is sixty-one percent chardonnay, twenty-one percent pinot meunier and eighteen percent pinot noir. The original release was disgorged back in March of 2015 and saw a *dosage* of 2.5 grams per liter. The late release spent an additional four-plus years on its fine lees prior to disgorgement in June of 2019 and was finished with a lower *dosage* of .75 grams per liter. The wine is beautifully expressive aromatically after its eight years *sur latte*, offering up a refined constellation of apple, pear, hazelnut, warm bread, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, a touch of straw and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and beautifully mineral in personality, with a fine core of fruit, refined *mousse* and excellent focus and grip on the long, vibrant and complex finish. With its negligible *dosage*, this wine is still plenty taut structurally, but it has blossomed and is drinking beautifully today. 2020-2045. **92.**



### **Champagne Marguet “Shaman 16” Extra Brut NV (Ambonnay)**

The 2016 version of Benoît Marguet’s Shaman bottling is composed of a blend of eighty-four percent pinot noir and sixteen percent chardonnay. The wine was given an extended *elevage* prior to bottling for its second fermentation, having spent from the end of fermentation to August of 2017 in cask prior to bottling. It was disgorged in January of 2020 and finished with zero *dosage* and zero sulfites. It offers up a complex and wide open bouquet of white peach, apple, chalky soil tones, bread dough, white flowers, a whisper of buttery oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core, fine backend mineral drive, elegant *mousse* and a long, complex and very classy finish. The extended *elevage* in cask for the *vins clairs* shows nicely in a whisper of oak influence on the palate that just adds to the backend textural mosaic here. I really like this rendition of the Shaman cuvée. 2020-2035. **92.**

### **Moutard Père et Fils “Grand Cuvée Brut NV (Buxeuil)**

The new release of Moutard’s Grand Cuvée non-vintage Brut is from the base year of 2014 and was disgorged in September of 2019. The wine is its customary one hundred percent pinot noir and was finished with a *dosage* of ten grams per liter. It offers up a pure and complex bouquet of apple, white peach, bread dough, a fine base of chalky soil and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and nicely soil-driven, with a lovely core, elegant *mousse* and a long, complex and very well-balanced finish. Once again, this is first class non-vintage Brut. 2020-2035. **91.**

### **Philipponnat “Royal Réserve” Brut NV (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

The current release of Philipponnat “Royal Réserve” non-vintage Brut is from the base year of 2015 and the wine was disgorged in June of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of eight grams per liter. As is customary, the *cépages* here is sixty-five percent pinot noir, thirty percent chardonnay and five percent pinot meunier, with around twenty-five percent of the blend made up of reserve wines from the solera system the *maison* has started in the last decade. The wine offers up a refined bouquet of white peach, apple, fresh-baked bread, chalky soil tones, a touch of hazelnut and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a fine core, elegant *mousse*, bright acids and fine length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. As I have noted for the last few years, amongst the *Grandes Marques* these days, Philipponnat’s non-vintage Brut is now consistently one of the finest made! 2020-2040. **92.**

### **Ployez-Jacquemart “Granite” Extra Brut NV (Ludes)**

The Granite cuvée from Ployez-Jacquemart is a special bottling that Laurence Ployez has fashioned to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the *maison*, from a wide palette of vintages and all three major grape varieties. The *cépages* is the easier side of the equation here, as the wine is composed of sixty-one percent chardonnay, thirty-one percent pinot noir and eight percent pinot meunier (with the latter all from the family’s home village of Ludes on the Montagne de Reims). The chardonnay is from a wide variety of different villages, including Mesnil-sur-Oger, Tauxières, Pui-Sieulx, Cuis, Bisseuil, Grauve and Cramant. The pinot noir is all from the village of Mailly. But, even more complex than the *cépages* is the range of vintages this wine has been fashioned from, as it is a composition of 1976, 1982, 1983, 1988, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000, 2004, 2011, 2012 and 2013! Forty-one percent of the wines were barrel-fermented and did not undergo malolactic fermentation, but I have no idea which ones. It was disgorged in June of 2019 and is quite a youthful wine in profile, offering up a beautiful bouquet of apple, pear, fresh almond, a very complex base of chalky soil tones, brioche and a discreet floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with an excellent core, great mineral drive, utterly refined *mousse* and a very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. Though this has some very old wines in its blend, it is not an old wine by any stretch of the imagination and I am sure it will drink gorgeously for the next thirty to forty years! It is an utterly superb bottle. 2020-2050+. **94+.**

### **Champagne Ponson “la Petite Montagne” Extra Brut NV (Coulommès-la-Montagne)**

The new release of non-vintage Brut from Maxime Ponson sports a *cépages* of forty percent pinot meunier, thirty-five percent chardonnay and twenty-five percent pinot noir. As is Monsieur Ponson’s custom, this is all from a single vintage, in this case the 2014, and was disgorged in August of 2019 after more than four years aging *sur latte*. The wine offers up excellent aromatic complexity, wafting from the glass in a combination of apple, fresh almond, chalky soil tones, warm biscuits and just a touch of white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, complex and full-bodied, with a fine core, really impressive backend mineral drive, brisk acids and fine focus and grip on the long and very nicely balanced finish. This is still quite snappy structurally with its very modest *dosage*, but for those who would like slightly softer acids, only a year or two in the cellar will be needed for those edges to round off a bit more. The depth and complexity here are impressive. Maxime’s move to organic farming here once he took over from his parents is paying dividends with even higher quality fruit to work with (and this shows in the wine), not to mention making the Champagne region a better place to live in for those in proximity to his vineyards. Fine juice. 2020-2035+. **91+.**

### **Champagne Tarlant “Cuvée Louis” Brut Nature (Oeuilly)**

The current release of Cuvée Louis from the Tarlant family is a blend of 2003 and 2002 and spent fully fourteen years aging *sur latte* prior to its disgorgement on March of 2018. It is composed of a *cépages* of fifty percent each of chardonnay and pinot noir, with the vines over seventy years of age and all planted in the *lieu à dit* of Les Crayons in the village of Oeuilly. The wine offers outstanding complexity on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, white peach, fresh-baked bread, a complex base of soil, a nice touch of walnut and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a fine core of fruit, good acids and grip, elegant *mousse* and a long, very nicely balanced and classy finish. This has some of the warm vintage structural generosity of 2003, but it is also precise, vibrant and quite classy finish. The Cuvée Louis is often a real long distance runner, but with the 2003 in the blend here, this is going to be at its best over the next decade or so. 2020-2035. **93.**

### **Champagne Marie Weiss Brut NV (Ludes)**

As readers already know, Marie Weiss is the second label from one of my favorite small producers in all of Champagne, Ployez-Jacquemart in the Montagne de Reims village of Ludes. The wine is its customary blend of fifty percent pinot noir and twenty-five percent each of chardonnay and pinot meunier. It is from the base year of 2015 and was disgorged in April of 2019, with a finishing *dosage* of six grams per liter. The wine delivers lovely aromatic complexity in its mix of pear, apple, a touch of fresh almond, a good base of soil, white flowers and a nice background suggestion of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely spine of acidity, elegant *mousse* and fine balance and grip on the long and zesty finish. This is consistently one of the best values in Champagne- not as serious or ageworthy as the regular bottlings from the Ployez family, but always complex and classy and delicious right out of the blocks. 2020-2035+. **91.**

### ***Brut and Extra Brut Rosé Non-Vintage***

#### **Champagne Christian Bourmault “R de Rosa” Rosé Brut NV (Avize)**

Christian Bourmault “R de Rosa” non-vintage Brut Rosé is composed of ninety-five percent chardonnay from Cuis and five percent pinot noir from Cumières, with the pinot noir taking its color from some skin contact prior to fermentation. The wine is primarily from the base year of 2014, but thirty percent of the chardonnay is from the previous year of 2013. All of the *vins clairs* for this bottling undergo an extended *elevage* in cask prior to bottling up for secondary fermentation in July of 2015, so this was eight months for the 2014 *vins clairs* and twenty months for the thirty percent of chardonnay from the 2013 vintage! All of the *vins clairs* undergo malo in barrel. The wine was disgorged in October of 2018 and finished with a *dosage* of seven grams per liter. This current release of R de Rosa is a fairly pale salmon color and delivers a very refined and vibrant bouquet of strawberries, cherries, chalky minerality, brioche, almond and a gentle touch of fresh nutmeg in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and complex, with pinpoint bubbles, lovely balance and grip and a long, refined and beautifully balanced finish. This is very, very fine juice! 2020-2040. **92.**

#### **R. H. Coutier Brut Rosé NV (Ambonnay)**

The Coutier family’s bottling of Brut Rosé in the market today is from the base year of 2015, with forty percent of the blend composed of reserve wines. The *cépages* is eighty-five percent chardonnay and fifteen percent pinot noir and the wine was disgorged in December of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of seven grams per liter. All of the pinot noir in the blend is still

red wine. The new release offers up a beautiful bouquet of cherries, rhubarb, rye bread, chalky soil tones and orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and youthfully zesty, with a good core of fruit and soil signature, frothy *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the nascently complex and youthful finish. This is still fairly primary and further bottle age will be nicely rewarded. 2022-2035+. **90+**.

**Gatinois Brut Rosé NV (Aÿ)**

The Gatinois non-vintage Brut Rosé currently in the market is its customary blend of ninety percent pinot noir and ten percent chardonnay, with all of the fruit hailing from the village of Aÿ. It is from the base year of 2014, with all of the *vins clairs* having undergone malolactic and the still red wine added to the bottling hailing from sixty year-old vines in Aÿ (after a full year of barrel aging for the red wine). It was aged *sur latte* for three years prior to disgorgement and finished with a *dosage* of six grams per liter. The wine offers up an outstanding bouquet of cherries, rhubarb, gentle spice tones, wheat toast, chalky soil tones and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with lovely mineral drive, elegant *mousse* and fine length and grip on the complex and very nicely balanced finish. This is first class Aÿ Rosé! 2020-2035+. **92.**

**Pierre Moncuit “Grand Cru” Brut Rosé NV (Mesnil-sur-Oger)**

The new release of Pierre Moncuit Brut Rosé is composed of seventy-five percent chardonnay from Mesnil and twenty-five percent pinot noir from Ambonnay. It was disgorged in July of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of eight grams per liter. It is a beautiful, pale salmon color and offers up a bright bouquet of strawberries, a touch of rhubarb, gentle smokiness, chalky soil tones and a dollop of clove in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core, refined *mousse*, fine balance and a long, succulent and complex finish. This is stylish and drinking very well right now. 2020-2030+. **90.**

**Philipponnat “Royal Réserve” Rosé Brut NV (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

The new release of Royal Réserve Rosé from Philipponnat is from the base year of 2014 and was disgorged in August of 2018, with a *dosage* of nine grams per liter. The wine’s *cépages* is seventy-five percent pinot noir, twenty percent chardonnay and five percent pinot meunier and the bottling includes twenty-five percent reserve wines from a solera system set up several years ago. Seven percent of the blend is still red wine from the villages of Mareuil-sur-Aÿ and Riceys to add the delicate salmon color to the blend. The wine offers up a complex and very refined bouquet of strawberries, tangerine, a touch of rhubarb, chalky soil tones, wheat toast, a delicate note of clove and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and focused, with a fine core of fruit, elegant *mousse*, lovely balance and a long, complex finish. This is very good non-vintage Brut Rosé. 2020-2035+. **91.**

**Ployez-Jacquemart Extra Brut Rosé NV (Ludes)**

Laurence Ployez makes beautiful Rosé and the newest release, from the base year of 2015, is no exception. The wine is its customary blend of fifty percent chardonnay, thirty-seven percent pinot noir and thirteen percent pinot meunier and was disgorged in February of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of three grams per liter. It is a pale salmon color and offers up a complex and vibrant bouquet of white cherries, rhubarb, chalky soil tones, orange peel, a delicate touch of spice elements and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and impeccably balanced, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, refined *mousse* and a long, zesty and very classy finish. Like all of Laurence’s wines, this will age beautifully, but is already a very tasty glass of bubbly. 2020-2040+. **92.**



### **Sadi Malot “Rosé Nature” Brut Nature NV (Villers-Marmery)**

The new release of Sadi Malot Rosé Nature is composed of a blend of eighty-three percent chardonnay from Villers-Marmery and seventeen percent pinot noir, which is all still red wine from the families vineyards in Verzy. It is aged for five full years *sur latte* and was disgorged in July of 2019, making this wine from the base year of 2013. The wine is a fine salmon color and offers up a refined and complex nose of rhubarb, strawberries, chalky soil tones, a touch of cinnamon and rose petals. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and beautifully balanced, with the five years aging *sur latte* nicely allowing the acids to relax. The wine has a fine core, good soil signature, frothy *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the complex finish. This has a nice touch of backend vinosity to it from the fairly high percentage of still red wine in the blend, but it is also light on its feet and is easily drunk on its own as an aperitif. Fine juice. 2020-2035. **91.**



*Vincent Laval in his element- in one of his vineyards in the village of Cumières.*

### ***Vintage-Dated Blanc de Blancs***

#### **2016 Georges Laval “les Chênes” Blanc de Blancs Brut Nature (Cumières)**

Vincent Laval’s 2016 version of les Chênes was disgorged at the end of February of 2020 and shows enormous potential. The bouquet is already very expressive, jumping from the glass in a complex blend of pear, golden delicious apple, brioche, complex soil tones, macadamia nut, a bit of buttery oak and a topnote of gently musky floral tones. On the palate the wine is deep,

beautifully balanced and full-bodied, with a lovely core of fruit, fine mineral drive and grip, elegant *mousse* and outstanding length and grip on the brisk, but nicely buffered finish. I really like the structure of the 2016 les Chênes, which will age for decades, but may not demand the customary ten years in the cellar before it really starts to drink with generosity. This is a great bottle of bubbly in the making. 2025-2065. **95**.

#### **2015 Bérêche et Fils “les Beaux Regards” Extra Brut Millésime (Ludes)**

The 2015 vintage of les Beaux Regards from the Bérêche brothers was disgorged in December of 2018 and finished with a *dosage* of three grams per liter this year. Though the wine is primarily sourced from a parcel of very old chardonnay vines planted in 1902 in the Ludes *lieu à dit* of Les Beauxregards, the Bérêche brothers augment this with a smaller lot from vines planted in 1970 in a nearby vineyard of Les Clos. The *vins clairs* here do not undergo malo and are barrel-fermented. The bouquet here is excellent, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, apple, a complex base of soil tones, plenty of early smokiness, brioche and a dollop of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with a fine core, good soil signature and grip, elegant *mousse* and a long, complex and very promising finish. This is certainly approachable today, but the wine is still a puppy and I would love to give it five or six more years in the cellar to let it really start to blossom! 2025-2065. **93+**.

#### **2015 Francis Boulard et Fille Blanc de Blancs “Vieilles Vignes” Extra Brut (Faverolles)**

The 2015 Francis Boulard et Fille old vines bottling of Blanc de Blancs comes from a single *lieu à dit* called Le Murtet and is planted with vines that range from sixty to eighty years of age. The *vins clairs* are barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts and undergo malolactic; the wine was disgorged in October of 2019 after three and a half years aging *sur latte* and finished with a *dosage* of two grams per liter. The wine delivers a very refined bouquet of pear, golden delicious apple, brioche, fresh almond, chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and nicely light on its feet, with a lovely core, good soil signature, frothy *mousse* and a long, complex and low fat finish. It is already quite approachable, but will be even better with three to five years in the cellar to blossom properly. 2020-2045+. **92+**.

#### **2015 Emilien Feneuil “Les Basses Croix & Les Gillis” Blanc de Blanc Non-Dosé**

The Blanc de Blancs bottling from Monsieur Feneuil hails from the *lieux à dits* of Les Basses Croix in the village of Sermiers and Les Gillis in Écueil. The chardonnay vines in Les Basses Croix are forty-one years of age and have a westerly exposition; those in Les Gillis are thirty-six years old and face east. Both share a soil base of clay and sand over a base of limestone. The 2015 vintage is Emilien’s first and it is bright, pure and impressively complex in its aromatic constellation of pear, hazelnut, a very complex base of soil tones, brioche, dried flowers, hints of the *crème patissière* to come with bottle age and a touch of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and nascently complex, with lovely depth in the mid-palate, excellent soil signature, pinpoint bubbles and a long, balanced and vibrant finish. The acids here are beautifully buffered without any *dosage* and the wine is already very pleasurable to drink, but it is nicely built to age and will be even better with at least a few years in the cellar. First class Blanc de Blancs that really stands out, due to the Sermiers soils not being particularly marked by their chalkiness, giving this Blanc de Blancs a quite unique and compelling personality. 2020-2035+. **93+**.

### **2012 Christian Bourmault “Les Fêtes” Blanc de Blancs Brut (Avize)**

Les Fêtes is the name of a *lieu à dit* in Cuis where the Bourmault family has a parcel of sixty year-old chardonnay vines, from which this bottling is produced. The *vins clairs* here are barrel fermented in one to three year-old casks and given an *elevage* of eleven months prior to bottling up for secondary fermentation. The wine is then given five and a half years aging *sur latte* prior to disgorgement and the 2012 version was finished with a *dosage* of five grams per liter. The wine offers up a superb, youthful bouquet of pear, fresh almond, limestone minerality, a hint of the *crème patissière* to come with further bottle age, white flowers and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with bright, snappy acids, excellent focus and grip and a long, complex and very promising finish. This is certainly drinkable today, but the wine is still in climbing mode and it will be even better three to five years down the road. The *mousse* here is not the most refined I have ever come across, but there is a lot going on here on both the nose and palate and this is overall an excellent bottle in the making. 2020-2045+. **92+**.

### **2012 Sadi Malot Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime (Villers-Marmery)**

The 2012 Sadi Malot Blanc de Blancs vintage Brut was disgorged in October of 2018 after five and a half years aging *sur latte*. The wine offers up an outstanding bouquet of golden delicious apple, pear, brioche, almond, chalky soil tones, just a hint of oak and a gentle topnote of acacia blossoms. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with impeccable balance and grip, very refined *mousse*, a lovely core of ripe fruit and fine backend mineral drive on the long, elegant and vibrant finish. This is already a great glass of bubbly, but the wine has the structure to age long and gracefully and it will probably not hit its apogee for another decade! 2020-2045. **93**.

### **2011 Francis Boulard et Fille “les Rachais” Extra Brut (Cauroy les Hermonville)**

Though it does not state it on the label, the les Rachais bottling from Francis Boulard and his daughter Delphine is composed entirely of chardonnay, from a parcel farmed biodynamically and planted in 1967. The wine is barrel-fermented, goes through full malo and is aged for one year prior to bottling for its secondary fermentation. The wine was disgorged in December of 2017 after more than five years aging *sur latte* and finished with a *dosage* of three grams per liter. It offers up a superb bouquet of apple, pear, hazelnut, brioche, a lovely base of soil tones and just a whisper of incipient smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and zesty, with an excellent core of fruit, frothy *mousse*, lovely focus and grip and a long, complex and nicely mineral finish. This is starting to show the first vestiges of secondary complexity and is drinking very well indeed today, but still has plenty in the reserve tank for a long life in bottle. 2020-2040. **91+**.

### **2009 Jacquesson “Avize- Champ Caïn” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Millésime (Dizy)**

As I mentioned last year in my note on the 2008 vintage of this bottling, the single vineyard bottling of Champ Caïn in Avize hails from a *lieu à dit* located at the bottom of the slope in this commune, with a due south exposition. Jacquesson owns 1.3 hectares of vines here that were planted in 1962. The 2009 vintage was barrel-fermented and the *vins clairs* were aged in casks prior to being bottled for second fermentation, it was disgorged in May of 2019, after nine-plus years of aging *sur latte* and was finished this year with a *dosage* of 1.5 grams per liter. The bouquet is deep, complex and shows the sunny side of this vintage, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of apple, fresh-baked bread, a touch of hazelnut, just a hint of tangerine, a

beautiful base of chalky soil tones, white flowers and a bit of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a superb core of fruit, fine mineral drive, elegant *mousse* and a long, poised and beautifully balanced finish that is quite a bit more open than the 2008 was at a similar stage of evolution a year ago. This is excellent. 2020-2045. **94.**

**2009 Jacquesson “Dizy- Corne Bautray” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Millésime (Dizy)**

The Jacquesson chardonnay vines in the Dizy *lieu à dit* of Corne Bautray were planted in my birth year, 1960, so they are getting to be pretty old vines these days! The wine was barrel-fermented and aged for an extended period in cask prior to bottling up for its secondary fermentation. The 2009 was disgorged in April of 2019 after nearly nine years aging *sur latte* and finished without any *dosage*. The wine offers up a nicely ripe and complex bouquet of apple, warm bread right out of the oven, lovely nuttiness, a complex base of minerality, a bit of youthful oak influence, dried flowers and a nice touch of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely brisk structurally, with a rock solid core, fine soil undertow, refined *mousse* and a long, nascently complex and very nicely balanced finish. As this is non-*dosé* in 2009, I do not find it quite as immediately appealing as the 2009 Champ Caïn out of the blocks, as there is no *dosage* to buffer the good girdle of acidity here. Consequently, unless one is an ardent fan of no *dosage* bottling, I would tuck this excellent wine in the cellar for three or four years and let the acids relax a little bit before really starting to drink it in earnest. 2024-2045. **93+.**

**2009 Philipponnat “Grand Blanc” Extra Brut Millésime (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

The 2009 Philipponnat “Grand Blanc” Extra Brut is produced entirely from parcels of vines in the Côte des Blancs, with the *vins clairs* fermented in both stainless steel tanks and oak casks. Part of the blend done in tank underwent malolactic fermentation in 2009, but none of the barrel-fermented portion went through malo. The wine was aged *sur latte* for nine years and disgorged in June of 2019, with a finishing *dosage* of 4.5 grams per liter. The bouquet here is bright and pure, wafting from the glass in a mix of pear, apple, chalky soil tones, warm biscuits, spring flowers and a touch of hazelnut. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a fine girdle of acidity, elegant *mousse*, impressive balance and grip and a long, youthful and promising finish. This is very nicely light on its feet for a 2009 Blanc de Blancs. 2020-2050. **92.**

**2008 Jacquesson “Avize- Champ Caïn” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Millésime (Dizy)**

I cannot overstate how happy I was to have a chance to revisit the 2008 Champ Caïn after the wine has seen another year’s worth of bottle age (though it was a warehouse mistake that allowed the bottle to find its way to my door!). I as I noted a year ago, this wine was bottled in May of 2009 and disgorged nine years later, in April of 2018, with a finishing *dosage* of 2.5 grams per liter. The bouquet remains youthful, but is starting to stretch its wings and now offers up a refined blend of golden delicious apple, pear, hazelnut, a fabulous base of limestone minerality, brioche and a gentle smoky topnote. The perception of buttery oak that was fairly prevalent a year ago is now being buried in the other aromatic elements. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and shows the excellent structure of 2008, with a rock solid core of fruit, excellent mineral drive, elegant *mousse* and a very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is not better than it was a year ago, but it has softened up a bit structurally with the passage of time and is far more enjoyable to drink today. That said, it is still a long-distance runner and this is very early days for this beautiful wine! 2020-2050+. **94+.**

### **2006 Demièvre-Ansiot Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime (Oger)**

The 2006 Demièvre-Ansiot vintage Blanc de Blancs is drinking lovely at age fourteen and, like so many other vintage-dated wines from this year, is really now into its apogee. The bouquet offers up a fine, complex and nicely mature bouquet of apple, pear, hazelnut, chalky soil tones, brioche and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and zesty, with a lovely core, refined *mousse*, good acids and grip and a long, complex and wide open finish. First class juice with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2020-2040. **92.**

### **1986 Champagne Corbon “Grand Millésime” Blanc de Blancs Brut (Avize)**

The 1986 vintage from Agnès Corbon (or more properly, from her father, Claude) has just been re-released in small quantities into the market. At age thirty-four, the wine is right at its peak of maturity, offering up a pure, bright and very complex nose of fresh apricot, peach, chalky minerality, hazelnuts, orange peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and nutty, with fine mineral undertow, still vigorous *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the poised, well-balanced and very complex finish. This is the age where I really like to drink my vintage-dated bottles of Champagne and this is a marvelous testament to just how beautifully the Corbon family’s wines age over the long haul. 1986 was a good, rather than a great vintage, but the ’86 Corbon is cruising along splendidly and is really a delightful glass of fully mature Champagne. 2020-2035. **92.**





### ***Vintage-Dated Brut and Extra Brut***

#### **2015 Bérèche et Fils “Rive Gauche” Extra Brut Millésime (Ludes)**

The Bérèche et Fils “Rive Gauche” is the domaine’s pure pinot meunier cuvée, produced from vines planted in 1969 in the *lieu à dit* of Les Misy in the village of Le Port à Binson in the Vallée de la Marne. The 2015 Rive Gauche was disgorged in November of 2018 and finished with a *dosage* of three grams per liter, with the *vins clairs* barrel-fermented and not undergoing malolactic fermentation. It delivers fine aromatic complexity in its blend of white peach, fresh-baked bread, beautifully perfumed meunier floral tones, hazelnut, a whisper of buttery oak and a complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is precise, focused and full-bodied, with a lovely core, beautiful transparency down to the soil, elegant *mousse* and a very long, complex and elegant finish. Though this too is drinkable right out of the blocks, it would be a crime not to tuck it away in the cellar for at least a handful of years and really let it stretch its wings! 2025-2065. **94.**

#### **2015 Emilien Feneuil “Cuvée Totum” Non-Dosé Millésime (Sermiers)**

The Cuvée Totum from Emilien Feneuil is composed of a blend of sixty percent pinot meunier, thirty percent pinot noir, eight percent chardonnay and two percent petit meslier. The wine offers up a superb bouquet of apple, pit fruit, walnut, complex soil tones, gentle smokiness, rye toast, a nice touch of Meunier floral tones and a lovely, understated foundation of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a fine core, elegant *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the poised and well-balanced finish. For a zero *dosage* wine, this has impeccable balance right out of the blocks and is already drinking very well. 2020-2030+. **92.**

#### **2015 Emilien Feneuil “Les Puits” Blanc de Noir Non-Dosé Millésime (Sermiers)**

The 2015 Emilien Feneuil “Les Puits” Blanc de Noir is composed entirely of pinot noir, from a parcel of thirty-four year-old vines in the village of Chamery. The *lieu à dit* faces northeast and has about a meter of clay, chalk and sandy topsoil over the mother rock of limestone. Like all of Emilien’s wines, the *vins clairs* are barrel-fermented in older oak and aged for one year prior to bottling for secondary fermentation. The 2015 Les Puits offers up a beautiful bouquet of white peach, raw almond, a complex base of soil tones, brioche, a whisper of buttery oak, dried flowers and a discreetly savory topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a superb core, fine mineral drive and grip, elegant *mousse* and a long, poised, zesty and beautifully balanced finish. This is still a young wine and though it is very, very easy to drink today, there is so much more complexity coming that it is a crime to drink this wine now! 2023-2055. **93+.**

#### **2015 Georges Laval “Cumières” Brut Nature (served from magnum)**

This is the exact same blend as the Cumières non-vintage bottling from the base year of 2015 that was released without any vintage-dating on the label in regular-sized bottles two years ago, but the magnums (and jeroboams for those so disposed) were aged an additional two years *sur latte* and hence are labeled with the vintage date on the front label. The larger-sized formats are also non-*dosé*. This magnum was disgorged at the end of November of 2019 and offers up a superb nose of apple, discreet tangerine, hazelnut, excellent minerality, a hint of iodine, warm bread, gentle smokiness, acacia blossoms and a whisper of oak (with most of this having been subsumed into the other aromatics). On the palate the wine is pure, racy and full-bodied, with a rock solid core, great delineation and mineral drive, refined *mousse* and absolutely stellar backend lift, grip and length. When this was first released, Vincent Laval was convinced it was one of the finest vintages of his Cumières bottling in many years, and drinking it now out of



magnum with more time on the fine lees, it is awfully easy to agree with him! The extra few years aging *sur latte* have allowed the fine girdle of acidity to relax here nicely and this wine is now drinking really quite well out of magnum (and probably regular-sized bottles as well), but my bottles are staying put in the cellar for at least another five years! 2020-2055. **94+**.

**2015 Georges Laval “les Hauts Chèvres” Brut Nature Millésime (Cumières)**

The 2015 les Haut Chèvres from Vincent Laval is flat out brilliant young wine. As readers will recall, after the 2009 vintage, this single vineyard bottling changed *cépages*, as Vincent had to replant his parcel of pinot noir vines planted in 1930, so this switched over to a pure pinot meunier cuvée from the same *lieu à dit*, with the vines having been planted in 1931 and 1947. The 2015 version was disgorged at the end of February of 2020 and is beautifully expressive aromatically today, wafting from the glass in a blend of white peach, beautiful, gently musky meunier floral tones, a complex base of chalky soil elements, a bit of buttery oak, a touch of fresh nutmeg and lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is precise, pure and full-bodied, with a great core of fruit, even better mineral drive, bright, buried acids and stunning length and grip on the complex and vibrant finish. As this is non-*dosé*, it is still a very youthful wine, but it is so beautifully balanced that it is not all that hard to drink in its youth. But, it is really built for the cellar and I would not venture to touch a bottle until it has seen a full decade’s worth of bottle age, as there is so much more here to unfold with the passage of time! 2030-2065+. **96**.

**2014 Vincent Charlot “Vossenelles” Vieilles Vignes Extra Brut Millésime (Mardeuil)**

Vincent Charlot’s parcel of pinot noir vines in the *lieu à dit* of Vossenelles were fifty years of age in 2014 and were used for this special cuvée. The wine was barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts, did not go through malo and spent eleven months in cask prior to bottling up for its secondary fermentation. It was disgorged after four years aging *sur latte* and finished with a *dosage* of four grams per liter. It delivers a fine aromatic constellation of peach, hazelnut, a lovely base of soil, a bit of buttery oak, fresh-baked bread and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still quite youthful, with a fine girdle of acidity, a lovely core and soil signature, elegant *mousse* and a long, well-balanced and vibrant finish. This is certainly approachable today, but it is really built for the cellar and deserves at least a few more years of bottle age to let it blossom properly. Fine juice. 2024-2050. **92+**.

**2013 Olivier Horiot “5 Sens” Non-Dosé Millésime (les Riceys)**

The 2013 Olivier Horiot “5 Sens” bottling takes its name from the five grape varieties that make up its *cépages* in equal portions of twenty percent each: chardonnay, pinot noir, pinot meunier, pinot blanc and arbanne. Monsieur Horiot ferments each variety separately, allows them all to go through malolactic and ages the *vins clairs* in cask prior to bottling them up for their secondary fermentation. He only began producing this wine in the 2006 vintage. The 2013 is a good, solid wine, offering up a nose of apple, peach, bread dough, smoke and a nice touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and a bit four-square in personality, with a good core, slightly coarse bubbles and perfectly respectable length and grip on the well-balanced finish. 2020-2035. **89**.



### **2012 Georges Laval “les Longues Violes” Blanc de Noirs Brut Nature (Cumières)**

The 2012 is the first release of les Longues Violes from Vincent Laval. This is a single vineyard bottling of pinot noir and pinot meunier that Monsieur Laval just started producing when he had to replant a parcel of very old pinot noir from his neighboring *lieu à dit* of les Hauts Chèvres, as those 1931 vines finally gave up the ghost after the 2009 harvest. However, in this adjoining vineyard, Vincent wanted to wait until the youngest vines (planted in 1984) were sufficiently mature to go into a single vineyard cuvée. The meunier here dates back to 1947 and most of the Lavals’ pinot noir in les Longues Violes was planted in 1964 for this bottling. The *vins clairs* were barrel-fermented (as is the case for all of Vincent’s wines) and aged until August of 2013 prior to bottling up for secondary fermentation; the wine was disgorged at the end of May of 2019. It delivers a marvelously pure and youthful bouquet of white peach, apple, hazelnut, a touch of buttery oak, lovely soil tones, warm bread and just a touch of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused, complex and perfectly balanced, with excellent mid-palate depth, elegant *mousse*, bright, buried acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex and utterly refined finish. This is gorgeous young wine, but like all of Vincent’s cuvées, it really needs some cellaring to blossom. 2028-2075. **96.**

### **2012 Philipponnat Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut Millésime (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

The 2012 vintage of Philipponnat’s Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut is composed entirely of pinot noir from premier and grand cru villages. It was aged *sur latte* six-plus years, disgorged in October of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of 4.5 grams per liter. The wine is absolutely superb

on the nose, wafting from the glass in a pure and complex blend of peach, apple, warm bread, a beautifully refined base of soil tones, hazelnuts and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, bright and full-bodied, with a great core of fruit, lovely transparency and grip, elegant *mousse* and a bright girdle of acidity that adds cut and lift on the very long and classy finish. Though 2012 is a ripe vintage, this wine is very precise and mineral-driven and will age long and effortlessly. Fine, fine juice. 2020-2050. **93+**.

#### **2009 Jacquesson “Aÿ Vauzelle Terme ” Extra Brut Millésime (Dizy)**

The *climat* of Vauzelle Terme is one of the most famous in the village of Aÿ, with extremely chalky soils. The Chiquet brothers own thirty *ares* of pinot noir vines here that were planted in 1980 and which sit right in the middle of the due south-facing slope. The wine was barrel-fermented and the *vins clairs* were bottled in June of 2010 for their secondary fermentation; the *cuvée* was disgorged in May of 2019 after nine years aging and was finished without *dosage* in this vintage. The wine offers up a stellar bouquet of peach, apple, macadamia nuts, a beautiful base of chalky soil tones, brioche, a bit of buttery oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and impeccably balanced, with a superb core of fruit, outstanding focus and grip, refined *mousse* and a very long, complex and wide open finish. The ripeness of the fruit in 2009 allowed for this wine to be bottled without *dosage* and still offer up outstanding drinking (relatively) right out of the blocks. This is very lovely juice. 2020-2045+. **93**.

#### **2009 Philipponnat “Cuvée 1522” Extra Brut Millésime (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

The Philipponnat “Cuvée 1522” bottling is based primarily on pinot noir from the superb vineyard of Le Léon in the village of Aÿ, with the remainder of the *cuvée* composed of chardonnay hailing from grand cru vineyards in the village of Mesnil-sur-Oger. A portion of the *vins clairs* were barrel-fermented and had their malo blocked, to give the wine more cut in the ripe year of 2009. The *cépages* of the 2009 version is sixty-nine percent pinot noir and thirty-one percent chardonnay and the wine was disgorged in March of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of 4.5 grams per liter. The bouquet is beautifully refined for a 2009 (which was a very hot, ripe year), wafting from the glass in a blend of white peach, apple, caraway seed, beautifully refined soil tones, a whisper of buttery oak and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with fine transparency and cut, elegant *mousse* and a very long, complex and still quite youthful finish. This is certainly approachable today, but the wine is really still in climbing mode and deserves at least three to five more years in the cellar to really start hitting on all cylinders. It will be a stellar bottle in due course. 2023-2055. **93+**.

#### **2008 Dom Pérignon Brut Millésime (Épernay)**

I had not tasted a bottle of the 2008 vintage of Dom Pérignon since my interview with Richard Geoffroy at the abbey in Hautvillers just a few months before Monsieur Geoffroy retired. I was very happy to see it generously added by John Chapman to our lineup for the second Vega Sicilia vertical that I reported on in the previous issue, as it is a wine of the same superb quality as all those great old Únicos. As I noted in my feature on Dom Pérignon, the 2008 is an absolutely classic vintage for this wine, which means it is structured, structured, structured, and at twelve years of age, still an absolute infant! The primary bouquet offers up a promising blend of apple, lime peel, menthol, superb minerality, a touch of young DP botanicals and tons of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core,

with brisk acids, refined *mousse*, bruising backend mineral drive and a very long, very pure and seamlessly balanced finish. I scored this a touch lower than the bottle in Hautvillers, but I suspect that this is just the result of context and the wine has not lost any of its luster- it has only hidden its essence even further behind its electric girdle of acidity. This is years away from its apogee, but has utterly brilliant potential. 2030-2075+. **96+**.

**2004 Champagne Tarlant “la Vigne d’Or” Brut Nature Millesime (Oeuilly)**

One of the things I respect the most about the Tarlant family is their willingness to age their non-*dosé* bottlings for a sufficient time for the acids to mellow before they release them. Case in point, the 2004 la Vigne d’Or spent fully eleven years aging *sur latte* prior to its disgorgement in March of 2018. This bottling is composed entirely of pinot meunier and the 2004 version offers up a superb bouquet of white peach, hazelnut, a very complex base of soil tones, warm sourdough bread, dried flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impeccably balanced, with a fine core of fruit, excellent complexity and grip, refined *mousse* and a long, focused and zesty finish. This is simply dynamite bubbly! 2020-2045+. **93+**.

**2002 Piper-Heidsieck “Rare” Brut Millésime (Reims)**

I have been fortunate in the last couple of years to drink the 2002 vintage of Piper’s Rare with some frequency and the wine never fails to delight. It is still a wine with plenty of potential for further evolution in the cellar, but it is wide open today and really drinking well, with the nose offering up scents of apple, fresh-baked bread, caraway seed, a complex base of chalky soil tones, dried flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and zesty, with lovely mid-palate depth, elegant *mousse* and excellent focus and balance on the long, vibrant and very classy finish. 2020-2040+. **94+**.

**1994 Philipponnat “Clos des Goisses” L.V. Brut Millésime (Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

This recent re-release of the 1994 Clos des Goisses was given an extended time aging *sur latte* in the cellars in Mareuil, prior to being disgorged in July of 2019 and finished with a *dosage* of 4.5 grams per liter. The nose today is beautifully nuanced with notes of maturity adding to the constellation of apple, walnut, a beautiful base of soil tones, gentle smokiness, a touch of caraway seed and a topnote of wheat toast. On the palate the wine is refined, complex and full-bodied, with excellent mid-palate depth, still quite bright acids, impeccable focus, elegant *mousse* and a very long, beautifully balanced and classy finish. This is a lovely example of why Clos des Goisses is bottled in almost every vintage, for even in vintages that are not widely considered blessed, this *terroir* turns out something special! 2020-2040. **94**.

***Vintage-Dated Brut and Extra Brut Rosé***

**2015 Emilien Feneuil “Les Goulats” Rosé de Macération Non Dosé Millésime (Sermiers)**

Emilien Feneuil’s 2015 Les Goulats Rosé de Macération is one of the darker rosés I have tasted in quite a while, as he de-stems these grapes and then macerates them for thirty hours before the start of fermentation, to give the wine its cherry red hue. The pinot noir for this bottling hails from the *lieu à dit* of Les Goulats in the village of Chamery. The wine is made similarly to Monsieur Feneuil’s other bottlings, with indigenous yeast fermentation in older casks, and extended *elevage* prior to bottling for secondary fermentation and no *dosage* at disgorgement. The 2015 Les Goulats offers up a beautiful nose of blood orange, cherries,

cinnamon, cloves, a lovely base of soil tones, a touch of smokiness and a bit of background oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, deep and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, impressive soil inflection, frothy *mousse* and fine bounce and grip on the long and complex finish. This is drinking beautifully out of the blocks, but has the balance to also age very gracefully and is really a great bottle of Rosé Champagne to drink through the meal! 2020-2035.

**93.**

## RECENTLY- TASTED RED BURGUNDY IN THE BOTTLE REPORT SPRING 2020



*Vine cuttings being burned during spring pruning in the village of Aloxe-Corton.*

It has been a couple of years since I last put together a feature on red Burgundies in the bottle, which had been a staple of the newsletter each year since its beginning. However, as the flow of samples and tasting trips started to grow dramatically in the last few years, I have not found time or space to include this report since the late summer of 2017 and so this article is a bit overdue. It is funny, as I was under the distinct impression that I do not drink a lot of younger red Burgundy these days (certainly not as much as I did in the decade of the 1990s, when I simply sucked down a significant percentage of the reds I bought for my cellar from the 1987, 1989, 1990 and 1991 vintages before they were even ten years-old), but going back through my notes from the last year and a half or so, it became pretty clear that my consumption of younger red Burgundies has not fallen off anywhere near as much as I had thought! It is probably true that I have at least gotten my act together in more recent times and do not open young bottles of red grand crus these days, finally understanding that these wines really do not reveal anywhere near all their secrets until they are at least twenty-five or thirty years of age, but I was surprised to see how much younger premier cru and high quality *villages* level wines I have drunk over the last eighteen months. A lot of these wines have been drunk in restaurants while in Burgundy, as most



wine lists there today have been pretty well denuded of their older vintage wines (and yes, admittedly, I did play a role in the depletions of some of those great old wine lists of yesteryear, as I used to be a pretty thirsty visitor once I pulled off of the A6 back in the day!) and one has to be content to drink some of the well-selected younger wines on the lists here these days.

But, clearly the volume of notes that follow suggest that I have been drinking more younger red Burgundies beyond the confines of the lovely restaurants of the Côte d'Or, and my relatively new-found sense of restraint in letting red Burgundies age properly in the cellar before opening them appears to be somewhat illusory. Of course, many of the notes that follow were derived from bottles shared with friends and colleagues, or opened through the generosity of the *vignerons* themselves, many of whom continue to show wines from previous vintages at the end of tastings of the new vintage in barrel with quite some regularity, despite the world's thirst for these wines having grown exponentially in the last decade and the wines themselves being harder and harder to find in the open market with each passing vintage. The tradition of graciousness of the Burgundy spirit continues here, despite such seismic shifts in the global market for their wines, and sometimes I wonder how much longer this tradition will continue to reign in the region. There are certainly signs that things are changing at several of the most famous domaines of Burgundy, who are cutting back on visitors, realizing that they need to save every single bottle for their demanding clientele and certainly do not need more high scores in publications such as this to feed the fires of commercial demand for their wines. But, the growth of this more *Bordelais*-centric spirit at certain Burgundian domaines remains the exception today, as the notes below will attest, and there remains a great many very famous and world-class Burgundy producers who are not shy about sharing a few bottles of recent vintages at the end of tastings.

As demand for red Burgundy has skyrocketed in the last decade, it has become increasingly difficult to set up appointments to taste at domaines here in November, and I have often tried to be understanding to the plight of well-known producers in the region and the attendant demands on their time when so much of the Burgundy-loving world descends on the Côte d'Or and Chablis in October and November to taste the new vintage. Consequently, I have on more than a few occasions in the last couple of years agreed to taste in the cellars with fellow journalists, so that the *vignerons* can maximize their time organizing tastings by showing the wines to more than one publication at a time. As I do not read any other wine publications (hoping to avoid the specter of "group think" that so plagued the world of wine journalism towards the tail end of Robert Parker's career), I had forgotten that several of my colleagues still like to revisit last year's vintage in bottle, after working through the whole range of the new vintage in cask, and so, even though I generally do not ask to do so on my solo visits, I have had the opportunity to accrue quite a few notes of wines in bottle on these visits where I agree to share an appointment. I have started this report with wines from the 2015 vintage (though I have tons of notes on 2016s and 2017s out of bottle as well from these "shared" appointments), as the riper and plusher style of the 2015s has made many of them far more approachable in their youth than some other recent vintages and hence, more appropriate for this report.

Though many of the red Burgundies from 2015 are starting to already drink quite well (or are not all that far away from doing so), this is not the vintage of red Burgundy I have typically been selecting when dining in the region, as I have preferred to drink examples from 2014, 2013 and 2011 when confronted with a younger wine list here. All three of these vintages have

examples that are starting to blossom nicely (I tend to try to stick mostly to *villages* level wines from 2014 in restaurants right now, if possible) and can be very enjoyable with food. But, as both 2013 and 2011 are a bit out of fashion in certain red Burgundy-drinking circles (though I personally like both vintages very much), it is often the case that I can find a more forward premier cru from 2011 or 2013 priced on the same wine list as a range of 2014 AC bottlings, so, as you will see, these days I usually opt for those two vintages at the premier cru level when selecting a red off of a wine list. I did the same a few years back with the 2007 and 2008 red Burgundies, when the 2009s were out and being touted as another “great vintage” in certain circles and I was perfectly content to drink my youthful 2007 or 2008 reds at the restaurant and leave the more expensive 2009s on the list for others’ enjoyment. Consequently, many of the surprisingly deep number of notes on the 2015s out of bottle were tasted recently in the cellars when producers have kindly offered to share a few examples after a range of more recent wines out of cask.

In the following report, I have left out many recent notes on wines that have been tasted for other Burgundy-oriented articles I have planned for later this year. One is a big feature on the 1999 red Burgundies, which was planned for last year, but which I was not able to get to, due to my father’s health issues in the second half of the year and my having devoted a lot of time to learning about senior health care here in the US and doing my best to shelter him from some of its worst traits. Three other big projects I have in the works for red Burgundy would have been perhaps published, in lieu of this feature, if the Coronavirus global pandemic had not intervened this spring, as I had a lot of tastings lined up in the Côte d’Or for this March to focus on the red wines of Chassagne-Montrachet, Gevrey-Chambertin’s unsung, but truly great premier cru of Petite Chapelle and the glorious reds wines from the hill of Corton. I hope all of those projects will be completed and the articles written in the not too distant future, if we can one day return to a semblance of normal life after this virus and its deathly march across the globe recedes into the past. So, I have retained all of my notes in my files on the 1999 reds and those other three *terroirs* for those future articles and they are not included below. As I mentioned in my feature on the Mâconnais and Côte Chalonnaise in the last issue, the small handful of red wines that I received for that report are reported on here, rather in the last issue, which focused exclusively on the white wines from those regions.

I have listed the wines from the Côte Chalonnaise first in the notes that follow in their own section, as I did not have room for these in the last issue of the newsletter on the white wines of that region. After these, the following notes are organized, first chronologically by vintage (starting with 2015), and then geographically within each vintage subset by commune, running from north to south. In the more recent vintages, where I have accrued a lot of notes, the wines within each communal subset are organized with *Villages* level bottlings first, followed by Premier Crus and then Grand Crus. Within the groupings of premier crus and grand crus, I have listed the wines by my personal preference for the respective *terroir*, rather than alphabetically, so for example, les Amoureuses will be the last of the premier crus listed within the vintage’s grouping of Chambolle-Musigny premier crus, rather than the first. If, I have been fortunate enough to taste multiple examples of a given cru, the wines are then listed alphabetically by producer within that grouping.



### ***Côte Chalonnaise Rouge***

#### **2017 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine des Moirots (Christophe Denizot)**

The 2017 Bourgogne Rouge from Christophe Denizot at Domaine des Moirots is crafted from a variety of parcels, so that the average age of vines in this bottling is thirty-five years-old. Most of the cuvée is fermented and aged in cement tanks, with about ten percent seeing its *elevage* in three year-old barrels. The 2017 version is a good, solid wine in the making, offering up a complex nose of cherries, quince, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a good base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a fine core, good transparency and grip, modest tannins and a long, still fairly primary finish. Like many examples of Bourgogne Rouge, this could do with a few years in the cellar to blossom, but it will be a good glass of pinot noir in due course. 2023-2033. **88.**

#### **2017 Givry- Domaine des Moirots (Christophe Denizot)**

Christophe Denizot's 2017 Givry *villages* bottling hails from a one hectare parcel of thirty year-old vines that are planted on soils that have a fair bit of clay in them. The wine is given a few days cold soak, with the bunches completely destemmed and it is aged for a year in barrel, with thirty-five percent of the casks new each year. The wine delivers a vibrant and red fruity aromatic constellation of cherries, strawberries, pomegranate, a superb base of soil, a bit of cedary oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full and nicely transparent, with a good core, fine focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and very promising finish.

This is really going to be a fine bottle when it blossoms and offers up stunning value. Just give it a bit of time in the cellar to spread its wings! 2025-2045+. **89+**.

**2017 Givry “à Vigne Rouge” 1er Cru- Domaine des Moirots (Christophe Denizot)**

The 2017 Givry “à Vigne Rouge” premier cru bottling from Domaine des Moirots is a relative newcomer in their lineup, as they purchased and planted this parcel seven years ago. It was planted with a *selection massale* of pinot *fine* vines, which produce very small berries. The wine is destemmed, given a short cold soak, fermented in cement and then aged in casks for one year, with sixty percent being new oak and the other forty percent one wine barrels. The 2017 Vigne Rouge delivers a superb bouquet of red and black cherries, a bit of raw cocoa, grilled meats, a lovely base of dark soil tones, cedary oak and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and nicely soil-driven, with a good core of fruit, lovely focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and very classy finish. This is an excellent wine and carries its new wood seamlessly. 2025-2050. **91**.

**2017 Mercurey “le Meix Juillot”- Domaine Michel Juillot**

The le Meix Juillot bottling from Laurent Juillot is relatively new in the portfolio of the domaine. This is an old vine cuvée made from some of the estate’s finest parcels at the *villages* level and the wine is aged in fifty percent new oak. The bouquet delivers a fine constellation of cherries, strawberries, fresh thyme, bonfire, a fine base of soil and a fairly generous serving of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, vibrant and tangy finish. This has outstanding backend energy and lift and will be a superb wine with a bit of bottle age. 2026-2050. **91**.

**2017 Mercurey “les Vignes de Maillonge”- Domaine Michel Juillot**

The les Vignes de Maillonge bottling from Laurent Juillot is made from vines that were planted in 1958 and 1982. The wine is completely destemmed and raised in fifteen percent new oak. The 2017 version is beautifully red fruity on the nose, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, strawberries, mustard seed, lavender, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke and just a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and tangy, with a good, sappy core, fine soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex finish. This is nicely structured and will need some bottle age to blossom, but it has lovely constituent components and will prove to be an excellent village wine in due course. 2025-2050. **89+**.

**2017 Mercurey “Clos des Barraults” Premier Cru- Domaine Michel Juillot**

As I mentioned in my note on the 2016 Clos des Barraults, the Juillot family’s vines here were planted in three *tranches*, with the oldest now closing in on their fiftieth birthday and the youngest having been planted in 1995, so all of the vines here have now reached their primes. The wine sees just under a third of new oak and the 2017 delivers a classy nose of black cherries, a bit of dark berry, woodsmoke, venison, a very good base of soil, a hint of cinnamon and a discreet framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with superb depth at the core, fine focus and grip and a long, soil-driven and very promising finish. I have a slight stylistic preference for the more red fruity personality of the Champs Martin over the more black fruity Clos des Barraults, but in terms of quality, they are both exceptional and great values! 2026-2060. **92**.

**2017 Mercurey “Clos du Roi” Premier Cru- Domaine Michel Juillot**

The Clos du Roi premier cru bottling from Laurent Juillot is also planted with a range of vine ages, as the parcels were planted at the same time as those in the Clos des Barraults (1972, 1980 and 1995). The wine sees thirty-five percent new oak during its *elevage* and the 2017

shows off a marvelously refined bouquet of red and black cherries, a bit of pomegranate, a very complex base of soil, a lovely mix of gentle spices, *pigeon*, fresh thyme, bonfire and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tangy and structured, with excellent mid-palate depth, fine focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, vibrant and still very youthful finish. This will be the best of a very, very strong range of premier cru reds from Laurent in 2017, but it will also need the most time in the cellar to blossom. 2027-2065+. **92+**.

**2017 Mercurey “les Champs Martin” Premier Cru- Domaine Michel Juillot**

The vines in the Juillot family’s parcel of les Champs Martin are forty-three years of age. The wine is completely destemmed and was raised in thirty percent new casks in this vintage. The wine delivers a very refined aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, gamebird, bonfire, a fine base of soil tones, a bit of espresso, fresh thyme, mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and very complex, with a superb core of fruit, great soil signature and grip, ripe, buried tannins and a long, poised and very promising finish. This is terrific red Burgundy in the making! 2027-2060. **92**.

**2017 Corton “Perrières”- Domaine Michel Juillot**

As this bottle generously arrived with the range of Côte Chalonnaise reds I requested from Domaine Juillot’s importer, I happily include it in this report. The Juillot family’s parcel here were planted in 1982, so they were thirty-five years of age in 2017. The wine is completely destemmed and aged in forty percent new oak for a year and a half prior to bottling. The bouquet is deep, youthfully complex and extremely promising, wafting from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, red currants, stony soil tones, gamebird, a bit of blood orange, plenty of Corton spice tones, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with a rock solid core of fruit, firm, ripe tannins, excellent focus and grip and a very long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. This is a proper long-distance runner and will need plenty of time in the cellar, but it is going to be outstanding when it is ready to drink. 2032-2100. **94**.

**2014 Mercurey- Domaine Gaëlle et Jérôme Meunier**

The 2014 Mercurey from Gaëlle and Jérôme Meunier is really an excellent bottle of pinot noir, with lovely, chalky soil tones underpinning a really pretty and complex bouquet of cherries, gentle autumnal tones, coffee, bonfire and a touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and transparent, with a nice core of fruit, tangy acids, modest tannins and excellent focus and balance on the long and nascently complex finish. This is a very high class example of Mercurey. 2017-2035. **90**.

**2014 Mercurey “Premier Cru”- Domaine Gaëlle et Jérôme Meunier**

The 2014 Mercurey “Premier Cru” bottling from Gaëlle and Jérôme Meunier is just starting to blossom nicely and begin to offer up generosity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex blend of red and black cherries, gamebird, bonfire, bitter chocolate and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is bright, full and vibrant, with a fine core of pure fruit, modest tannins and a long, focused and tangy finish. I really like the size and shape of this wine, but it is bottled with a fair bit of sulfur, so be sure to decant it for a bit if drinking it now, so that it can blossom properly. 2020-2040. **91**.

## **2015 Vintage**

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

The 2015 Bourgogne “Vieilles Vignes” from Domaine Joseph Voillot is a very pretty and red fruity example of the vintage, offering up a bright nose of strawberries, cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of orange peel and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and tasty, with a very good core for its level, good soil signature, a bit of backend tannin and a long, well-balanced and tangy finish. This is very, very good for Bourgogne! 2019-2030. **89.**

### **2015 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Evocelles”- Domaine Denis Bachelet**

The 2015 les Evocelles from Denis Bachelet is a really lovely wine in the making. The bouquet is pure and black fruity, offering up a refined blend of black cherries, roasted meats, gentle spice tones, a complex base of dark soil elements, woodsmoke and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite open already, with a lovely core, moderate tannins and a long, nascently complex and generous finish. Structurally, this wine is already very approachable, but I would still leave it alone in a dark corner of the cellar for at least another five years and let its secondary layers of complexity emerge. 2025-2050. **91+.**

### **2015 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Perrière”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2015 Perrière from the Harmand family is a very strong example of the vintage. The bouquet offers up a lovely blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, woodsmoke, bitter chocolate, a touch of chicory, black minerality and nutty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and plush at the core, with fine-grained, buried tannins, lovely focus and balance and a long, complex and classy finish. There is nothing over the top about this 2015! 2022-2055+. **92+.**

### **2015 Mazis-Chambertin- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2015 Mazis from Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy is terrific on both the nose and palate. The bouquet offers up a nascently complex blend of black plums, black cherries, dark chocolate, a beautiful base of Mazis minerality, coffee bean, roasted meats and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with very good dark soil undertow, buried, ripe tannins and a very long, suave and promising finish. This needs plenty of time, but it is going to be an exceptional bottle of Mazis! 2030-2080. **95.**

### **2015 Ruchottes-Chambertin- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg**

The Mugnerets’ 2015 Ruchottes-Chambertin has really turned out surprisingly red fruity for the vintage. The bouquet is very classy, wafting from the glass in a mix of baked cherries and red plums, grilled meats, complex soil tones, mustard seed, cedar and a smoky topnote. With a bit of air, a violet-laced perfume also emerges on the nose. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with ripe, seamless tannins, excellent focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and very promising finish. This will be a long distance runner and will need plenty of cellaring, but in due course, it will be stellar. 2030-2080+. **95.**

### **2015 Chambertin- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

Jean-Louis Trapet’s Chambertin is one of the finest wines of the vintage in 2015. The youthful bouquet already shows enormous complexity in its combination of red and black cherries, dark plums, woodsmoke, a gorgeous base of soil, gamebird, mustard seed and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and sappy at the core, with great balance and grip, suave, fine-grained tannins, exquisite length and focus and simply stunning backend mineral drive for a 2015 Burgundy. This is going to be celestial juice in the fullness of time. 2029-2085. **97.**



**2015 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier**

Stylistically, I am a bigger fan of the 2014 vintage *chez* Mugnier than the 2015s, but this wine showed very nicely. The bouquet has a nice muskiness to it today, offering up a ripe blend of red and black cherries, gamebird, a touch of blood orange, gentle spice tones, dusty rose and a good base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ample in personality, with a good core and soil signature, moderate tannins and very good length and grip. Good juice in the making. 2023-2050. **90.**

**2015 Chambolle-Musigny “les Feusselottes ”- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg**

The 2015 Feusselottes from the Mugneret family has really turned out beautifully. The bouquet is bright and classy, wafting from the glass in a sappy blend of red and black cherries, roasted quail, mustard seed, chalky soil tones, woodsmoke and a touch of spicy wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and shows off beautiful mid-palate depth, with suave, buried tannins and fine focus and grip on the impressively soil-driven finish. Fine juice in the making. 2025-2065+. **93.**

**2015 Chambolle-Musigny “les Fuées”- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier**

The 2015 les Fuées from Monsieur Mugnier is a good example of the vintage, offering up a sappy and black fruity blend of black cherries, black plums, raw cocoa, gamebird, a touch of nutskin, chalky soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine deep, full-bodied and plush in personality, with a good core, ripe tannins and a long, primary and well-balanced finish. This needs some time to unlock its secondary layers of complexity. 2027-2065+. **92.**

**2015 Chambolle-Musigny “les Amoureuses”- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier**

The 2015 les Amoureuses from Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier is a stunning wine in the making. The bouquet already shows celestial complexity in its mix of red plums, red and black cherries, lavender, a touch of blood orange, raw cocoa, a complex base of soil, violets and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and suave on the attack, with a lovely core, great transparency and breed, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and nicely reserved finish. First class Amoureuses! 2030-2080. **96.**

**2015 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier**

The 2015 Bonnes-Mares from Domaine Mugnier shares some of the musky floral qualities found in the Chambolle AC here this year. The nose is youthful, deep and classy, wafting from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, spit-roasted *pigeon*, woodsmoke, lovely soil signature, a touch of mustard seed and a suave foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and sappy at the core, with good mineral drive, ripe, buried tannins and plenty of backend volume on the long and focused finish. This is quite a powerful vintage for this bottling *chez* Mugnier. 2030-2075+. **94+.**

**2015 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier**

We are still at least five years away from the release of the 2015 Musigny from the domaine, but put a note in the calendar, as this is one of the finest wines of the vintage and it will be a lovely addition for the cellar. The bouquet is stunningly deep and pure, with a sappy personality that includes notes of red and black cherries, musky violet tones, dark chocolate, kaleidoscopic minerality, woodsmoke, gamebird, a touch of nutskin and a very sophisticated base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, ripe, buried tannins and a very long, sappy, nascently complex and powerful finish. Great juice. 2035-2100. **98.**

### **2015 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg**

The 2015 Clos Vougeot from Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg is a beautiful young wine. It offers up an aromatic constellation of red plums, cherries, nutskin, gamebird, woodsmoke, mustard seed, a very complex base of soil and a nice framing of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a plush core, great mineral drive for the vintage, fine-grained tannins and a very long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. Of the three grand crus in the cellar here this year, the Clos Vougeot has the most seamless tannins. 2032-2100. **97.**



### **2015 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg**

The 2015 Vosne-Romanée from the Mugneret sisters is a lovely wine that is all Vosne spice and red fruit in this vintage. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a mix of baked raspberries and red plums, *pigeon*, lovely soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full and complex, with a sappy core, fine focus and grip and a long, moderately tannic and very nicely balanced finish. Good juice, but this needs at least a few more years. 2024-2050. **90.**

### **2015 Echézeaux- Domaine Arnoux-Lachaux**

The 2015 Echézeaux from Domaine Arnoux-Lachaux is a good, solid example of the vintage and far less new oak than I remember the wines here a decade ago. The bouquet offers up a promising blend of red and black cherries, a good base of soil tones, espresso, still a youthful touch of the stems, woodsmoke and a nice touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is

fullish, elegant and already fairly complex, with a good core, fine soil signature, suave tannins and a long, promising finish. This is still too young for primetime drinking, but it will not take an eternity to blossom into its plateau. 2025-2055+. **92.**

**2015 Echézeaux- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg**

The Mugneret family's 2015 Echézeaux is another excellent result from this vintage. The wine is the most flamboyant of the three grand crus here this year, offering up a deep, ripe and sappy nose of black raspberries, black cherries, Vosne spices, violets, dark chocolate, a great base of soil and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, plush on the attack and sports excellent mid-palate depth, with ripe, buried tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and very well balanced finish. Fine juice in the making. 20302-1200. **96.**

**2015 Nuits St. Georges- Domaine Georges Noëllat**

The 2015 Nuits St. Georges AC from Domaine Georges Noëllat is a fine example in the making. The bouquet delivers scents of red and black cherries, venison, a touch of blood orange, dark soil tones and a bit of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripe at the core, with good soil signature, moderate tannins and fine length and grip on the well balanced finish. This is good juice. 2022-2050. **90.**

**2015 Nuits St. Georges "les Vaucrains"- Domaine Henri Gouges**

The 2015 Vaucrains from Grégory Gouges is a lovely wine in the making and a proper long-distance runner, in the fine family tradition here. The wine offers up a youthful aromatic constellation of black cherries, cassis, lavender, *pigeon*, a very complex base of soil tones, woodsmoke and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush at the core (particularly for a young example of Gouges Vaucrains!), with lovely focus and grip, ripe, buried tannins and a long, nascently complex and properly chewy finish. Fine juice in the making. 2027-2065+. **93.**

**2015 Nuits St. Georges "Clos de la Maréchale"- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier**

The 2015 vintage of Clos de la Maréchale is an excellent wine in the making. The youthful nose delivers scents of black cherries, sweet dark berries, chicory, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and properly chewy out of the blocks, with a rock solid core, good soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, vibrant and promising finish. One has to really admire from Monsieur Mugnier has done with this bottling in just over one decade after its return to the domaine's fold! 2025-2065. **92.**

**2015 Savigny-lès-Beaune "Reine Joly"- Domaine Camus-Bruchon**

The 2015 Savigny-lès-Beaune "Reine Joly" from Domaine Camus-Bruchon is a lovely and nicely red fruity example of the vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of currants, a touch of orange peel, woodsmoke, gamebird, Savigny spice tones, coffee and a complex base of soil elements. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very elegant in its relative youth, with a good core of fruit, suave backend tannins and a long, focused and very well balanced finish. This is a first class *villages* in the making. 2022-2050. **91.**

**2015 Volnay "Champans"- Domaine Joseph Voillot**

This is a domaine that I have wanted to find time to visit during one of my two annual trips to Burgundy each year, but have yet to find a place to slot them into one of the itineraries. But, I have always liked what I have tasted from Domaine Voillot here in the US and was delighted when their American importer sent me a range of their wines to taste to nudge me towards finding a time to visit them on a coming trip. Their 2015 Champans is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a fine bouquet of cherries, a touch of plum, chocolate, gamebird, dark

soil tones and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe and full-bodied, with good acids, a nice base of soil and a long, moderately tannic and well-balanced finish. This is a pretty ripe example of the vintage, but has maintained nice shape and bounce and is already pretty tasty to drink. 2021-2045+. **90.**

### ***2014 Vintage***

#### **2014 Chambolle-Musigny “Premier Cru”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2014 Chambolle Premier Cru bottling from the Drouhin family is a beautiful bottle that will not take too many more years to really open up completely and start to drink with generosity, but today, it is still in need of a couple more years in the cellar. The bouquet is beautifully precise and perfumed, wafting from the glass in a mix of red plums, cherries, cocoa powder, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and a lovely touch of upper register spiciness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a good core, lovely transparency and bounce, ripe, buried tannins and a long, tangy and perfectly balanced finish. This wine will age long and gracefully, so even though it is not too far away from blossoming, do keep in mind that is only the start of what will be a long plateau of peak drinkability. 2023-2055+. **92.**

#### **2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Baudes”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I am always happy to see the Drouhin family bottling their les Baudes up on its own, as they own a very small parcel in this vineyard, and in vintages that they do not feel are exceptional in quality, it is blended into the Premier Cru bottling (see above) to add a bit more to the foundation of that wine. In top flight years, the theory is that the other constituent components can stand on their own quite nicely, and the Baudes gets its own bottling. The 2014 Baudes is indeed excellent, offering up a beautiful young nose of black cherries, sweet dark berries, gamebird, espresso, vinesmoke, raw cocoa, a fine base of soil and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent in personality, with a fine core, good grip and focus, tangy acids and a long, balanced and moderately tannic finish. This will be a lovely wine and will only need a year or two more in the cellar than the Premier Cru to blossom and start to drink with generosity. 2025-2060+. **92+.**

#### **2014 Chambolle-Musigny “la Combe d’Orveau”- Domaine Jean Grivot**

I have not had the opportunity to visit Domaine Grivot in several years, so I was quite pleased when a neighbor at La Colombière in the center of Beaune offered to share a glass of this wine with me. The 2014 Combe d’Orveau from the Grivot family has a fine, youthful and black fruity nose of dark berries, black cherries, gamebird, a sound base of soil, gentle balsamic tones and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, youthful and nicely balanced, with a good core and soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a long, moderately extracted finish. This is less extracted in style than I remember the wines from the Grivot family, which is all to the good to my palate, but it still is in need of some cellaring before it starts to stir. 2026-2065. **91.**

#### **2014 Vosne-Romanée “les Beaux Monts”- Domaine Georges Noëllat**

Maxime Cheurlin’s 2014 Beaux Monts is outstanding wine in the making. It is still on the youthful side of course, but shows enormous promise on the both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up scents of black cherries, sweet dark berries, espresso, venison, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and very pure, with a superb core of fruit, lovely soil inflection, ripe, fine-grained tannins and excellent focus and grip on the poised, nascently complex and vibrant finish. All this superb premier cru needs is sufficient time in the cellar to properly stretch its wings. 2025-2055+. **93+.**

### **2014 Nuits St. Georges “les Pruliers”- Domaine Henri Gouges**

The inherent elegance of the 2014 vintage has left its mark on the Gouges family's Pruliers, which synthesizes beautifully with the power and broad shoulders of this bottling to have produced one of the greatest young vintages of this cuvée that I have ever tasted *chez* Gouges! The first class bouquet wafts from the glass in a youthfully complex blend of black cherries, dark berries, gamebird, a brilliant base of soil tones, coffee, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very transparent out of the blocks, with a superb core of fruit, ripe, seamless tannins, tangy acids and great focus and grip on the long, complex and vibrant finish. This is brilliant wine in the making! 2028-2075. **94+**.

### **2014 Savigny-lès-Beaune “Grands Liards” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Camus-Bruchon**

The 2014 Grand Liards from Guillaume Camus is an excellent example of the vintage. The bouquet is still youthful, but shows fine promise in its refined aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, red plums, venison, coffee, a nice touch of Savigny spice tones, a good base of soil and a topnote of vinesmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still moderately tannic, with a good core of fruit, fine soil signature and a long, nascently complex and gently chewy finish. Good juice in the making, but give it still a few more years to more completely soften up and blossom. 2023-2060. **92**.

### **2014 Beaune “Grèves”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The Drouhin family's 2014 Beaune “Grèves” is a fine example of the vintage and starting to just blossom and drink with a bit of generosity, though its peak years are still several more down the road. The bouquet is young, pure and has a nice touch of sappiness to its fruit component, as it offers up scents of red plums, black cherries, dark chocolate, a beautiful base of soil, *pigeon*, woodsmoke, cedar and an exotic topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very elegant in profile, with a lovely core of fruit, fine soil signature, moderate, ripe tannins and impressive length and grip on the poised, tangy and complex finish. This is already very easy to drink today, but it is still climbing and softening and another few years should really find it in a sweet spot in its evolution. I should note that I clearly underestimated this wine out of cask. 2023-2055+. **93**.

### **2013 Vintage**

#### **2013 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Domaine Duroché**

The 2013 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux” from Domaine Duroché is a very pretty and stylish wine that carries just a touch too much oak spice for my taste, but it is still pretty youthful, and that may be remedied with further bottle age. The bouquet shows a fair bit of new wood, but coupled with lovely nose of cherries, red plum, pretty spice tones, a fine base of soil, lead pencil and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely soil-driven in personality, with a solid core, but a bit of a dry edge to the oak tannins that have not yet been fully integrated in the wine. As it is a couple of years now since I last tasted this wine, the wood may have continued to integrate and if this is the case, then my score is already a bit conservative, as the other elements in the wine are quite good. 2018-2040. **89+?**

#### **2013 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Dujac**

The 2013 Chambolle AC from Domaine Dujac is still a young wine and is pretty shut down at the present time. Today, there is a bit of pepperiness evident on both the nose and palate, as the bouquet offers up a combination of cherries, blood orange, fresh herb tones, chalky soil elements, pepper and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tightly-knit and tangy, with a good core and soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, adolescently awkward finish. I

tasted this bottle back in the summer of 2019 and it was not yet ready for primetime, though I have little doubt that it will outgrow this stage with further bottle age. 2023-2045+. **90+**.

**2013 Chambolle-Musigny “les Cras”- Domaine Georges Roumier**

Christophe Roumier’s les Cras is a lovely example of the 2013 vintage. The wine is refined, precise and still youthful, offering up a very promising bouquet of cherries, *pigeon*, woodsmoke, mustard seed, chalky soil tones and a discreet foundation of new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex, vibrant and classy, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is still a few years away from properly blossoming, but it should be starting to hit on all cylinders around its tenth birthday! 2023-2065. **93**.

**2013 Vosne-Romanée “les Chaumes”- Domaine Georges Noëllat**

The 2013 Vosne-Romanée “les Chaumes” from Maxime Cheurlin is excellent. The bouquet is very refined, wafting from the glass in a complex mix of dark berries, black cherries, bonfire, espresso, gamebird, a touch of fresh herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, a quite open personality and a long, modestly tannic and very well-balanced finish. This wine is developing beautifully into a very elegant middleweight, with plenty of intensity of flavor and an impressive lightness of step on the palate. Fine juice. 2018-2045. **91**.

**2013 Nuits St. Georges “les Herbues”- Domaine Nicolas Faure**

The 2013 Nuits St. Georges “les Herbues” from Nicolas Faure is a very pretty *villages* bottling, offering up a refined and promising bouquet of cherry, pomegranate, venison, bonfire and a lovely base of soil that is just starting to shade in an autumnal direction at age seven. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and nicely soil-driven, with a good, but not great core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and quite stylish finish. This is quite an elegant expression of Nuits AC and a pretty wine that is starting to just reach its plateau. 2020-2045+. **90**.

**2013 Nuits St. Georges “Aux-Thorey”- Domaine Chauvenet-Chopin**

The 2013 Nuits St. Georges “Aux-Thorey” from Domaine Chauvenet-Chopin is a good, young bottle of Nuits in the making, but it is still pretty closed down on the palate and demands a bit more time in the cellar to start to stir properly. The bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, roasted game, a good base of soil, a touch of youthful Nuits medicinal overtones, bonfire and a fair bit of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and soil-driven, with a good core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and a long, closed and well-balanced finish. Right now this seems a touch dense in style, but it is still in its closed phase and more transparency may emerge with further bottle age. 2024-2045+? **88-90?**

**2013 Nuits St. Georges “les Chaignots”- Domaine Robert Chevillon et Fils**

The 2013 Chaignots from Bertrand Chevillon is really a lovely bottle that is not too far away from drinking with generosity. The bouquet is bright and red fruity, offering up a pure and classy blend of cherries, a touch of beetroot, lovely minerality, a dollop of fresh herbs, nutskin and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a good core fine focus and grip, suave tannins and a long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. This is going to be lovely in only a couple more years. 2022-2050+. **92**.

**2013 Nuits St. Georges “Clos des Porrets”- Domaine Henri Gouges**

The 2013 Clos des Porrets from the Gouges family is an excellent example of the vintage. It offers up a refined and nice red and black fruit elements in its bouquet of red berries, black cherries, a fine vein of minerality, woodsmoke, incipient notes of *pigeon*, a very discreet framing



of new oak and a gentle topnote of Nuits nutskin. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and really soil-driven in profile, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and grip, suave, buried tannins and a long, tangy and nascently complex finish. This will be a very elegant vintage of Clos des Porrets in the fullness of time. 2023-2055+. **93.**

**2013 Savigny-lès-Beaune “Reine Joly”- Domaine Camus-Bruchon**

The 2013 vintage of Guillaume Camus’ Reine Joly bottling is a very pretty *villages*, offering up a red fruity nose of cherries, red currants, Savigny spices, a lovely base of soil, venison and a still youthful hint of peppercorn. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tangy, with lovely transparency and grip, a good core, fine-grained tannins and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. This will be very good with a few more years of bottle age. 2023-2045+. **90.**

**2013 Beaune “Grèves”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

In November of 2014, the 2013 Beaune “Grèves” was not showing all that well, but it was one of the very last of the vintage its malolactic fermentation in the Drouhin cellars in this vintage and was simply not ready for primetime tasting. It has proven to be even better than I thought it would be out of cask and is really showing beautifully out of bottle today. The is a lovely wine that is still a handful of years from really starting to drink well, but which is already offering a bit of enjoyment in its youth. The bouquet is bright and complex, offering up scents of cherries, pomegranate, chalky soil tones, a nice touch of raw cocoa, incipient notes of gamebird, vinesmoke and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a good core and very nice soil signature, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, vibrant and still fairly primary finish. With air, this gets a bit more tannic and youthful, so I would opt to let it rest in the cellar for another couple of years before opening the next bottle, as it will be very, very good when it has blossomed. 2022-2055. **92.**

**2013 Volnay- Domaine Michel Lafarge**

The 2013 Volnay *villages* from Frédéric Lafarge is a fine bottle in the making. The nose is pure, bright and red fruity, offering up scents of cherries, red currants, lovely spice tones (that recall Caillerets a bit), woodsmoke and a fine base of stony soil. On the palate the wine is fullish, nascently complex and tangy, with a good core, fine transparency and grip and a long, moderately tannic finish. This will be fine wine in due course, but it still needs some time. 2023-2055. **90+.**

**2013 Volnay “Clos du Château des Ducs”- Domaine Michel Lafarge**

The 2013 Clos du Château des Ducs from Domaine Lafarge is an outstanding young wine. The nose is pure, red fruity and quite refined, delivering a constellation of cherries, red berries, a touch of currant, gamebird, lovely minerality, mustard seed and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and beautifully balanced, with a good core of red fruit, lovely soil signature and a long, suavely tannic and vibrant finish. All that is required here is a bit more patience. 2025-2065+. **93.**

**2012 Vintage**

**2012 Marsannay- Domaine Sylvain Pataille**

I like the wines quite well from Sylvain Pataille and do not know why I have never found time to visit the domaine and taste *sur place*. His 2012 Marsannay *villages* is quite good, offering up a very pretty and elegant bouquet of cherries, strawberries, spiced meats, a touch of pepper, lovely soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and intensely flavored, with

just a touch of remaining tannin, good focus and grip and a long, tasty finish. This is a very good AC. 2018-2030+. **89.**

**2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Pruliers”- Domaine Henri Gouges**

The 2012 Pruliers from Grégory Gouges is an outstanding wine in the making, though it is still at least a handful of years away from really starting to blossom. The bouquet is pure, youthful and marvelously precise, wafting from the glass in a blend of cassis, black plum, gamebird, woodsmoke, a fine base of dark soil tones, coffee bean, a touch of fresh herbs and a lovey foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pretty hunkered down today, with a lovely sense of sappiness buried deep in the core, fine soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and a very long, youthful and promising finish. This will be an excellent bottle, but give it some time in the cellar still. 2026-2065+. **93+.**

**2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Boudots”- Domaine Georges Noëllat**

The 2012 Boudots from Maxime Cheurlin is a very lovely example of the vintage. The bouquet is still youthful, but already detailed and showing all of its inherent complexity, wafting from the glass in a mix of black plums, dark berries, raw cocoa, gamebird, woodsmoke, a superb base of dark soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with fine nascent complexity and grip, suave tannins and a long, poised and beautifully balanced finish. All this wine needs is a bit more bottle age. 2023-2055+. **93+.**



*Late afternoon showers just starting to lift over the vineyard of Feusselottes in Chambolle-Musigny.*

### **2012 Pernand-Vergelesses “Premier Cru”- Domaine Rollin**

I presume the hail damage in the Côte de Beaune in 2012 necessitated the blending of the les Fichots and the les Vergelesses bottlings together to have enough for a proper cuvée. The resulting 2012 Pernand “Premier Cru” bottling from the Rollin family is a lovely wine, offering up a fine nose of black cherries, red currants, a touch of venison, mustard seed, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pure on the attack, with a lovely core of sappy fruit, good soil signature, modest tannins and a long, complex and very well-balanced finish. This is a lovely wine that is just starting to reach its plateau, but will be even better with a bit more bottle age. 2020-2045+. **91+**.

### **2011 Vintage**

#### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Poissenots”- Domaine Humbert Frères**

I have never visited Domaine Humbert Frères, but based on this lovely bottle of Poissenots, I really should find time to put them on my schedule! If I understood correctly, this wine is raised in one hundred percent new oak, which is a bit over the top for my tastes normally, but as it had a chance to blossom with air, the fruit rose up and absorbed and integrated all of the new oak elements. The bouquet eventually offers up a refined mix of cherries, strawberries, grilled meats, a nice touch of cinnamon, lovely soil signature and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with a good core of fruit, impressive transparency, suave tannins and a long, very well-balanced and vibrant finish. I am guessing that the sojourn in all new oak casks is not particularly long here, based on how well balanced this wine is today. 2018-2045. **92**.

#### **2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Feusselottes”- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg**

The Mugneret family’s 2011 Feusselottes is still a young wine, but it is impeccably balanced and quite pure and will be a classic in due course. Today, the wine offers up a promising and already quite complex bouquet of cherries, red plums, violets, chalky soil tones, cocoa powder, gamebird and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and shows off lovely mid-palate depth, with fine focus and grip, moderate tannins and a long, vibrant and youthful finish. This is getting close to fully blossoming, but will also last long and age very gracefully. A first class example of the 2011 vintage. 2023-2055+. **93**.

#### **2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Fuées”- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier**

The 2011 Domaine Mugnier les Fuées is a lovely example of the vintage that is just starting to get ready for primetime drinking, though it will have a long life in bottle. This is a low fat and beautifully red fruity vintage of Mugnier les Fuées, offering up scents of cherries, strawberries, mustard seed, a touch of blood orange, chalky soil tones, roses and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, tangy and complex, with beautiful transparency and grip, a good core, moderate tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. This is not a big vintage of les Fuées, but the wine has plenty of intensity of flavor and lacks for nothing. 2023-2050+. **92**.

#### **2011 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles**

The 2011 les Lavières from Domaine Chandon de Briailles is still a bit tight-knit and youthful, but it shows plenty of promise and should be a fine drink in due time. The youthful bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, a touch of cinnamon, vinesmoke, complex soil tones, *pigeon*, lavender and a dollop of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and soil-driven, with a good core and still a bit of youthful tannin to resolve on the backend. There is good length here and the wine simply needs some bottle age to

blossom, as it is a low fat vintage of Lavières and is a touch youthfully austere at the present. 2023-2050. **89+**.

### **2010 Vintage**

#### **2010 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2010 Mes Favorites from the Burguet family is quite closed down today, but its ultimate quality is still very evident. The reticent nose offers up lovely purity and promise in its mélange of red and black cherries, mustard seed, dark soil tones, vinesmoke and a deft framing of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with a sweet core of sappy fruit buried down deep, ripe, suave tannins and great length and grip on the tangy and still very, very primary finish. This is going to be a terrific vintage for this bottling, but give it time! 2023-2050+. **92+**.

#### **2010 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Domaine Duroché**

The 2010 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze” from Domaine Duroché is a very good wine in the making, but to my palate the new oak sticks out a bit here and is not quite as sophisticated as what is being practiced at the domaine today. The bouquet is certainly quite lovely at age ten, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, roasted meats, forest floor and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and still fairly closed today, with a good core of fruit, fine soil signature and very good length and grip on the fairly tannic finish. Some of the backend tannins here are still wood tannins, but they will probably be absorbed with further bottle age. Good juice, but I have the sense that if this vintage came along again today, the results would be even more impressive. 2026-2065. **91+**.

#### **2010 Morey St. Denis “Clos Solon”- Domaine Fourrier**

The 2010 Clos Solon from Jean-Marie Fourrier is a good, solid example of the vintage, but I might be inclined to let it have just a few more years in the cellar for further development, despite the fact that it is starting to blossom. The nose shows lovely complexity in its blend of red plum, cherries, cocoa, a good base of soil, gamebird and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, refined and sappy at the core, with just a touch of backend tannin, good focus and grip and a long, nascently complex finish. I am sure that more complexity will emerge with more time in the cellar, but structurally, it is wide open and already quite tasty. 2019-2035+. **89+**.

### **2009 Vintage**

#### **2009 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2009 Mes Favorites from Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils is a very fresh and vibrant example of this ripe vintage. The bouquet is quite stylish in its blend of sappy black cherries, grilled meats, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, chocolate and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a sappy core, sound acids, fine focus and grip and a long, moderately tannic and very well-balanced finish. This wine shows absolutely no signs of straying over the line into the realm of *sur maturité* and is a very fine example of 2009. It will drink sooner than the 2010 version, but should keep very well and offer up a long window of peak drinkability. 2016-2035. **92**.

#### **2009 Clos Vougeot- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils**

The 2009 Clos Vougeot from Maison Bouchard is a very good example of the vintage. The bouquet is deep, pure and quite fresh for an '09, wafting from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, plums, roasted meats, a superb base of soil tones, chocolate and spicy new oak.

On the palate the wine is plush, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with good soil signature, fine freshness for the vintage, very good grip and balance and a long, still slightly chewy finish. There remains a bit of oak tannin there that still needs to be integrated completely, but there is plenty of stuffing her to eventually do so. A very good bottle in the making. 2023-2050+. **92.**

**2009 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg**

The 2009 Clos Vougeot from the Mugneret family is starting to drink quite nicely and avoids some of the roasted elements that plague other examples from this vintage. The bouquet is nascently complex and sappy, offering up scents of black cherries, plums, chocolate, gamebird, a fine base of soil and a stylish framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite accessible, with a plump core, good soil undertow, ripe, fairly modest tannins and a long, well-balanced and classy finish. Good juice. 2020-2050. **93.**

**2008 Vintage**

**2008 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2008 bottling of Mes Favorites from the Burguet family is really a superb example of this pure and transparent year. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a beautiful blend of red and black cherries, chocolate, a bit of grilled meats, black minerality, woodsmoke and a discreet framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows lovely mid-palate depth, with lovely mineral drive, excellent focus and grip, modest tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This is a beautiful bottle that is already drinking very well, but a couple more years in the cellar should really allow it to reach its apogee and I would try to hold off opening it until then. 2020-2040+. **93.**

**2008 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Domaine Bruno Clair**

I know Bruno Clair has his fans, but I could not find a whole lot here that was promising. The black fruity style is okay in its way, though not my favorite way to interpret Clos St. Jacques, but the real troubling aspect of this wine is its over-oaking. The nose is quite dominated by the new oak, offering up scents of cassis, black cherries, dark soil tones underneath the huge serving of spicy aggressive new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and reasonably pleasant on the attack, albeit with very little soil signature from one of the greatest *terroirs* in the Côte de Nuits. It is the backend that is the most disappointing here, as there is still plenty of uncovered raw wood tannins sticking out, and nearly a decade out from the vintage, one would expect that the wine would have absorbed these already, if it is ever going to do so. There is solid length on the finish, but it is dry-edged from the wood tannins and my guess is that they will never be assimilated into the wine and it will just continue to dry out with further bottle age. I would love to be proven wrong, but I really have little hope for this wine. 2017-2024? **80.**

**2008 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Hubert Lignier et Fils**

The 2008 Charmes from Domaine Lignier is starting to stir and is really quite a lovely drink today, if given proper time in decanter to blossom. The bouquet is already quite beautiful, wafting from the glass in a pure blend of cherries, red plums, gamebirds, gorgeously complex soil tones, a touch of cinnamon, mustard seed and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with outstanding transparency, moderate tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and tangy finish. This is still climbing and I would not touch a bottle for another five years (unless I had a very robust supply in the cellar!), but with its exquisite balance, it is already very easy to drink. 2024-2060+. **94+.**

### **2008 Chapelle-Chambertin- Domaine Cécile Tremblay**

I tasted this wine with mixed emotions, as a friend generously served it out of his cellar, but he does not have all that many bottles of it and it is still woefully too young for primetime drinking! The youthful bouquet offers up scents of red plums, cherries, beautiful spice tones, gamebird, a complex base of dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a nice touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary in personality, with a fine core of fruit, nascent complexity, lovely focus and grip and a long, suavely tannic and tangy finish. This will be a great wine in due time, but that time is emphatically not now! 2028-2085+. **95+**.

### **2008 Morey St. Denis “Clos Sorbés”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I have been a longtime fan of this premier cru in Morey, which is probably not too surprising, given that the very first estate I ever visited in Burgundy was Domaine Truchot-Martin, who was nearly synonymous with the Clos Sorbés. The 2008 version from Maison Drouhin (who produces a classic example) is still a bit tight and in need of further bottle age, as its generosity on the nose is not yet replicated on the palate. The nose is a lovely, red fruity blend of strawberries, beetroot, coffee, a fine base of soil and a nice touch of mustard seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile, with a respectable core, lovely transparency, tangy acids and still a bit of tannin in need of resolution on the long and focused finish. Give this a few more years in the cellar to more fully blossom on the palate. 2021-2050. **91**.

### **2008 Vosne-Romanée “Rouge Dessus”- Domaine Cécile Tremblay**

In notable contrast to the almost hermetically-sealed 2008 Chapelle-Chambertin, the Rouge Dessus '08 from Cécile Tremblay is starting to drink quite nicely at age eleven, though it could still probably do with another handful of years in the cellar to really let it reach its plateau of peak maturity. The bouquet is deep and complex, wafting from the glass in a classy blend of dark berries, black cherries, *pigeon*, espresso, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh nutmeg and toasty oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and shows off lovely mid-palate depth, with fine focus and grip, tangy acids, moderate tannins and lovely balance on the long and blossoming finish. With some extended air, this was very tasty, but my gut instinct would still be to let it sleep another five years in the cellar. 2023-2055. **92**.

### **2008 La Romanée- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair**

The 2008 La Romanée from Liger-Belair is just about ready to start drinking at its plateau of maturity, but could still do with just a couple more years in the cellar, if you can resist the temptation! The bouquet today is gorgeous, soaring from the glass in a pure and extroverted blend of raspberries, red plums, cocoa, duck, exotic spice tones, woodsmoke and a generous base of nutty, luxuriant new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and seamless in its balance, with great mid-palate depth, laser-like focus, modest tannins and outstanding complexity and grip on the very long, tangy and precise finish. A magical wine. 2020-2075. **96**.

### **2008 Pommard- Château de Pommard**

The 2008 Château de Pommard was starting to show beautifully on this evening. This is one of my favorite, younger red Burgundy vintages for current drinking (the other being 2007) and this lovely Pommard was the group's favorite wine of the evening. The bouquet shows all of the elegance and purity inherent in the vintage, delivering scents of cherries, plums, cocoa powder, autumnal soil tones, vanillin oak and a nice touch of spice in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven in personality, with a fine core of red fruit, moderate, well-integrated tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This wine is just



beginning to drink well at age nine, but has decades and decades of life still ahead of it. 2017-2045. **93.**

**2008 Volnay “Caillerets”- Domaine Nicolas Rossignol**

I do not know the wines of Nicolas Rossignol particularly well, but this bottle of the 2008 Caillerets was still showing a bit of its new oak at ten years of age and I worry a bit about that for its long-term evolution. This had been the case when I first tasted it back in 2011, and though it has absorbed much of its new wood component since then, there is still some uncovered wood tannin on the backend. The nose is high-toned, offering up scents of cherry, quince, woodsmoke, mustard seed, soil and plenty of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and modestly complex, with a respectable core, bright acids and still a bit of tannin perking up the finish. As I said, I do not know these wines well enough to know if the oak will eventually integrate completely or not. If it does, the wine should merit a bit higher score. 2018-2035+? **87+?**



**2007 Vintage**

**2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2007 Mes Favorites is a lovely blend of the sturdiness of this cuvée and the perfumed elegance of the vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a very stylish blend of cherries, a touch of fresh truffle, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil, hints of chocolate and a judicious base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very suave on the attack, with lovely

mid-palate intensity, fine focus, tangy acids and really exquisite backend minerality on the long and ripely tannic finish. This is a lovely example of the vintage, offering a lovely combination of 2007's generous fruit tones and the lovely mineral definition of this bottling. Fine, fine juice. 2018-2035. **93.**

**2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2007 Gevrey Vieilles Vignes from the Harmand family is beginning to really open up nicely with secondary layers of complexity, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a mix of dark berries, black cherries, black truffles, a touch of eucalyptus, grilled meats, coffee and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very nicely balanced, with still a bit of backend tannin perking up the long, focused and classy finish. This is a very, very good *villages*! 2017-2040. **91.**

**2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Domaine Fourier**

The 2007 vintage of Clos St. Jacques from Jean-Marie Fourier is still young and a bit structured, but it is moving very nicely towards a long and refined plateau of peak maturity. The bouquet is blossoming beautifully, offering up scents of red and black cherries, grilled meats, mustard seed, a complex base of soil and a nice touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite full in the mid-palate for a 2007, with excellent focus and grip, burgeoning complexity and a long, moderately tannic and very well-balanced finish. Fine juice in the making, but this still deserves at least a handful of years in the cellar to really come into its own. 2023-2060. **94.**

**2007 Chambolle-Musigny “la Combe d’Orveau”- Domaine Anne Gros**

The 2007 Combe d’Orveau from Anne Gros is still quite marked by its new oak component on the nose, which tends to dominate the aromatics a bit more than I would like from a ten year-old Chambolle. The bouquet offers up a blend of cherries, beetroot, a solid base of soil tones, mustard seed and a generous serving of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is full, focused and moderately complex, with a respectable core, tangy acids and a bit of chewy, backend tannin. The wine has okay length, but it is still struggling to carry all its new wood. Maybe one day the oak will fully integrate and the wine will gain a measure of charm? 2017-2040. **87+.**

**2007 Chambolle-Musigny “les Feusselottes”- Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg (magnum)**

The 2007 Feusselottes from the Mugneret sisters is drinking very nicely already, even out of magnum. The bouquet is pure and perfumed, offering up a lovely blend of cherries, red plums, dusty rose, gamebird, a hint of mustard seed and a nice framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and silky on the palate, with a good core, a wide open and engaging personality, modest tannins and very good length and grip on the complex and flattering finish. 2019-2045. **92+.**

**2007 Chambolle-Musigny “les Amoureuses”- Domaine Comte de Vogüé**

In general, I really like drinking 2007 red Burgundies now, but the les Amoureuses from Comte de Vogüé was still a bit young and tannic and not as charming as many other examples from the vintage. The bouquet shows lovely promise in its blossoming blend of cherries, quince, peonies, complex soil tones, incipient forest floor and a quite generous serving of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a good core of fruit, fine soil signature, but a bit oaky in personality, as it has not yet fully integrated its new wood into the fruit and soil tones of the wine. The tannins are moderate, but this wine still needs a bit more time in the cellar to really start to drink with generosity. 2025-2075. **93.**

### **2007 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Philippe Charlopin**

This example of Bonnes-Mares is quite new oaky in personality, but with good depth of fruit and plenty of soil signature underneath and I really did not have any particular issues with all of the smoky new wood (though I could have done with quite a bit less). The bouquet is complex and now quite open, offering up scents of red and black cherries, venison, coffee, incipient notes of *sous bois*, a fine base of soil and the aforementioned, generous serving of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and quite suave on the attack, with good, but not great depth at the core, modest tannins and fine length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is a very good wine, but even in the forward vintage of 2007, I could not help but think that it is just a bit too easy-going already for Bonnes-Mares. 2020-2050. **91+**.

### **2007 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret-Gibourg (served from jeroboam)**

This is what I love about the 2007 red Burgundy vintage, for even a serious grand cru from a top estate can be drunk with plenty of pleasure at age ten from a large format bottle! The 2007 Clos Vougeot from Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg is showing beautiful as it nears its tenth birthday, offering up a very pure and refined bouquet of red plums, cherries, summer truffles, a touch of blood orange, a complex base of soil, vanillin oak and a bit of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a lovely core, fine soil inflection, melting tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This is the epitome of elegance right now. 2017-2050. **94+**.

### **2007 La Romanée- Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair**

The 2007 La Romanée from Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair is starting to really drink beautifully at age twelve, wafting from the glass in a glorious aromatic blend of raspberries, beetroot, blood orange, exotic spice tones, kaleidoscopic minerality, fresh nutmeg, roses, a touch of lavender and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tangy and nicely sappy at the core, with great focus and grip, lovely acids and a very, very long, complex and meltingly tannic finish. This is one vintage of La Romanée that it is emphatically not a crime to be drinking in its relative youth! 2019-2050. **96**.

### **2007 Volnay “Vendanges Selectionées”- Domaine Michel Lafarge**

The 2007 Vendanges Selectionées bottling from the Lafarge family is starting to nicely develop some secondary layering of complexity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of cherries, red plum, mustard seed, gamebird, a complex base of soil (just starting to show some autumnal shadings), summer truffles and a topnote of violet and lavender. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely red fruity, with fine soil signature, a solid core, still a wisp of backend tannin, fine complexity and a long, tangy and beautifully focused finish. This is really fine Volnay. 2020-2060. **92**.

### **2007 Volnay “les Angles”- Domaine Louis Boillot**

The 2007 les Angles from Louis Boillot is starting to really drink nicely at age ten. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a polished mix of dark berries, gamebird, a touch of currant leaf, dark chocolate, bonfires and a discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very nicely balanced, with a solid core, bright acids and just a touch of remaining backend tannin adding grip to the long and complex finish. A fine bottle. 2017-2040+. **91**.

### **2007 Volnay “Caillerets”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles**

The de Nicolay family no longer produces a bottling of Caillerets, as this wine was farmed under a *mettayage* agreement and the owner of the vines was not happy with the domaine’s switch over to biodynamic farming methods. It is too bad, as this was a good wine

during its time in the Chandon de Briailles lineup and the 2007 Caillerets is a fine example of the vintage, albeit, still a handful of years away from really opening up. The bouquet is the most expressive element of the wine today, offering up a beautiful and perfumed blend of cherries, violets, gamebird, autumnal soil tones and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, tangy and intensely flavored, with a solid core, fine focus and grip and still a bit of backend tannin in need of resolution. Fine juice. 2022-2045+. **92.**

### ***2006 Vintage***

#### **2006 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

It had been a couple of years since I last tasted the 2006 Mes Favorites from Domaine Burguet, so I do not know if this wine has closed down as abruptly as many of the other 2006s have over the course of the last few years. But, in any case, this most recent bottle is young and not yet ready for primetime drinking, offering up a deep and promising bouquet of red plums, cherries, incipient notes of *sous bois* and black truffles, a superb base of dark soil tones and a deft framing of spicy wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with excellent focus and balance, ripe, well-integrated tannins and lovely transparency on the long and classy finish. This has excellent promise. 2022-2045. **92.**

### ***2005 Vintage***

#### **2005 Morey St. Denis “Clos Sorbés”- Domaine Jacky Truchot**

2005 was Jacky Truchot’ final vintage of a long and illustrious career. Since his official retirement and the sale of most of his domaine’s vineyards, he has only continued to make a bit of Morey premier cru les Sorbés for his own enjoyment, from a small plot of vines that he retained when he sold the rest of the estate. Les Sorbés lies next to his well-known bottling of Clos Sorbés, which was sold to David Durband along with the rest of his former estate vineyards. Jackie’s 2005 Clos Sorbés is excellent, but still youthful and moderately closed down, reluctantly offering up scents of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, gamebird, a lovely base of soil, woodsmoke, gentle spice tones and just a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and reserved today, with good depth at the core, tangy acids, ripe tannins and lovely length and grip on the promising finish. This needs at least another four or five years to stir, and as it is Jacky’s last official vintage, there is no sense in rushing to drink it! 2025-2055+. **92+.**

#### **2005 Echézeaux- Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg**

The 2005 Echézeaux from the Mugnerets is still a young wine and at least five to ten years away from really blossoming, but it is moving steadfastly towards that day and is beautifully delineated and really not all that hard to drink in its youthful guise. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a fine blend of black cherries, black raspberries, a touch of cinnamon, dark soil tones, gamebird, bitter chocolate and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a sappy core of pure black fruit, nascent complexity, suave, buried tannins and a very long, tangy and oh, so promising finish. Around age twenty this will start to really blossom, but I might be inclined to give it a full decade more in the cellar before beginning to broach bottles, as it is going to be very long-lived. 2025-2085. **95+.**

#### **2005 Beaune “Grèves”- Maison Joseph Drouhin (375 ml.)**

Out of half bottle, the 2005 Drouhin Beaune “Grèves” is still quite open, offering up a deep, complex and still quite youthful nose of red and black cherries, gamebirds, a beautiful base of soil, woodsmoke, a touch of fresh herbs, raw cocoa and a judicious framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very bright, with a lovely core, beautiful transparency

down to its complex soil tones, tangy acids and a very long, soil-driven and ripely tannic finish. This is still very early days for this lovely wine, and I would not be tempted to open this out of normal-sized bottle for another six to ten years, but it is already very tasty out of half! It should prove to be very long-lived and stunning at its apogee. 2019-2045+. **93+**.



*Jacky Truchot in front of the entrance to his domaine back in November of 2010.*

### ***2004 Vintage***

#### **2004 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

Monsieur Burguet’s 2004 Mes Favorites shows no signs of the greenness that some folks seem to associate in a wholesale fashion with this vintage, and it is a young, modestly tannic and very promising wine that should offer up lovely soil complexity and fine purity of fruit at its apogee. The still fairly youthful nose offers up scents of cherries, red berries, mustard seed, vinesmoke, a complex base of soil, summer truffles, incipient notes of gamebird and cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and still a touch tannic, with a good core (but not the same buffering fruit of more plump vintages such as 2006 or 2009), fine focus and balance and lovely grip on the very long and stylish finish. This is moving very nicely in the right direction and will be a lovely middleweight of admirable soil signature and complexity- though probably not particularly long-lived by the high standards of this cuvée. 2019-2035+. **91+**.

#### **2004 Ruchottes-Chambertin- Domaine Georges Mugneret**

The Mugneret sisters 2004 Ruchottes is a lovely bottle in the making, with just a wisp of *herbacité* still remaining in the upper register of the nose, but with all other components in perfect alignment and the wine starting to spread its wings on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined mix of black cherries, dark berries, grilled meats, espresso, dark soil tones, the aforementioned fresh herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with lovely soil signature, a good core of black fruit, fine-grained, moderate tannins and a long, complex and gently autumnal finish. I would guess that as the years go by, the fresh herb tones here will gently meld into the notes of *sous bois* and the wine will continue to drink very well for many years to come. 2018-2045+. **92.**

#### **2004 Echézeaux- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils**

I drank the 2004 Echézeaux from Maison Bouchard alongside of their 2009 Clos Vougeot and the Echézeaux is the one of the two that is a bit more tannic today and really asking for more bottle age. The bouquet is quite refined and shows very little of the vintage's *herbacité*, as it offers up scents of dark berries, black cherries, dark soil tones, gamebird, a touch of cigar ash, just a wisp of youthful peppercorn and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and beautifully soil-driven in personality, with a good core, tangy acids and still a bit of backend tannin perking up the long and complex finish. This is a strong example of the vintage. 2024-2065. **92.**

#### **2004 Echézeaux- Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg**

The Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg 2004 Echézeaux is also evolving beautifully and has a long and classy life ahead of it. The bouquet today is complex, pure and nicely defined by its underlying soil, wafting from the glass in a mix of raspberry, cherry, Sonoma Coast-like sweet herb tones, a complex base of soil, gamebird, a whiff of nutskin and a deft framing of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very classy in profile, with a good core, lovely transparency and bounce, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and nicely lifted finish. This is very good juice. 2019-2045+. **93.**

#### **2004 Nuits St. Georges “Les Vaucrains”- Domaine Robert Chevillon et Fils**

The 2004 Vaucrains from the Chevillon family is a fine bottle that is far better than the vintage's reputation might suggest. The bouquet is deep, pure and complex, wafting from the glass in a red fruity mix of cherries, blood orange, a great base of soil, *pigeon*, vanillin oak and a dollop of fresh herb tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature and grip, a bit of backend tannin and fine balance on the long and complex finish. Just a lovely bottle of 2004 red Burgundy that shows not all was a disaster in this vintage! 2022-2045+. **92+.**

#### **2004 Nuits St. Georges “Les St. Georges”- Domaine Henri Gouges**

The 2004 Les St. Georges from Domaine Gouges is blossoming very nicely and seems destined to be a really fine example of this vintage in due course. The bouquet offers up a complex blend of sweet dark berries, cassis, a touch of new leather, a superb base of dark soil tones, coffee, a whisper of new oak and a touch of celery seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very nicely balanced, with a solid core, still a touch of backend tannin and fine focus and grip on the long and classy finish. The only sign of the vintage's “green meanies” that this wine shows is that slightly idiosyncratic, but discreet topnote of celery seed. I do not think the 2004 will be as long-lived as most vintages of the domaine's Les St. Georges, but it is still going to provide plenty of pleasure. All in all, this is a lovely wine. 2022-2045+. **92+.**



## **2002 Vintage**

### **2002 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2002 version of Mes Favorites is a classic example of the vintage, with its relatively modest soil component more than adequately compensated for with superb purity on the fruit and spice side of the pinot noir equation. The really sumptuous nose wafts from the glass in a complex and vibrant blend of cherries, plums, mustard seed, fresh thyme, coffee and a nice touch of spicy wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and almost sappy still at the core, with lovely texture to its generous and very pure fruit component, tangy acids and just a touch of backend tannin adding grip and spine to the long finish. This is a lovely drink, and while I am personally more drawn to vintages with more overt expressions of *terroir*, this is not a hard glass of wine to drink! 2018-2035+. **92.**

### **2002 Gevrey-Chambertin “aux Combottes”- Domaine Dujac**

The 2002 Combottes from Jeremy Seysses is drinking very nicely today and has developed an exotic spice panoply on the nose that is very enticing, as scents of lavender and dried eucalyptus augment the more classical notes of cherry, blood orange, coffee, gamebird, *sous bois* and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and very classy in personality, with a lovely core, excellent soil signature and grip, tangy acids and a long, meltingly tannic and complex finish. This is very lovely wine. 2020-2050. **92.**

### **2002 Gevrey-Chambertin “Fontenys”- Domaine Serafin**

I very much liked the 2002 Fontenys from Domaine Serafin for the first hour or so that it was opened, but the high percentage of new oak eventually started to show through the fruit of the wine and it became a touch astringent with wood tannins over time. My score below reflects how the wine showed before this occurred. The bouquet is complex and classy, offering up scents of black cherries, spiced meats, black truffle, a touch of leather, dark soil tones, lavender and cedar. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a good core, still a touch of backend tannin and good length and grip on the very tasty finish. As I said, the oak tannins eventually started to surface here, so I would opt for decanting it and immediately serving it, so as to try to outrace the oak tannins to the finish. Before they come up, the wine is quite good. 2018-2030+? **91.**

### **2002 Morey St. Denis “les Chaffots”- Domaine Hubert Lignier (375 ml.)**

The 2002 vintage of les Chaffots is now drinking beautifully out of half bottle. The wine is pure, bright and nicely red fruity, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, gamebird, mustard seed, a lovely base of soil tones and a nice touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a lovely core and grip, fine transparency down to the soil, melting tannins and a long, vibrant and *à point* finish. Lovely juice. 2018-2040. **92.**

### **2002 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Georges Roumier**

I always liked the bounce, purity of fruit and detail of Christophe Roumier's 2002 Chambolle *villages*, but I always thought I would have a slight preference for the 2001 version over the long haul. I recently had both examples at the same tasting and, to my surprise, had a slight preference for the 2002 this time around. The bouquet is really quite beautiful today, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, gamebird, chalky minerality and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, long and tangy, with excellent focus and grip, lovely complexity and a vibrant finish. Fine juice. 2019-2050. **91.**

### **2002 Musigny “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Comte de Georges de Vogüé**

I was impressed with how the 2002 Comte de Vogüé Musigny was evolving, as I had never loved the wine in its youth. But, at age sixteen, it is starting to come around, though it is still quite primary on both the nose and palate. The bouquet today is a mix of sappy black cherries, gamebird, pomegranate, cocoa, a good base of soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with good focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, slightly too new oaky finish. Though the new wood has not quite been integrated fully here on the backend, there is plenty of stuffing to do so eventually and it is not an issue. This is still quite young to be drinking a bottle of Musigny, but I like the direction this is going in right now! 2025-2065+. **93+**.

### **2002 Beaune “Grèves”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2002 Joseph Drouhin Beaune “Grèves” is a very good example of the vintage, but it is very much a child of its growing season and does not show quite as much soil nuance as other vintages of this cuvée. The bouquet is still a lovely blend of red and black cherries, a bit of cocoa, woodsmoke, violets and a very gentle base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, fresh and vibrant, with a very good core of fruit, lovely focus and balance, quite modest tannins and lovely length and grip on the pure, but slightly fruit-driven finish. This is a lovely wine that is drinking very well today, and its slight lack of strident soil signature is hardly a serious demerit! 2018-2035+. **92**.

### **2002 Volnay “Caillerets”- Domaine Thierry Glantenay**

The 2002 Volnay “Caillerets” from Domaine Thierry Glantenay is an outstanding example of the vintage and is just entering its apogee of peak maturity. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of red plums, cherries, a touch of orange peel, roasted *pigeon*, woodsmoke, iron soil tones and the first whisper of autumnal elements in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and vibrant, with a lovely core and transparency, still a bit of backend tannin and excellent focus and grip on the long and beautifully balanced finish. A fine, fine example of Caillerets! 2018-2045+. **92**.

### **2002 Monthélie “Côte de Beaune”- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 2002 Monthélie “Côte de Beaune” from Jean-François Coche is a lovely bottle in the making, but it has yet to develop that haunting sappiness found in both the 1996 and 1999 versions when they hit their apogees, so I would be inclined to still let this relax in the cellar for a few more years- despite it having no rough edges and being wide open in personality today. The bouquet is a beautiful blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, gamebird, a fine base of soil that is showing the first vestiges of autumn notes, woodsmoke and a whisper of fresh thyme in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and tangy, with a lovely core, little remaining tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, classy finish. It is awful easy to drink this wine today, but I have a gut feeling that it will be even better with just a few more years’ worth of bottle age. 2020-2040+. **91**.

### **2001 Vintage**

#### **2001 Gevrey-Chambertin “Corbeaux” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Denis Bachelet**

The 2001 Corbeaux from Denis Bachelet is still a bit primary and in need of at least another five or six years of bottle age to really reach its zenith, but that is not to say that it is not a lovely drink today. The deep and nicely complex nose offers up a great mix of black cherries, a bit of black raspberry, grilled meats, brambly herb tones, a fine base of soil, cocoa powder and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and soil-

driven, with a sappy core of fruit, ripe, melting tannins, very good acidity and outstanding length and grip on the poised and palate-staining finish. A beautiful bottle of Corbeaux that is not too far from its absolute apogee. 2018-2050. **93+**.

**2001 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Domaine Fourrier**

The 2001 Clos St. Jacques from Jean-Marie Fourrier is a beautiful example of the vintage that is starting to really drink well as it closes in on its twentieth birthday. The bouquet is pure and very red fruity in personality, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, red plums, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, a complex base of soil tones and a deft foundation of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, superb soil signature, still a trace of backend tannin and a long, blossoming and very classy finish. This is certainly approachable today, but a bit more bottle age will also pay dividends. 2019-2050. **94+**.

**2001 Charmes-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Jacky Truchot**

The 2001 vintage is one of my favorite for Jacky Truchot’s Charmes-Chambertin and I am embarrassed by how many times I have drunk this wine in the last decade, as it is still climbing in quality and I should know better! But, this has always been the beauty of Jacky’s wines in that they blossom early and yet last and last in the cellar as well. The bouquet of the 2001 Charmes is in a beautiful place right now, offering up a complex blend of red and black cherries, dark soil tones, beetroot, mustard seed, gamebird, woodsmoke and a lovely base of soil that is just transitioning to its autumnal profile. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and really starting to get sappy at the core, with great transparency and complexity, modest tannins and a long, tangy and vibrant finish. Great juice. 2019-2050. **95**.

**2001 Charmes-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Denis Bachelet**

Denis Bachelet’s 2001 Charmes-Chambertin is a wine of enormous quality, and though the wine is now drinking beautifully, it still deserves at least another decade’s worth of bottle age to really reach its zenith. The deep, complex and marvelous nose wafts from the glass in a mix of black cherries, dark berries, grilled meats, coffee, black Gevrey minerality, woodsmoke and a discreet base of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully pure on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, suave and beautifully-integrated tannins, tangy acids and stunning length and grip on the focused and very complex finish. A great, great wine that is lovely today, but still in climbing mode. 2019-2070. **96+**.

**2001 Ruchottes-Chambertin- Christophe Roumier**

I love Christophe Roumier’s bottling of Ruchottes-Chambertin and the 2001 vintage of this wine is outstanding. The wine is still a bit youthful on both the nose and palate and more aging will certainly prove beneficial. The bouquet is pure and precise, wafting from the glass in a mix of red plums, cherries, smoked meats, cocoa powder, gorgeous soil tones, woodsmoke and a bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a superb core of fruit, marvelous backend mineral drive, modest tannins and fine length and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. 2025-2060+. **94+**.

**2001 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Georges Roumier**

I drank the 2001 Chambolle AC from Christophe Roumier at Weingut Keller, after a long week of Riesling tasting, so I am not sure if the wine’s relative sense of tannin was part of the wine or part of my “Riesling palate” after a week or so of non-stop tasting in Germany. The bouquet is really lovely, and oddly, showing a fair bit of its new oak component in its mix of plums, red and black cherries, chocolate, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke and a fair bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and well-balanced, with a good core, fine blossoming complexity and a long, modestly tannic finish. I would guess that my impression of

the new oak here was derived from several hundred previous samples of Riesling, rather than something actually in the wine! 2019-2040. **90.**

**2001 Musigny “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Comte de Vogüé**

The 2001 vintage of Musigny from the Comte de Vogüé estate is more complex and evolved than its sibling from 2002, but it is a bit shorter on the backend. The bouquet is quite lovely today, offering up scents of cherries, blood orange, woodsmoke, a good base of soil, gamebird and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely complex, with a good core and grip, elegant balance and a moderately long, focused and classy finish. This is a very good wine, but by the high standards of Domaine Comte de Vogüé, this is just a bit short. 2016-2040. **92.**

**2001 Grands Echézeaux- Domaine René Engel**

The 2001 Grands Echézeaux from Domaine Engel is a lovely example of the vintage. The bouquet offers up a superb blend of raspberries, cherries, beetroot, gamebird, a touch of nutskin, a lovely base of soil and a generous framing of toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very nicely new oaky in personality, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and grip and a long, suavely tannic and complex finish. This is really a fine bottle in the making, that will be even better with a bit more bottle age, but is awfully easy to drink already. 2023-2065. **94.**

**2001 Nuits St. Georges “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Georges Mugneret**

The Mugnerets’ small parcel of old vines is located in the fine *lieu à dit* of Bas de Combe, which lies right on the Vosne border. The production of this bottling is so small that, though I have been friends with the Mugneret family for more than twenty years, I did not even know about the existence of this cuvée until a few years ago! The 2001 version is really a lovely wine that is just entering its plateau, offering up a refined aromatic constellation of black cherries, roasted venison, summer truffles lovely spice tones, coffee and forest floor. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wide open in personality, with a good core, fine focus and grip, modest remaining tannins and impressive length on the complex finish. A really lovely *villages*! 2019-2040+. **91.**

**2000 Vintage**

**2000 Charmes-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Denis Bachelet**

Denis Bachelet’s 2000 Charmes-Chambertin is a beautiful wine that is now into its primetime peak of drinkability. The deep and very complex nose is beginning to show plenty of lovely secondary development in its aromatic blend of red and black raspberries, grilled meat, incipient notes of black truffle, a beautiful base of black minerality, espresso, gentle herb tones and a fine base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, very good acidity for the vintage, melting tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex and very poised finish. A superb 2000 grand cru with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2018-2035+. **93.**

**2000 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret**

I bought a case of this wine on release and have never regretted that decision. I am getting down to one or two bottles left in the cellar, but everyone along the way has delivered immense enjoyment. This most recent bottle was signing, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of baked cherries and plums, gamebird, heather, coffee, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely plush on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, melting tannins and a long, complex and classy finish. One

does notice a touch lower acidity in the 2000 than other vintages around this time of the Clos Vougeot here, but other than slightly lower acids, there is nothing here with which not to be delighted! The wine still has plenty of life ahead of it. 2019-2040. **93.**

**2000 Echézeaux- Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg (served from jeroboam)**

I think I still have a bottle or two of this wine somewhere in my cellar, as I bought it at the same time as the Clos Vougeot above. But, this note hails from a jeroboam generously opened at the domaine this past November, when the family was celebrating their thirtieth harvest since the transition from Dr. Georges to his two daughters as winemakers, Christine and Marie-Andrée Mugneret. Out of jeroboam, the 2000 Echézeaux is really in a lovely moment of its evolution, delivering a very complex aromatic constellation of sweet dark berries, smoked duck, black cherries, dark soil tones, a touch of cocoa powder, black truffles, *sous bois*, woodsmoke and toasty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still nicely tangy in large format, with a superb core, lovely soil signature, just a bit of backend tannin and a long, complex and delicious finish. 2019-2045+. **93.**



**2000 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles (magnum)**

The 2000 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses” from Chandon de Briailles is an absolutely stellar example of the vintage and is drinking with great style and grace out of magnum today. The bouquet soars from the glass in a refined mix of cherries, red currants, a touch of fruitcake, *sous bois*, venison, coriander seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and beautifully soil-driven, with a lovely core of red fruit, still a touch of

backend tannin in magnum and fine grip and bounce on the long and very complex finish. I last shared this with friends in Germany back in the spring of 2016, and at that time, I felt that magnums of the wine could do with a few more years to fully blossom and should be hitting their stride right about now. Wish I had one in the cellar during this period of “social distancing” to investigate and see if my projection was correct! Fine, fine juice. 2020-2050. **93+**.

**2000 Beaune “Grèves”- Maison Joseph Drouhin (half bottle)**

The 2000 Joseph Drouhin Beaune “Grèves” is drinking splendidly and was just what the doctor ordered with seared *magret de canard* after a long day in the cellars. The bouquet is deep, complex and mature, offering up scents of cherries, a dollop of dark berry, a lovely base of soil, a bit of fresh bay leaf and a topnote of bitter chocolate. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and complex, with a lovely core, very little remaining tannin in half bottle, lovely focus and balance and impressive length and grip on the transparent and very classy finish. Fine juice from this underrated and highly satisfying vintage. I suspect that full bottles here would merit a point or two higher and a longer projected window of drinkability, but this still has tons of life and personality out of half! 2017-2030+. **90**.

**1998 Griotte-Chambertin- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I have gone back and forth on the 1998 vintage of red Burgundy since writing my feature on the wines on their fifteenth birthdays. It was obviously not a great time to catch the vintage, as many customers were in a closed down phase and the research was nowhere near as pleasurable as I had been anticipating. However, that was seven years ago and lately, the handful of 1998s I have drunk have started to open up again and have been far more enjoyable and more representative of who I imagined the vintage would evolve when I tasted them young. The 1998 Drouhin Griotte-Chambertin (from their own parcel of vines) is lovely, offering up a pure and complex bouquet of red and black cherries, mustard seed, a beautiful base of chalky soil tones, a nice touch of cinnamon, grilled meats and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and modestly tannic today, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, blossoming finish. This is not as fresh as I might hope, but the 1996s also dipped a bit in freshness at about the same age and then reemerged with plenty of vibrancy, so I would anticipate that the 1998 Griotte will do the same. 2023-2065+. **93**.

**1998 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret (served from nine liter bottle)**

Christine and Marie-Andrée Mugneret celebrated their thirtieth harvest together as the head of the family domaine in November of 2019, as the 1989 vintage was the first where their father, Dr. Georges Mugneret, was not in charge of the cellars. They invited several hundred friends to the winery to share in the celebration and provided a number of excellent, large formats of their wines to enjoy over the course of the evening. The 1998 Clos Vougeot in nine liter bottle is really showing well (my most recent bottle seemed more shut down than this large format), offering up a complex bouquet of black plums, woodsmoke, black truffles, forest floor, dark soil tones, a bit of gamebird and a fine foundation of smoky oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and drinking quite nicely, with still a bit of buried tannins on the backend, a lovely core, fine soil signature and a long, complex finish that closes with fine bounce and grip. This will last a very, very long time in this large bottle, and it will be interesting how my next bottle out of my cellar shows in comparison to this nine liter! 2019-2055+. **94+**.



### **1997 Chambolle-Musigny “les Gruenchers”- Domaine Dujac**

The 1997 Gruenchers from the Seysses family is drinking at its plateau of peak maturity and is really one of the best 1997s I have had in a long time. The tertiary bouquet wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of cherries, plums, vinesmoke, chalky soil tones, incipient *sous bois*, a bit of chocolate and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, plush and tangy, with good focus and complexity, melted tannins and just a hint still of 1997 weediness remaining on the long finish. This is very easy drinking right now and quite tasty. 2018-2030+. **91.**

### **1997 Musigny- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 1997 Drouhin Musigny is a good wine and one of my favorites from the vintage, but, that said, it is not a great vintage for this bottling. The nose is deep, complex and focused, offering up a ripe blend of red and black cherries, spice tones, a complex base of soil, coffee, herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe and full, with plenty of depth at the core, suave, buried tannins and a long, complex and slightly chunky (by the very, very high standards of Drouhin Musigny) finish. This may be one of those vintages of Musigny where it muddles along at an okay level for its first fifty years and then the *terroir* roars up and the wine finally takes wing, or it may always be stylistically a bit more about the vintage than the beauty of this vineyard. Time will tell, but it is still not a bad result. 2018-2050. **92.**

### **1996 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Denis Bachelet**

The 1996 Gevrey old vines from Denis Bachelet is a tangy example of the vintage, but with the acids here still very nicely integrated into the body of the wine. The nose is deep, tertiary and really quite pretty, offering up scents of black cherries, grilled meat, a touch of fresh mint, woodsmoke, espresso, an exotic touch of *pain epice* and a lovely base of dark Gevrey soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with secondary layers of complexity beginning to blossom and a good core of fruit. The tannins are ripe and fading, but still a bit present and the acids quite tangy, though still well-integrated on the very long and soil-driven finish. I like this very much today, but it is on the tangy side and probably always will be over the course of its life. 2019-2035+. **91.**

### **1996 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Domaine Duroché**

The 1996 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze” from Domaine Duroché is a very pretty wine done in the slightly higher-toned style of the estate back in this era. The bouquet is bright, red fruity and complex, wafting from the glass in a mix of red plums, raspberries, lovely spice tones, mustard seed, a fine base of soil and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and very nicely balanced, with good focus and grip, tangy acids and fine length and grip on the still moderately tannic finish. I have the sense that the finish is still a bit pinched by its new oak component and that this may always be part of the wine. Good juice, but not quite at the same level as the domaine is producing these days. 2019-2040. **90.**

### **1996 Clos de la Roche- Domaine Dujac**

I do not drink as much Domaine Dujac Clos de la Roche as I used to twenty years ago, as the wine was a bit easier to pop at its old price than it is today (at least for me). So, I was very happy to have a chance to drink this wine again only a few months after I had completed my report on the 1996 vintage back in the autumn of 2018. The wine was singing and every bit as brilliant as it had been at that pair of very large tastings of the vintage, offering up a complex and vibrant bouquet of cherries, plums, cocoa powder, a complex base of soil tones just starting to go autumnal, gamebird, a dollop of mustard seed, new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, great transparency and

grip, melting tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish of great breed and precision. This is one of my favorite examples of the vintage. 2019-2055. **96.**

**1996 Clos de la Roche- Domaine Hubert Lignier (375 ml.)**

The 1996 Clos de la Roche from Romain Lignier is drinking splendidly today out of half bottle, but I would be inclined to still give it a few more years in regular-sized format. Romain used quite a bit more toasty new oak than his brother Laurent uses today at the domaine, but other than the different foundations of new oak, the family stylistic sensibilities are very much the same. The nose here is stunning, offering up scents of baked black fruit, venison, woodsmoke, a touch of truffle, *sous bois* and a lovely base of toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and very soil-driven, with a full-bodied personality, a gorgeous core of fruit, moderate, buried tannins and a long, tangy and very complex finish. The acids here are beautifully integrated into the body of the wine and add lift and energy, without ever threatening to go shrill. A stellar 1996! 2018-2045+. **96.**

**1996 Chambolle-Musigny “les Cras”- Domaine Ghislaine Barthod**

The 1996 les Cras from Ghislaine Barthod is drinking beautifully at age twenty-three, offering up lovely complexity and purity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of dark berries, *sous bois*, spit-roasted gamebird, black truffles, dried lavender, a beautiful base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and *à point*, with a good core, tangy, well-integrated acids, still a touch of tannin and a long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. Fine juice with still many decades of life ahead of it. 2019-2050. **92.**

**1995 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret**

The 1995 vintage is not my favorite in this fine decade for red Burgundy, but I have not given up hope that this vintage will eventually emerge from a long adolescence and really turn some heads down the road. Certainly, the Mugneret sisters’ Clos Vougeot shows just how good these wines could become in due course, as it is a very, very strong example of the vintage. The bouquet offers up a very refined constellation of red plums, cherries, a touch of orange zest, roasted *pigeon*, a gorgeous base of soil, just a touch of cinnamon and a discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly broad-shouldered for this cuvée, with a good core of fruit, fine complexity and grip, fairly modest tannins and a long, balanced and quite classy finish. This is really quite a lovely wine and has decades of life ahead of it and may be even better ten years down the road! 2020-2060+. **93+.**

**1994 La Tâche- Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

I had hoped to like the 1994 La Tâche more than I did, but the four-square character of the 1994 vintage seemed to trump the customary complexity inherent in this great *terroir*, so the wine was ultimately just chunky and simple. The bouquet is a mix of red plums, Vosne spices, beetroot, a bit of venison, still a touch of stems and new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, simple and a bit blocky, with a respectable core, modest tannins and good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Perhaps this is just still too young to have developed any complexity and it may surprise with more nuance another decade or two down the road, but my gut feeling that this is just the nature of the 1994 vintage and this wine is what it is. This still has the stuffing to age for many decades, so there is hope. 2018-2050+. **88+?**

### **1993 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Domaine Armand Rousseau**

A couple of years ago I had the good fortune to drink the 1993 and 1996 Rousseau Clos St. Jacques side by side, and it was very interesting to compare the two high acid vintages of the 1990s in such proximity and with such a superb cuvée. The 1993 is a bit more black fruity than the 1996 (though it too is moving to a more strawberry and red plum composition as it ages, and is markedly less stridently black fruity than it was a few years ago), and shows similar weight and focus on the attack. However, from the mid-palate back, the 1993 is a much more powerful and deeper wine than the 1996, with more tannin, similar acids, and great grip on the complex finish. The nose offers up notes of red plums, moe grilled meats, mustard seed, vinesmoke, earth and a touch of new wood. Given that this wine was raised in one hundred percent new oak, its virtual lack of wood tones is rather remarkable and a fine testament to the amount of stuffing the wine possesses. On the palate it is full-bodied, tangy and beautifully balanced, with still a bit of tannin and excellent length and grip on the complex and classy finish. I would give this wine another four to six years to really blossom, as though it is certainly not a bad drink now, there is still plenty more to come with further bottle age. 2022-20505 **95**.

### **1993 Griotte-Chambertin- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 1993 Griotte from Joseph Drouhin is just starting to drink well, but as it clearly still has more than a half century of life ahead of it, I will be inclined to let the remainder of my bottles rest for a while in the cellar. The bouquet is still fairly youthful, but is stirring nicely and offers up a superb mix of red and black cherries, venison, chalky soil tones, woodsmoke a touch of fresh nutmeg, coffee and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparency today, with a good core, bright acids, modest tannins and excellent length and grip on the poised and complex finish. I decanted this for half an hour ahead of serving and it was still opening up further by the time we finished the bottle, so clearly, there is absolutely no rush to open bottles now, but if one's curiosity needs sating, it is already a very, very good drink! 2020-2075+. **95**.

### **1993 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Dujac**

As I have mentioned in recent articles about Domaine Dujac, the example of Bonnes-Mares the estate is producing today is even better than what they were crafting back in 1993, as they have been able to add other parcels in the vineyard and bring up their mix of the vineyard's *terres rouges* and *terres blanches* sections into a better balance; back in 1993, their Bonnes-Mares was more than eighty percent *terres rouges* in origin and hence, missed some of the additional soil elements that are now front and center in the cuvée today. That said, the 1993 Bonnes-Mares is still a very good wine, offering up a lovely nose of cherries, a touch of raspberry, mustard seed, cinnamon, a lovely base of soil and is just starting to show *sous bois* and a nice framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tangy and complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature, modest tannins and a long, vibrant and quite classy finish. This is drinking very well indeed today, but there is no rush. 2019-2040+. **93**.

### **1993 Musigny “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Comte de Georges de Vogüé**

The 1993 Comte de Vogüé Musigny Vieilles Vignes is a good, solid wine, with plenty of depth and length, but it has not yet started to develop its secondary layers of aromatic and flavor complexity that I would associate with this great *terroir*. The bouquet is still quite complex and wafts from the glass in a black fruity blend of dark berries, black cherries, a touch of balsamic overtones, woodsmoke, venison, dark soil, cigar ash and new oak, but these are not signature Musigny aromatics in my book. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely sappy at the core, with good focus and grip and a long, moderately tannic and complex finish. With some

time in decanter, the wine loses some vitality, which is not a great sign, but there is depth and complexity here. Perhaps the signature of the 1993 vintage is just going to stamp this wine with a slightly different personality than many other vintages of this bottling? 2019-2045. **92.**

**1993 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret**

The 1993 Clos Vougeot from the Mugneret sisters is a superb wine that is just now really starting to reach its plateau of maturity. The bouquet is deep, complex and very pure, delivering a constellation of plums, red and black cherries, cocoa powder, a touch of both cinnamon and fresh nutmeg, woodsmoke, gamebird, a fine base of soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a lovely core of fruit, great backend mineral drive, refined, moderate tannins and a long, vibrant and very complex finish. While this is starting to really drink well, I am going to keep my last few bottles buried for another decade! 2022-2065+. **97.**

**1993 Echézeaux- Domaine Mayer-Gilles**

I never drank too many wines represented by US importer Robert Kacher, as I always thought his methodology of buying all new casks for his producers was wrong-headed and quite unsuccessful. Consequently, I do not taste too many wines like this '93 Mayer-Gilles Echézeaux, which was always one of the best wines in the Kacher portfolio, but also one of the lesser examples of Echézeaux produced in the Côte de Nuits. At age twenty-five this has aged into a solid, new oaky and four-square example of the appellation, offering up a bouquet of dark berries, roasted game, tarry tones, dark soil and toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite solid at the core, with modest complexity, melting tannins and a perfectly respectable length and grip on the chunky finish. This is okay, but really is not as good as first rate examples of Vosne-Romanée *villages*. 2018-2035+. **88.**

**1993 Romanée-St.-Vivant- Domaine Hudelot-Noëllat**

The 1993 RSV at Domaine Hudelot-Noëllat is still a few years away from reaching its primetime plateau of drinkability, so I would opt to let this superb bottle rest for at least another three to five years before opening it (though, of course, this was the last bottle in my cellar). The bouquet is the best part today and flat out brilliant, offering up a sappy blend of raspberries, cherries, Vosne spices, cocoa powder, gamebird, a touch of fresh nutmeg, a complex base of soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is still a bit hunkered down, though with aeration, shows some movement forward, as it is deep, full-bodied and has a nice sappy echo in the core of the stunning nose. The tannins here are still present, but the wine is perfectly balanced and focused, with excellent complexity waiting to really emerge with a bit more bottle age, and in due course, this is going to be a stunning drink. But, try to exercise just a bit more patience, if you can! 2023-2075+. **96.**

**1993 Nuits St. Georges “les Perrières”- Domaine Robert Chevillon**

The 1993 Perrières from the Chevillon family is starting to really reach its apogee and is drinking splendidly today. The superb nose soars from the glass in a black fruity mix of black cherries, venison, stony soil tones, black truffles, a touch of nutskin, a suave framing of vanillin oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, deep and full-bodied, with an excellent core of sappy black fruit, great soil signature, excellent focus and grip and still a bit of backend tannin perking up the long and very complex finish. Perrières is usually one of the most red fruity of the premier crus *chez* Chevillon, but the more black fruity profile of the 1993 vintage is in ascendency in this wine. This is truly superb juice that is just starting to really drink with generosity and still has decades and decades of fine drinking ahead of it! 2018-2050. **93.**



### **1993 Beaune “Clos des Mouches”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 1993 vintage of Clos des Mouches is very strong and the wine is now drinking into its plateau of maturity. The bouquet is fairly black fruity, in the overall style of the vintage, delivering a fine blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, woodsmoke, a touch of venison, pepper, complex soil tones and a bit of fresh thyme in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and just into its peak of maturity, with a very good core of fruit, tangy acids, fine focus and grip and a long, moderately tannic and very well-balanced finish. This is one of my favorite vintages of Clos des Mouches since the outstanding 1978, with perhaps only the 1999 at this same level until we get to the 2005. 2019-2050. **93.**

### **1993 Beaune “Grèves”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 1993 Beaune “Grèves” from Maison Joseph Drouhin is an absolutely superb example of the vintage and now starting to drink at its apogee. The deep, pure and very refined nose jumps from the glass in a lovely blend of red plums, cherries, a touch of cocoa powder, a fine base of soil, gamebirds and a distinct topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a wide open personality, a sappy core of fruit, still just a touch of ripe tannin and outstanding length and grip on the focused and full bloom finish. This is one of the finest vintages of this bottling I have had the pleasure to drink from the Drouhin family. A beautiful wine that today a true joy to drink! 2018-2035+. **93.**

### **1991 Mazis-Chambertin- Maison Faiveley (served from magnum)**

The 1991 Faiveley Mazis-Chambertin is a very good bottle, but this is from a period in the *maison's* history where I did not like their winemaking style quite as much as I do today, or did up until the 1980 vintage. The wine is a good, solid and *terroir*-driven example of Mazis, but it lacks a bit of vibrancy to its fruit component and is just a touch sinewy on the backend. The bouquet offers up a correct blend of cassis, chicory, dark soil tones, grilled meats, woodsmoke and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly youthful in magnum, with a good core of fruit, still some chewy backend tannin and a long, but not particularly complex finish. Perhaps this is just a bit young still in magnum and more complexity will emerge down the road? I was frankly expecting more, given how much I love the 1991 vintage these days. 2017-2040. **89.**

### **1991 Chambolle-Musigny “les Gruenchers”- Domaine Dujac**

There was hail damage in Chambolle in 1991, as a very localized storm pummeled the vineyards on August 22<sup>nd</sup> of this year, causing a huge crop reduction and some rather un-Chambolle-like wines at some addresses. Happily, most of the affected berries fell off in the sunny and dry conditions that followed, so other than a short crop and a delay in ripening, the hail did not taint the wines. At Domaine Dujac, their Bonnes-Mares was hit so hard that Jacques Seysses decided to just blend what little was produced into his cuvée of Gruenchers, which did not hurt that wine at all! I have loved this wine for several decades now, as it drank well from a fairly youthful age and this most recent bottle really showed well, offering up a complex and wide open bouquet of red and black cherries, a bit of desiccated strawberry, heather, gentle notes of cinnamon, autumnal soil tones, mustard seed and a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully resolved today, with a lovely core, still a touch of chewy, backend tannin and a long, complex and very classy finish. This is fine juice and a ringing success for what was a challenging vintage in Chambolle. 2018-2035+. **93.**

### **1990 Gevrey-Chambertin “Estournelles St. Jacques”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1990 Estournelles St. Jacques from Louis Jadot is very much a creature of its vintage, and if one does not mine the overripe fruit tones of the vintage, this is a very good wine. For my palate, the more this vintage ages, the prunier it gets and the less that I like it. The wine here offers up a complex and pruney nose of dried black fruit, prunes, dates, chocolate, hung game and muddy soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and overripe, with a good core, moderate tannins, tangy acids and a long, borderline volatile finish. This is not my cup of tea at all! 2018-2040. **83.**

### **1990 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Armand Rousseau**

Charles Rousseau's 1990s are some of my favorites from this overrated vintage, and his 1990 Charmes-Chambertin is really a very, very good wine. The bouquet is deep, pure and beautifully red fruity, wafting from the glass in a mix of strawberries, cherries, spiced meats, a lovely base of soil tones, mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively transparent for the vintage, with a good core of fruit, tangy acids, modest tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. There is a touch of muskiness on the nose that shows its vintage of origin, but there is nothing overripe or pruney here and this wine is really very, very good. 2019-2060. **93.**

### **1990 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret**

The 1990 Clos Vougeot from Domaine Georges Mugneret is a very good example of the vintage, but in the pantheon of Clos Vougeots produced here during the decade of the 1990s, this



is not one of the top vintages. The bouquet is deep and already fully tertiary, offering up a lovely, autumnal blend of dried cherries, forest floor, gamebird, bonfire, heather, dry oak leaves and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and autumnal in personality, with good complexity and grip, still a bit of backend tannin, quite good acidity for the vintage and a long, focused and fully mature finish. This is a good, tasty bottle, but it pales in comparison to the 1991, 1993, 1995, 1996 and 1999 versions. 2017-2035. **92.**

#### **1989 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Domaine Armand Rousseau**

In its youth, the 1989 Rousseau Clos St. Jacques was an intensely black fruity wine, with a creamy opulence that made it nearly impossible not to drink early on (and yes, I did drink my bottles woefully too soon). The wine has aged extremely gracefully, and is now a much more complex and mellowed example of the vintage, without that sappy exuberance of youth, but great refinement and breed. The bouquet offers up notes of baked plums, cherries, *sous bois*, some chocolaty tones, just a hint of vinesmoke and rather discreet, cedary wood. On the palate the 1989 is deep, medium-full and elegant, with fine depth at the core, lovely delineation, and fine intensity of flavor on the complex finish. The 1989 has been mature for a number of years, and though it shows no signs of imminent decline. 2017-2035+. **93.**

#### **1988 Gevrey-Chambertin “aux Combottes”- Domaine Dujac**

The 1988 Combottes from Domaine Dujac is now drinking beautifully. The bouquet is bright, vibrant and red fruity, offering up scents of raspberries, cherries, cinnamon, a great base of soil tones (now just starting to share autumnal), a touch of iron and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full and tangy, with marvelous complexity and soil signature, a fine core of sweet red fruit, tangy and well-integrated acids and just a wisp of backend tannin still perking up the long and complex finish. This is now *à point* and drinking beautifully. 2019-2035+. **93.**

#### **1988 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1988 Clos de Bèze from Maison Jadot is a superb wine that is just now starting to arrive at its plateau of maturity, where it will remain for many decades, so if one only has a couple of bottles in the cellar, I would be inclined to let it rest comfortably in the cellar for just a bit longer. The bouquet is blossoming nicely now, offering up a superb blend of cassis, grilled meats, coffee bean, a complex base of dark soil tones, mustard seed, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, modest tannins and a long, vibrant and energetic finish. With half an hour in decanter, this wine is a very good drink already, but I have the sense that it is still climbing and more patience will be rewarded. 2020-2085. **94+.**

#### **1988 Chambolle-Musigny- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I have the distinct impression that the quality of the *villages* level wines from the Drouhin family is even higher today than was the case back in the 1980s, but this lovely 1988 Chambolle AC shows that they were never an afterthought here. The wine is drinking beautifully today, offering up a complex nose of red and black cherries, a bit of dark berry, gamebird, mustard seed and a fine base of autumnal soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and tangy, with good complexity and grip, melted tannins and fine focus and lift on the backend. Good AC. 2019-2035. **90.**

#### **1988 Chambolle-Musigny “les Feusselottes”- Domaine Georges Mugneret**

The 1988 Feusselottes from Dr. Georges Mugneret is drinking very nicely these days. It offers up a refined and fully mature bouquet of cherries, strawberries, gamebird, *sous bois*, gentle

smokiness and a nice touch of heather in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tangy and complex, with a solid core, lovely focus and balance and a long, classy finish. Good juice. 2018-2035. **91.**

**1988 Musigny “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Comte de Vogüé (magnum)**

I have always liked the 1988 vintage of Comte de Vogüé Musigny, which, to my palate, was the next to last vintage of the old school style of this bottling; from the 1990 vintage forwards the wine became a more muscular example of Musigny. This most recent 1988 was out of magnum and showed very nicely indeed, wafting from the glass in a blend of cherries, pomegranate, mustard seed, woodsmoke, a bit of cherrystone, gamebird, heather, coffee and a gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and intensely flavored, with a good core, lovely soil signature, fine focus and grip and a long, tangy and modestly complex finish. This is very stylish and really reflective of its underlying *terroir*. 2019-2040. **93.**

**1988 Echézeaux- Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg**

The 1988 vintage was the last that was vinified by Dr. Georges Mugneret before his untimely passing in early 1989. His last Echézeaux is really a beautiful wine that is now starting to enter its plateau of peak maturity, but will last at this level for several decades. The utterly refined bouquet delivers a superb combination of plums, cherries, violets, smoked duck, a very complex base of soil tones (that are just starting to get autumnal), fresh nutmeg, summer truffles and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very transparent in personality, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and balance, still just a wisp of backend tannin and a long, tangy and soil-driven finish. This is a classic, topflight 1988, without perhaps the mid-palate amplitude we have become accustomed to as global warming has affected the Burgundy region, but with plenty of fruit stretched nicely across a dazzling mosaic of *terroir*. 2019-2045+. **94.**

**1985 Gevrey-Chambertin “Combes aux Moines”- Domaine Philippe LeClerc**

The 1985 Combes aux Moines from Philippe LeClerc is a fascinating wine, as it is deep, complex and spicy and is drinking beautifully today, but as it was served blind to me, I was certain I was drinking a top flight Châteauneuf du Pape! The bouquet is quite complex, offering up scents of red and black raspberries, lavender, pepper, hung game, dark soil tones and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a good core, tangy acids and melted tannins on the long finish. This is a very well made wine, but it is not my idea of a classic interpretation of Combes aux Moines! 2019-2045+. **92.**

**1985 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Domaine A. Rousseau (magnum)**

The 1985 Clos St. Jacques from Charles Rousseau is just a beautiful drink from magnum today, offering up a deep and classic nose of cherries, strawberries, orange zest, smoked meats, beautifully mineral soil tones, coffee, mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and tangy, with lovely intensity of flavor, superb complexity, fine focus and balance and a very long, tangy and softly tannic finish. Even in magnum, the 1985 Rousseau Clos St. Jacques is fully mature, but this wine is so beautifully balanced that I have to imagine that it will continue to cruise along beautifully for many decades to come. 2018-2040. **93.**

**1985 Echézeaux- Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg**

It had been a long, long time since I drank a bottle of the 1985 Echézeaux from Dr. Georges Mugneret, as I had last opened one of these back in 2007, when I was writing my historical profile on the estate. But, I eventually succumbed to temptation and opened my last remaining bottle in my cellar a short time ago. The bouquet is really lovely, wafting from the

glass in a fully mature blend of black cherries, dark berries, meaty overtones, a touch of cocoa powder, venison, *sous bois*, woodsmoke and a nice dollop of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, suave and soil-driven, with lovely remaining fruit tones, melted tannins and a long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. Like many of the 1985 red Burgundies, this passed through a period where it seemed to be tiring at the start of the new millennium, only to come out of that phase to seemingly deepen and pick up more structural conviction on the backend, and today, it is drinking beautifully. 2019-2040+. **94.**

**1983 Ruchottes-Chambertin- Domaine Georges Mugneret (served from nine liter bottle)**

This too was served at the Mugnerets' thirtieth harvest celebration and I was surprised to overhear several alleged Burgundy connoisseurs on the guest list dismissing this wine, based on the vintage's reputation, rather than judging what was in their glasses! It is actually a very, very good 1983 and is drinking very well indeed in this large format, wafting from the glass in a superb and autumnal blend of baked cherries and raspberries, grilled venison, bonfire, forest floor, a touch of hazelnut, coffee and a topnote of summer truffles. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still has plenty of fruit at the core, with lovely complex and grip, still a touch of backend tannin and very good focus and balance on the long and really quite classy finish. There are no signs of hail taint or physiological ripeness issues from the hydric stress in this fine 1983, just depth, complexity and soil signature of a fine, fully mature wine. 2019-2040+. **92.**

**1979 Chambertin- Domaine Louis Trapet**

The 1979 Chambertin from Jean Trapet is a beautiful wine for current drinking. The vintage is a bit more high-toned than 1978, but it has aged very well indeed and today, many of the 1979s are amongst the great sleepers still to be found in the realm of mature and sometimes overlooked red Burgundy. The bouquet is complex and beautifully perfumed, offering up a constellation of dried cherries, *fraises du bois*, a touch of hazelnut, porcini, a complex base of gently autumnal soil tones, woodsmoke and a beautiful array of spice tones (including fresh nutmeg) in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very transparent in personality, with a good core, very complex soil tones, tangy acids, melted tannins and lovely length and grip on the vibrant and very well-balanced finish. This is first class juice that is still at its zenith. 2019-2045. **94.**

**1978 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Clair-Daü**

The 1978 Bonnes-Mares from Domaine Clair-Daü is a very lovely and *à point* example of this lovely vintage. The bouquet is bright and beautifully tertiary today, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, orange peel, venison, bonfire, a very complex base of soil tones and a topnote of heather (which I often think of as one of the signature aromatic elements of fully mature Bonnes-Mares). On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a lovely core of fruit, superb soil signature and excellent length and grip on the meltingly tannic and exceedingly well-balanced finish. Fine juice. 2018-2040. **92.**

**1978 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine de Comte de Vogüé**

The 1978 Bonnes-Mares from Comte de Vogüé is absolutely stellar, and though this is the first time I have crossed paths with this wine, I do emphatically hope it will not be the last! At age forty, the bouquet is flat out stunning, offering up a brilliant blend of red and black cherries, roses, roasted venison, heather, *sous bois*, notes of iron and a smoky topnote. On the

palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and still shows off stunning mid-palate depth, with outstanding focus and grip, still a touch of seamless tannin on the backend and a long, tangy and very complex finish. This is outstanding Bonnes-Mares in full bloom! 2018-2050. **94.**



**1976 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Georges Mugneret (served from nine liter bottle)**

The 1976 Clos Vougeot from Dr. Georges Mugneret is another really good drink today in large format, though my gut feeling is that the wine might be getting a bit long in the tooth in a regular bottle today. But, in nine liter, it offers up a superb nose of dried cherries, dark soil tones, summer truffles, spit-roasted *pigeon*, cigar ash, summer truffles and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really shows a fine core of fruit for the vintage, with very good focus and grip, still some backend tannin and a long, autumnal and still *à point* finish. This is another of the excellent large format bottles shared at the domaine's celebration of harvest number thirty for the Mugneret Sisters. 2019-2040. **92.**

**1971 Echézeaux- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils**

The 1971 Echézeaux from Maison Bouchard Père et Fils is another really outstanding example of this vintage, with the wine fully at its apogee of peak maturity and drinking with great style and grace. The complex nose offers up a symphony of black cherries, plums, Vosne spices, venison, *sous bois* and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely *à point*, with a lovely core, superb soil signature, melted tannins and a

long, complex and vibrant finish. Just lovely juice in full flight and with tons of life still in it! 2019-2050. **93.**

**1971 Echézeaux- Domaine Mugneret-Gibourg**

Dr. Georges Mugneret's 1971 Echézeaux is a brilliant bottle of wine at its absolute apogee of peak maturity today. The complex and tertiary bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of desiccated cherries, heather, orange zest, coffee, *pigeon*, brown spice tones, vinesmoke and forest floor. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, vibrant and nicely autumnal, with a good remaining core, lovely acids and grip, melted tannin and a very, very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. This was an utter treat to drink! 2018-2045+. **96.**

**1964 Volnay "Caillerets" Ancienne Cuvée Carnot- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils**

This may well be the best bottle of mature Volnay I have ever tasted from Bouchard Père et Fils, who makes a very good lineup each year from this village. The 1964 Caillerets is deep, pure, tertiary and at its zenith of peak drinkability today, soaring from the glass in a mix of red berries, cherries, beautiful spice tones, *pigeon*, a stony base of soil, woodsmoke and a topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and strikingly transparent and elegant, with a fine core of fruit, excellent complexity, melted tannins and a long, pure and dancing finish of great balance and breed. Fine, fine juice. 2019-2045+. **94.**

**1962 Nuits St. Georges- Maison Léon Voilland (Tastevinage Label)**

William Kelley generously shared this bottle at a small dinner party in Beaune a couple of years ago and it was just lovely. Maison Léon Voilland was a small *négociant* house founded in Beaune in 1844 by Léon Louis-Voilland. This 1962 Nuits St. Georges was still drinking at its peak and quite elegant, offering up a properly autumnal bouquet of desiccated cherries and dark berries, *sous bois*, a touch of cinnamon, gamebird and a topnote of bonfire. On the palate the wine is pure, complex and fullish, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine soil signature and a long, tangy and meltingly tannic finish. This had no doubt been fully mature for many decades, but continues to cruise along very nicely. 2018-2035. **90.**

**1962 Beaune- Domaine Michel Gaunoux**

The 1962 Beaune from Michel Gaunoux continues to drink very well indeed, though I am sure it has been fully mature for several decades by now. The bouquet is deep, pure and tertiary, offering up scents of cherry, pomegranate, *pigeon*, orange zest, *sous bois*, coffee and bonfire. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and bouncy, with lovely complexity and lift, melted tannins and a long, complex and gently autumnal finish. Very pretty juice that continues to cruise along nicely. 2018-2030? **92.**

**1949 Beaune "Grèves" Cuvée l'Enfant Jésus- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils**

The 1949 vintage in Burgundy is one of my absolute favorites of the twentieth century and the 1949 Beaune "Grèves" Cuvée l'Enfant Jésus from Maison Bouchard is every bit worthy of this great year. The bouquet is deep, complex and marvelously old school in style, wafting from the glass in a mix of dark berries, woodsmoke, roasted gamebird, *sous bois*, a touch of lavender and cinnamon and a discreet foundation of cedar still showing in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and still beautifully pure and vibrant at the core, with lovely autumnal shadings to its soil component, great focus, complexity and grip and a long, tangy and still gently tannic finish. Fine, fine juice. 2019-2055. **95.**

### **1947 Musigny- Maison Pierre Ponnelle**

In contrast to the bottle of 1961 Leroy Musigny served in this same lineup, the 1947 Ponnelle Musigny is the real deal and is actually quite a good example. The bouquet offers up a lovely, tertiary blend of cherries, strawberries, heather, iron-infused soil tones, a touch of mustard seed and lovely autumnal notes in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and beautifully transparent, with a solid core, fine focus and complexity and a long, silky and very refined finish. A lovely old Moose that does not show any of the more roasted side of the 1947 vintage. 2018-2035. **92.**

### **1928 La Tâche- La Romanée- Maison Chevallot**

I had never previously come across a purported blend of La Tâche and La Romanée before, and I am not sure I have yet after tasting this wine. I do not know any of the historical background on Maison Chevallot, but the wine was still extant on both the nose and palate, but getting a bit cuspy. The nose offers up scents of red berries, forest floor, *pigeon*, walnuts and a bit of toffee like oxidation hovering like the grim reaper in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex still fairly sound structurally, but with little Vosne personality and a bit of backend bitterness on the finish. Back in this era, it was not all that uncommon for some merchants to blend things beyond pinot noir into their Burgundies to try and get a bit more stuffing, so maybe this has some Gigondas or the like added before bottling? The wine was still alive, but hardly memorable. ???

**RECENTLY-TASTED LOIRE VALLEY WINES  
SPRING 2020 IN THE GARDEN OF FRANCE**



I last wrote about the “Garden of France, the Loire Valley, back in October of last year, but quite a few recently-arriving samples have been piling up in my cellar, so it seemed high time to get them tasted and written up in time for the arrival of warmer weather throughout most of the northern hemisphere. As I wrote a pretty thorough backdrop on the 2018 vintage, which is primarily what is now in the pipeline from the Loire Valley back in the fall, I am going to just include it again further down, as I do not think I can craft a more thorough vintage summation. This way, readers curious about the growing conditions of 2018 on the Loire River will not have to open up Issue 83 to get the background information. The new arrivals also include plenty of earlier-released examples of the 2019 vintage, which was another hot summer across all of France. The Loire Valley was very happy in 2018 to be spared any frost damage in the spring, after two successive years with frost, but it was back again in early April of 2019. The frost damage cut back eventual yields from Muscadet all the way to Montlouis, as preventative measures were only marginally successful and once again, a normal-sized crop was out of the question for much of the western half of the Loire in 2019. Happily, the frosts were far less damaging in the central Loire red wine appellations were pretty much spared. Further east



towards Sancerre, the frost damage was also far less severe than in the most badly-affected appellations.

After the spring frosts, *vignerons* in the Loire Valley had to deal with the baking heat of June and July of 2019, where two brutally torrid heat spikes sent temperatures soaring for extended periods of time. By the time the second heat wave hit in July, estates across the entire region also had to deal with extreme drought conditions, as there had not been a single drop of precipitation since the start of June and hydric stress in the face of the second onslaught of heat in July was traumatizing to the vines. In particular, younger vines, with less well-developed root systems suffered the most, as they had less access to the deeper reserves of subterranean water supplies. Once the second heat spike had passed, the weather returned to quite normal temperature levels for the remainder of the growing season in the Loire, though it remained very dry throughout the rest of the year and this has further cut back yields, as berries remained very small on the bunches due to the lack of precipitation. A bit of rainfall in August or early September would have probably been welcomed by all across the valley, but it was not to be and the dry conditions reduced yields, which had already been badly affected in several parts of the Loire by the spring frosts. Happily, other than the small yields, the berries that came in looked quite good and this was particularly true of the fruit from older vines, so one had small berries of concentrated flavors and mineral expressions, generally coupled to superior acidity levels and often, lower alcohol levels, than was the case in the more bountiful, hot summer crop of 2018.

In addition to the spread of early-released 2019s, this Loire Valley feature also includes many more wines arriving from the 2018 vintage, which was a very warm summer that delivered bountiful yields after severe frost damage the past two vintages had wreaked havoc in the region. While the story of 2018 will be the superb second half of the summer, which ripened up a generous crop load to lovey levels of pure fruit and plenty of depth across most appellations in the Loire Valley, the summer was not without some speed bumps early on. The biggest challenge *vignerons* faced in 2018 were the very heavy rains in mid-June that triggered problems with rot and mildew that had to be controlled vigilantly, but once this wet weather passed, one could not have asked for a better growing season. The spring was early and flowering was abundant, setting the tables for a prolific crop that was very welcome by *vignerons* whose crop sizes had been absolutely decimated by frosts the previous two years. From the debut of July, days were very warm and sunny and nights often cooled down nicely, keeping relatively good acidity levels in the grapes and auguring good things for the wines of the vintage. However, there are a couple of potential Achilles' heels to the 2018 vintage, with the first obviously being that the rot and mildew that cropped up immediately after the heavy rains in June had to be studiously controlled to make great wines. The other is that the potentially huge yields required patience at the end of the summer, as this large crop had to be ripen up completely to get tannins and acids to ideal levels, which sometimes also allowed potential alcohol levels to also mount. While mostly it is the white wines of 2018 that are being released now from top estates in the Loire, there are already a few 2018 reds also finding their way into the pipeline and it will be interesting to see what is the general style of the red wines of 2018 will shape up to be a year from now, as more of the best-known bottlings finish up their *elevage* and are released from domaines.

Based on what I have tasted thus far from the vintage of 2018, it is pretty clear that this truly an outstanding vintage in the overall region. Of course, as the Loire is such an elongated

and stretched out series of appellations, the vintage style varies a bit from sub-region to sub-region, but it seems very safe to say that 2018 has produced excellent wines from east to west in the Loire and there are plenty of truly stellar wines currently hitting the market or due out in the coming months. It is not that the past two, frost-damaged vintages were disappointing here, as the general quality of the wines from the top estates in both 2016 and 2017 were really quite exceptional, given how hard the Loire was hit by frost damage and other difficulties in both years. But, there was simply not a whole lot of wine to go around with yields taking such a draconian turn in the wake of each year's frosts. So, the bountiful crop of 2018 is very much a welcome guest at domaines in the region and it has helped to offset, to some extent, all the pain that was lavished on *vignerons* in the previous two years by Mother Nature. However, with a big cropload comes the responsibilities to let those grapes ripen up completely, which happily, was a possibility with the beautiful *fin de saison* of 2018. However, I am sure that there are some estates that may have started picking a bit too early in this vintage and did not achieve the full maturity in the grape skins, seeds and tannins necessary to make truly great wines in this vintage. So, one had to have a strong nerve as the season wound to a conclusion in 2018 and be a bit intrepid when it came to alcohol levels for certain wines, as the sugars were certainly climbing to rather impressive levels in the continued sunny days of the second half of September.

Normally, when discussing each sub-region in the Loire, I will start on either the eastern or western end of the region and work my way across from appellation to appellation, but perhaps the central area of the Touraine is a good place to start this year, as it is a very good window into the vintage of 2018 in general terms. The style of the growing season of 2018 dictated styles a bit more than customary in the Touraine area this year, where *vignerons* in Vouvray and Montlouis have had a bit more leeway in how to shape their portfolio of wines in the last decade or more, with the possibility of making a full range of Sec, Demi-Sec and Moelleux bottlings possible in most of the recent vintages here. However, the summer of 2018 is one that definitely favored Moelleux and sweeter wines this year, with Sec the most difficult sweetness level to find properly ripe grapes for in 2018, due to the challenges of getting proper physiological ripeness with the large crop loads. At Domaine Huët in Vouvray, Sarah Hwang and her team decided to follow the path laid out by the vintage's style, so they only produced a very small quantity of Sec in 2018- solely from their Clos du Bourg vineyard, with everything crafted from the Le Haut-Lieu and Le Mont vineyards Demi-Sec and sweeter in 2018 and with lots of sweeter wines produced from the Clos du Bourg as well. She noted that it was important in Vouvray to be patient and let the grapes ripen fully into mid-October or later to get the acids and skins fully ripe, and for those who decided to pick earlier, the huge yields translated into Sec bottlings that can be lean, green, fighting machines. So, there will be some disappointing 2018s from the Touraine, to go along with some of the greatest sweet wines produced in this part of the Loire since the legendary 1989s.

Growers who had the most success here allude back to the legendary 1947 vintage in Vouvray and Montlouis as a similar growing season (based on family records and the memories of the most senior members of their winegrowing colleagues) and it is clear that there are some absolutely brilliant legends in the making coming from this region from the most successful estates in the Touraine. What I love best about the sweet wines produced in this section of the Loire in 2018 is that they are generally not wines that achieved their concentration levels through the shriveling effects of botrytis, but rather through very long hang times and *passerillage* (the

dehydration of the berries while still on the vine), so that one sees very pure, very precise flavors and aromatics from these wines, as well as gorgeous soil signatures, to go along with the bottomless depth of concentration from a great vintage. There was a very small amount of botrytis in isolated spots in the Touraine in 2018, but it has had a negligible effect on the vintage in general, in comparison to the concentration realized from the natural shriveling of the berries on the vine from *passerillage* (which also acts to concentrate acids, as well as sugars). The last vintage where this was the case was 1989, and the similarities between the style of the wines of 2018 and 1989 is quite noticeable, though the 2018s may well be even a bit more powerful than the 1989s and share a bit more 1947 personality in that regard (though, of course, I have no personal experience with how the 1947s may have tasted in their early decades). Leaving aside the fine chenin-based wines of Vouvray and Montlouis that define the Touraine, it is also an excellent vintage here for the value sauvignon blancs that are planted in this part of the Loire Valley, and the Touraine SBs that I have tasted are simply superb in 2018 and will be some of the great steals in the wine world for the coming year or two.

Moving over to the western edge of the Loire, in the Nantais, the Muscadet harvest started far earlier than in the middle Loire Valley, with some growers getting started as early as late August and most bringing in their grapes in the month of September. The grapes are nicely ripe for Muscadet in 2018, but due to the hot backend half of the growing season, acids are a bit lower than in many vintages and it seems likely that the top bottlings of Muscadet will not be quite as long-lived in 2018 as in other top recent vintages here, though they still have plenty of personality, mineral drive and complexity. However, keep in mind that I am only tasting now the more entry level wines of 2018 from Muscadet's top producers and it will be very interesting to see what their higher level cuvées produced from top crus in the appellation and aged far longer on their fine lees will show when they are released down the road. But, the depth of fruit and the still lovely signatures of soil of the early 2018s show that there will be an awful lot to like from 2018 Muscadet, even if the wines end up being a tad shorter-lived than in other recent very top vintages. It probably bears at least a passing mention that when I speak of Muscadet, I am talking exclusively about the top estates that hand-harvest their grapes and make their wines traditionally and with serious attention to detail. My comments are not applicable to the folks still making industrial-grade, machine-harvested Muscadet, which happily, I do not taste very often these days, as there is more than enough great and serious Muscadet being made in the western Loire today to keep me more than busy without having to dip my toes in the water of the more commercially-oriented plonk.

In the Anjou, the same discussion that pertained to the Touraine will likely be true here as well, with the strength of the vintage likely to be the sweeter wines from these lovely, chenin blanc appellations. In the great red wine appellations of the central Loire: Chinon, Saumur-Champigny, St. Nicolas de Bourgueil and Bourgueil, it is still very early days for the 2018s, as most of the top cuvées are still resting in cellars and will not be released for several more months. However, I have already tasted enough of the earlier-released bottlings to start to get a feel for the red wines of 2018 and it seems quite likely that the wines here may well be a bit similar to the 2005 vintage reds. From what I have tasted so far, it seems likely that the 2018 red wines of the Loire's best appellations will end up being characterized by truly exceptional depth of fruit, fine mineral drive and plenty of ripe tannins providing a structural chassis to take them far out into the future and make them cellar treasures for the next generation. I have to assume

that ripening up the tannins, not letting yields get too prolific, and waiting for complete ripeness of the bunches was still of paramount importance for making great red wines here, but there are enough really talented *vignerons* in these appellations these days to have confidence that many have done so and made truly legendary reds in 2018. My initial fears were that the very hot weather of the summer of 2018 might translate into red wines defined by elements of *sur maturité* and very high alcohols, but thus far, I have not seen a single example of red wine from 2018 that fits this description and I am extremely sanguine that these types of wines will not be part of the portfolios of the top red wine estates in Chinon, Saumur-Champigny, St. Nicolas de Bourgueil and Bourgueil.



*The mid-summer vineyards of Sancerre laid out like an emerald mosaic.*

On the far eastern end of the Loire in sauvignon blanc country, the appellations here have produced some truly brilliant 2018s in Sancerre, Pouilly-Fumé, Menetou-Salon and Quincy. These wines generally have just gorgeous fruit tones in this vintage, coupled to classic soil signatures, sound acids and excellent freshness, bounce and grip. It is going to be the most popular vintage for these beautiful examples of sauvignon blanc in a very long time, as these wines are just singing out of the blocks, but still have good structure for mid-term aging. Most that I have tasted thus far have good to very good levels of acidity, so they remain vibrant, bouncy and zesty on the palate and allow the great fruit of 2018 to show to best advantage. Though 2018 will long be remembered here for just how gorgeous the fruit tones of sauvignon blanc came through in the finished wines, there is absolutely no diminution in the underlying *terroir* of these wines and fans of the top estates here are likely to be extremely happy with the

2018s from these domaines. I have to imagine, as is always the case, that there are plenty of commercially-oriented sauvignon blancs here as well that will be far less satisfying, with the same attendant risks discussed about other sub-regions of the Loire also pertaining here in the east, with very large yields having been picked too early producing green-edged wines that are not emblematic of the greatness of 2018. But, those types of wines (call them supermarket Sancerre if you like) always lag way behind the best wines in every vintage here.

Regarding the first arrivals from the 2019 vintage on the Loire, I have not yet really seen enough of them to have as strong a sense of how this vintage will play out across each of the appellations as I do with the 2018s. However, there have been enough really stellar 2019s already released to build up enthusiasm for what is coming in the pipeline in the next several months, as more and more of the top cuvées from the 2019 vintage will start to be sent out into the market. The concentration levels I have witnessed with the early-released 2019s are quite impressive, with the wines generally not disproportionately-shaped or overblown in style, but deep, pure, precise and very mineral in their personalities this year. The wines tend to have really good structural chassis as well, with generally higher acids than comparable wines from 2018 and more cut, snap or tannic spine than the equally impressive, but quite differently styled wines of 2018. I would suspect that 2019 will prove to be a bit less consistent in quality across the board than 2018, but with the best examples of the vintage at least as good as the most successful 2018s, and at times, even superior in quality. Of what I have tasted so far from 2019, it is indeed a very concentrated vintage, with so many of the wines just rock solid at the core and endowed with serious structural chassis and the potential for serious longevity. The depth and structure of the best 2019s also will demand in many cases, some patience before opening them, for even wines such as Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé in 2019 can be brisk and rather buttoned up behind their girdles of acidity and are asking for a bit more bottle age to relax structurally. I have only had a few 2019 red wines from the Loire, but my expectations is that many of these will end up truly stellar with the growing conditions of this year, but the wines will probably be fairly tannic when they are released and demand some bottle age before they start to stir. In many ways, the two vintages of 2018 and 2019 dovetail nicely stylistically, as both have produced plenty of high quality wines and with the 2018s the more extroverted of the two vintages, it will be possible to drink very well from this vintage and give the more structured 2019s time to blossom completely with a bit of time in the cellar.

The following notes are organized in my customary geographical groupings from west to east, starting with Muscadet and eventually winding their way over to Sancerre. Within each sub-region section, the wines are listed chronologically by vintage, and then alphabetically by producer. In a switch from previous reports, I have ended up grouping all of the various Rosé bottlings together at the end of the roster of tasting notes, under the heading of “Sancerre Rosé and Friends”, as the vast majority of samples of Rosé I have tasted for this report ended up hailing from Sancerre.

### ***Muscadet***

#### **2018 Muscadet et Sèvre Maine “Sur Lies”- Domaine de Beauregard**

The 2018 Muscadet et Sèvre Maine “Sur Lies” from Laurent Grégoire at Domaine de Beauregard is produced from vines that range from thirty to forty years of age. The wine offers up a bright and nicely concentrated nose of lemon, breadfruit, a gentle touch of leanness, a

beautifully complex base of minerality and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is even more expressive than the nose suggests, with a full-bodied, rock solid format that shows excellent cut, complexity and grip and a long, minerally and snappy finish. This is a first class example of Muscadet! 2020-2035. **91+**.

**2018 Muscadet et Sèvre Maine “Sur Lies”- Domaine Gadais Père et Fils**

The 2018 Muscadet “Sur Lies” bottling from Christophe and Pierre-Henri Gadais is their “entry level bottling” and it is a beautiful example of the vintage, offering up a superb bouquet of lemon, green apple, stony minerality, dried flowers, ocean breeze and a gentle hint of leesy tones. On the palate the wine is bright, zesty and fullish, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent focus and grip and really quite a good girdle of acidity for the 2018 vintage. First class Muscadet. I am already looking forward to tasting their older vine cuvées of “Les Perrières” and “Monnières-Saint-Fiacre”! 2020-2030+. **91.**

**2018 Muscadet et Sèvre Maine “Sur Lies”- Domaine des Quatre Routes (Éric Poiron)**

The 2018 Muscadet from Éric Poiron’s Domaine des Quatre Routes is produced from twenty-five year-old vines and aged *sur lies* until March or April following the vintage, prior to bottling. The 2018 offers up a lovely bouquet of lemon, lime, breadfruit, lovely, gentle leesy tones, a fine base of soil and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and nicely soil inflective, with a good core, zesty acids and a long, fairly complex and zesty finish. This is a good, solid bottle of Muscadet that will be even better with another years’ worth of bottle age. 2020-2030. **88.**

**2017 Muscadet et Sèvre Maine “les Perrières” Monopole- Domaine Gadais Père et Fils**

The 2017 Muscadet “les Perrières” is a monopole of Domaine Gadais is produced from vines in excess of forty years of age and only bottled on its own on what the family deems is an excellent vintage for the vineyard. The wine is fermented with indigenous yeasts in older oak asks and aged in the same for a year and a half, with bi-monthly *battonage*, and then bottled unfinned and unfiltered. The 2017 les Perrières delivers superb aromatic fireworks in its blend of lemon, bread fruit, a beautiful base of stony minerality, white flowers, gentle leesy tones and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with great intensity of flavor and lift, bright, snappy acids, great mineral drive and a long, very complex and vibrant finish. There is just a whisper of rounding off of the corners here from the older oak barrels the wine is aged in that I find really well-done and takes the wine up another point or two. This is simply stellar Muscadet. 2020-2035+. **94.**

**2016 Muscadet et Sèvre Maine “Monnières-Saint-Fiacres” 1947- Gadais Père et Fils**

This bottling hails from the *lieu à dit* of Gras Mouton, and is emblazoned with the “1947” moniker on the label because that was the year that Louis Gadais bought this abandoned parcel in Gras Mouton and started clearing it and planting vines. It sits at the highest elevation in the vineyard and to use the Cru designation of Monnières-Saint-Fiacres for the wine, a minimum of twenty-four months aging on its fine lees is required. With the vines now more than seventy years of age, the 2016 vintage of this bottling offers up a superb bouquet of lime, breadfruit, ocean breeze, a complex base of salty minerality and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, crisp and full-bodied, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and grip, lovely complexity and a long, well-balanced and classy finish. This is drinking very nicely today, but clearly will age long and gracefully as well. 2020-2040. **92.**

### ***Savennières and Coulée de Serrant***

#### **2018 Savennières Roche-aux-Moines “Clos de la Bergerie”- Nicolas Joly**

Nicolas Joly barrel-ferments and raises all of his Savennières in wood, with the Clos de la Bergerie seeing five percent new oak during its *elevage*. These are fairly young vines by Monsieur Joly’s standards, being just under thirty years of age, but they are cropped at half the legal limit for Savennières, so this compensates for the slightly younger age of the parcel. The 2018 version offers up a ripe nose, as the wine comes in listed at 15.5 percent octane, with scents of sweet quince, a touch of pineapple, chalky soil tones, beeswax, white flowers and a touch of candied lemon peel wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, nicely ripe and balanced with a fine undertow of soil tones. The wine has outstanding depth at the core, solid framing acids and very good length and grip on the surprisingly well-balanced finish. There is only a whisper of backend heat evident here today, as well as a touch of natural wine “wildness” on the finish, but this is really quite an impressive wine for its octane level, as it does not lack for freshness or mineral drive. I do not have any experience aging Savennières at this alcohol level, so might ere on the side of caution and drink this wine in its relative youth. Right now it is a very good drink. 2020-2030? **92**.

#### **2018 Savennières “Les Vieux Clos”- Nicolas Joly**

The 2018 Les Vieux Clos comes in listed at a slightly lower octane level than the Clos de la Bergerie, as this wine states fifteen percent on the label. I have not tasted a vintage of Nicolas Joly’s Les Vieux Clos bottling since the 2014 vintage, so I was delighted to have a chance to try the 2017 version. As readers may recall, this is a younger vine bottling from Monsieur Joly, with this particular vineyard having been planted in the 1990s with *selection massale* material taken from Coulée de Serrant. The wine is barrel-fermented but sees no new oak. The 2018 Les Vieux Clos seems to show its ripeness more aromatically than the Clos de la Bergerie, as the fruit tones are more tropical in presentation, and the wine is also a bit more “wild” in the natural wine sense as well. The bouquet offers up scents of pineapple, a bit of guava, lanolin, a good base of soil tones, citrus peel and some pungent floral tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and seems a touch sweeter than the Clos de la Bergerie, with excellent mid-palate concentration, good soil signature, bright acids and a slight prickle of carbon dioxide on the long finish. This is far more adolescent right now than the Clos de la Bergerie, and the wine is a bit hard to read right now. My gut feeling is that it remains structurally sound, it will be excellent with a few years’ worth of bottle age. But the combination of a bit of residual sugar, a bit of CO<sub>2</sub> and the touch of natural wine “wildness” may not augur for a flawless evolution in bottle. If we give the wine the benefit of the doubt, then score it **92**, but with the caveat that this seems a tad more structurally fragile than the Clos de la Bergerie 2018 at this point in time and could be a bit more risky in the cellar. 2023-2045? **92?**

#### **2017 Coulée de Serrant- Nicolas Joly**

The 2017 Coulée de Serrant is a ripe wine, as Monsieur Joly lists this on the label as fifteen percent octane. The bouquet is deep, aromatically complex and ripe, delivering a blend of yellow plum, tangerine, a touch of pineapple, guava, beautiful, chalky soil tones, citrus peel, lanolin and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripe, with a good core, fine expression of *terroir* and fairly low acids, with good balance and little sign of its octane level. This is complex, quite open for young Coulée de Serrant and carries its alcohol very nicely indeed. Like all of these Joly wines, this needs some air after opening to really start to show properly; there is just a whisper of natural wine “wildness” here on both the nose and



palate once the wine blossoms, but it is fairly minimal. However, unless I am misreading the 2017, this will be a fairly short-lived vintage of Coulée de Serrant. 2020-2030. **92.**

**2017 Savennières “Les Vieux Clos”- Nicolas Joly**

The 2017 version is very ripe, coming in listed at fifteen percent alcohol, but the nose does not seem out of the ordinary, offering up scents of quince, pineapple, honeycomb, chalky soil tones, wet wool and orange peel. The bouquet offers up a bit of natural wine wildness when first opened, but time in decanter allows this to dissipate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and surprisingly well-balanced for its stated octane level, with a good core, lovely soil signature, sound framing acids and good length and grip on the quite wide open and tasty finish. To my palate this does not seem to really be fifteen percent octane, as it seems far cooler in profile on both the nose and palate. It is a lovely drink already, but seems to have the balance to age as long as its acids will carry it- perhaps ten to twelve years? Good juice. 2020-2030+. **91.**

**2017 Savennières- Domaine Laffourcade**

The 2017 Savennières from Domaine Laffourcade is a good young wine in the making, offering up a still quite primary bouquet of quince, a touch of fresh pineapple, lanolin, a good base of soil, citrus peel and a whisper of the honeycomb to come with bottle age. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely chalky on the palate, with a good core and cut, zesty acids and a long, closed and still fairly stubbornly adolescent finish. This needs some bottle age to relax and blossom, but I like the backend length and bounce and I suspect it will be a good bottle of Savennières when it starts to stir. But, be patient, because today it is a bit grumpy. 2024-2040. **88+.**

***Vin de France***

**2018 Le Berceau des Fées- Tessa Laroche (Domaine aux Moines)**

The Le Berceau des Fées from Tessa Laroche is made from her youngest chenin blanc vines, which she does not put into any of the estate’s cuvées of Savennières. The wine is fermented with indigenous yeasts in stainless steel and bottled with only a minimal dose of SO<sub>2</sub>. The 2018 version offers up a very pretty nose of pineapple, quince, lovely soil tones, a bit of orange peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and complex, with a good signature of soil, sound acids and lovely length and grip on the succulent finish. Good juice. 2020-2027. **89.**

**2018 Grolleau Gris “le Chant Baron”- Jérôme Choblet**

The 2018 Grolleau Gris from Jérôme Choblet is a very pale salmon color from this pink-skinned grape, though the wine only undergoes five hours of skin contact and is technically still a white wine. The 2018 version comes in at a cool 11.5 percent octane and offers up a pretty nose of white cherries, tangerine, dried flowers, orange peel and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is bright, fullish and complex, with very nice focus and grip, rather gentle acidity and good length on the nicely soil-driven finish. This is drinking very nicely today, but with its fairly low acidity, I would plan to drink it up over the next year or two. It is sealed under a screwcap, but my bottle showed no ill effects and was very tasty immediately upon opening. 2020-2022. **88.**



### ***Anjou Blanc***

#### **2017 Anjou Blanc “les Noëls de Montbenault”- Domaine Richard Leroy**

The 2017 Anjou Blanc “les Noëls de Montbenault” from Richard Leroy is a lovely wine in the making, offering up a pure and complex bouquet of quince, apple, chalky soil tones, white lilies and a nice topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and youthfully structured out of the blocks, with a good core of fruit, fine soil signature, zesty acids and a long, promising, but still pretty primary finish. I have had great results aging this bottling and I suspect the 2017 version is going to be just lovely three to five years down the road. 2023-2045. **91+**.

#### **2017 Anjou Blanc “La Croisée des Chenins” Sec- Domaine Éric Morgat**

Because of the severe frost damage in April in Savennières and Anjou, Monsieur Morgat only made a single, blended cuvée in 2017, of what would normally be his two separate bottlings of Savennières “fides” and his Anjou “Litus”. The wine is deep, complex and nicely soil-driven on the nose, offering up scents of quince, lemon peel, lanolin, chalky soil tones, a bit of wet wool, beeswax and white flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, complex and well-balanced, with good acids and grip, fine focus and a long, youthful and zesty finish. This has turned out quite nicely, given the brutal frost damage in the spring. 2020-2030. **89**.

### **2016 Clos des Quarts Anjou Blanc- Domaine Pascal Laffourcade**

The 2016 Clos des Quarts Anjou Blanc from Pascal Laffourcade is quite concentrated from the frosts in the spring and the attendant tiny crop size. The bouquet offers up scents of quince, lanolin, orange peel and a good base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a completely dry profile, sound acids and good length and grip on the currently closed and adolescent finish. This has plenty of depth and length, but it is pretty shut down right now and could do with a couple of years in the cellar to start to blossom. 2022-2035+. **89.**

### ***Anjou Rouge***

#### **2016 Anjou Rouge- Château Perray Jouannet (Pascal Laffourcade)**

The 2016 Anjou Rouge from Château Perray Jouannet hails from vines planted in the appellation of Coteaux du Layon (which of course is reserved for chenin blanc-based wines). This is almost entirely cabernet franc, with just a small percentage of cabernet sauvignon included in the cuvée. The wine is aged for just under six months in older casks prior to blending and bottling. The 2016 version offers up fine depth and nascent complexity in its bouquet of dark berries, cassis, espresso, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil and a beautiful topnote of balsam bough. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely balanced, with a superb core, some firm, but well-integrated tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, soil-driven and ageworthy finish. This needs a few years to soften up its backend tannins, but all of the constituent components are in place here for an excellent bottle in three or four more years. Great value! 2024-2050. **91.**

### ***Chinon Blanc***

#### **2018 Chinon Blanc “Silice”- Château de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

The 2018 Chinon Blanc “Silice” from Marc Plouzeau is a fine example: ripe, balanced and deep at the core. The bouquet offers up a classy blend of quince, hints of honeycomb, a fine base of soil tones, orange peel and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a very solid core, good framing acids and lovely focus and grip on the complex and wide open finish. This comes in at fourteen percent, but is fresh and light on its feet, with a real mid-palate generosity from the vintage’s personality. Fine juice. 2020-2030. **91.**

### ***Chinon***

#### **2019 Chinon “Rive Gauche”- Château de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

Marc Plouzeau’s Rive Gauche bottling of Chinon is one of his more forward cuvées, as the vineyard is planted on a base of gravel and pebbles along the river. The vines are thirty years of age and, like all of Monsieur Plouzeau’s wines, fermented with indigenous yeasts. The 2019 comes in nicely ripe at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a deep and classic bouquet of black cherries, dark berries, cigar smoke, gravel, a bit of menthol, tree bark and a topnote of juniper berries. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and has excellent depth at the core, with fine soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, complex and very well-balanced finish. This is approachable now, but with the exceptional quality of the 2019 central Loire red wine vintage, this has the depth and stuffing to also age gracefully for the next couple of decades. It’s fine quality augurs very well for some of the other cuvées of Chinon here yet to be released! 2020-2040. **91.**

**2018 Chinon “le Clos de la Bonnelière”- Château de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

The Chinon “le Clos de la Bonnelière” hails from a three hectare parcel of thirty-five year-old vines that surround the Château de la Bonnelière and which are planted on clay and limestone soils. The wine is raised in *demi-muids* for twelve months prior to bottling and the 2018 version offers up a beautiful bouquet of cassis, sweet dark berries, a touch of tree bark, cigar smoke, juniper berries and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and intensely flavored, with a very fine core of fruit, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and beautifully vibrant, complex finish. I would guess that in most vintages, this is a lovely drink right out of the blocks, but the depth and structure of the 2018 vintage has given this a lovely structural chassis to age on, and as tasty as this wine is today, it is going to be even better with five or ten years’ worth of bottle age. 2020-2050+. **92+**.

**2018 Chinon- Domaine Marc Brédif (Baron de Ladoucette)**

I have had some fine bottles of Vouvray over the years from Domaine Marc Brédif, but I had no idea that they also produced Chinon. Their 2018 Chinon is excellent and very classic in personality, offering up a bouquet of cherries, tree bark, a fine base of gravelly soil, a bit of menthol and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and nicely ripe and focused, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, complex and very nicely balanced finish. This has the fine shoulders of the 2018 vintage and deserves at least a few years in the cellar to fully blossom and soften up on the backend, but it is very well-balanced and is not all that hard to drink, even in its youth. First class Chinon! 2023-2055. **91**.

**2018 Chinon “Les Terraces”- Domaine Béatrice et Pascal Lambert (Cravant-lès-Côteaux)**

Béatrice and Pascal Lambert started their fourteen hectare domaine in Cravant-lès-Côteaux in 1997. They started farming organically in the early 2000s, were certified by Ecocert in 2005 and have since moved onto biodynamics. Their Les Terraces bottling is made from vines that range from ten to twenty-five years of age, grown primarily on gravelly soils. The wine is fermented and aged in cement tanks prior to bottling. The 2018 version comes in at 14.1 percent octane in this hot summer and offers up a nicely ripe and youthful bouquet of cassis, sweet dark berries, cigar smoke, gravelly soil tones and a touch of tree bark. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and balance, ripe, firm and well-integrated tannins and impressive length and grip on the promising finish. As this does not see any oak during its *elevage*, it is pretty tightly-knit when first opened right now and needs fifteen minutes in decanter to start to blossom and show its personality. It deserves a few years in the cellar to really get rolling, but has impressive stuffing and fine balance and is going to be an excellent example of Chinon with sufficient bottle age. 2026-2055+. **90+**.

**2017 Chinon “les Cornuelles”- Château de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

Les Cornuelles is one of the best vineyards in the village of Cravant-lès-Coteaux, with a high clay content that produces powerful examples of Chinon. Monsieur Plouzeau has fifty year-old vines in this excellent *lieu à dit*. The 2017 les Cornuelles is a stellar young bottle of Chinon, offering up a nascently complex and very pure blend of cassis, black cherries, a bit of meatiness, graphite, dark soil tones, espresso, cigar smoke and just a whisper of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and soil-driven, with a superb core of fruit, ripe, well-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the young, structured and extremely promising finish. All this excellent wine needs is time in the cellar to blossom! 2027-2060. **93**.

### **2016 Chinon “Vindoux l’Intégrale”- Château de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

The Chinon “Vindoux l’Intégrale” from Château de la Bonnelière hails from the small *lieu à dit* of Vindoux, whose soils are clay and sand and whose vines were planted in 1929! Monsieur Plouzeau ferments this wine in open top casks and ages it for twenty-four months in *demi-muids* prior to bottling. The 2016 Vindoux offers up a deep and youthfully complex bouquet of cassis, dark berries, tree bark, dark chocolate, a bit of game, beautiful soil tones, just a touch of new oak and topnotes of both balsam bough and menthol. On the palate the wine is very deep, full-bodied and perfectly balanced, with a great core of creamy, old vine black fruit, ripe, buried tannins, tangy acids and great focus and grip on the long, complex and absolutely stunning finish. This is a young wine and is a bit reductive when first opened, so if you are tempted to drink it in its youth, decant it thirty minutes first. But, it really deserves to be allowed to blossom fully in the cellar. 2026-2060+. **94+**.

### **2016 Chinon “les Pensées de Pallus”- Domaine de Pallus**

The 2016 Pensées de Pallus bottling from Bertrand Sourdais is a beautiful young bottle of Chinon. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a nascently complex blend of cassis, dark berries, cigar ash, tree bark, gravelly soil tones, cedar and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and still shows a bit of youthful pepperiness, with a good core and soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, promising and vibrant finish. This is too young for current drinking, as it does not have quite the same plush core as the 2015 version to cover up its structural chassis, so tuck this vintage away in the cellar for three to five years and let it soften up properly. It will be very good in due course. 2024-2050. **89+**.

### **2016 Chinon “la Rougerie”- Domaine de Pallus**

The 2016 is the first bottling of Chinon that I have tasted from Domaine de Pallus that includes the name of the *lieu à dit* on it, which in this case is the vineyard of la Rougerie. This is a *terroir* that is all clay soils, which produces the broadest-shouldered and most cellar-worthy examples of Chinon. The Sourdais’ vines were planted in two stages here, with the old vines planted in 1952 and a section replanted in 2007 to a high density pattern. The wine is ninety-five percent destemmed and raised in new Burgundy casks. The 2016 version offers up a superb young nose of black cherries, cassis, cigar smoke, a fine base of dark soil, a dollop of tobacco leaf and a nice framing of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a rock solid core of fruit, superb soil signature and grip, ripe, buried tannins and a long, complex and very classy finish. This needs time in the cellar to really stretch its wings, but it is going to be stunning Chinon when it is truly ready to drink! As I have said before, Bertrand Sourdais’ top bottlings of Chinon are the closest one can get to Clos Rougeard in the appellation! 2026-2060. **94**.

### **2015 Chinon “Les Perruches”- Domaine Béatrice et Pascal Lambert (Cravant-lès-Côteaux)**

The vineyard of Les Perruches has a very stony signature to it, as the clay and flint soils are peppered with stones. The Lamberts do not have particularly old vines here, as the oldest are twenty-five years of age, and the wine is fermented and raised in cement vats prior to bottling. The 2015 Les Perruches is just starting to blossom at five years of age, offering up a fine nose of cassis, black cherries, cigar wrapper, stony soil tones, espresso and cigar ash. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and sappy at the core, with good soil signature and grip, ripe, softening tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex and very well-balanced finish. As this wine is aged in cement during its *elevage*, it is slower to unfold than a comparable wine would be raised in oak, as it has not seen the same micro-oxygenation prior to bottling.

Consequently, the wine is still on the young side today, but it is impressively precise and deep at the core and is aging very gracefully and is already starting to show its potential quite vividly. It is approachable today, albeit, still a bit chewy. 2020-2050+. 92.

#### **2014 Chinon “Les Puys”- Domaine Béatrice et Pascal Lambert (Cravant-lès-Côteaux)**

The Les Puys bottling from Béatrice and Pascal Lambert hails almost entirely from a *lieu à dit* called Les Puys de Rochette in the village of Chinon (soils of clay and limestone), though they do add a couple of other tasty small plots from their holdings in Cravant-lès-Côteaux to the cuvée. This is one wine from the Lamberts that sees a bit of oak during its *elevage*, as it is fermented in a combination of oak vats and cement and then raised in six hundred liter *demi-muids* for fully two years, prior to racking back into tank for six more months of *elevage* prior to bottling, so the 2014 is the current release of this bottling of Chinon. The wine offers up a refined aromatic constellation of black cherries, sweet dark berries, tobacco leaf, a beautiful base of chalky soil tones, gentle notes of smoky oak, a dollop of menthol and a topnote of cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and more suave structurally than the 2015 Les Perruches (due to its sojourn in *demi-muids*), with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature and grip and a long, ripely tannic and very nicely balanced finish. This is good juice that deserves just a few more years of bottle age to fully blossom. 2024-2050+. 92.



### ***Saumur Blanc***

#### **2010 Saumur Blanc “Brézé”- Domaine Guiberteau (served from jeroboam)**

The 2010 Saumur Blanc “Brézé” from Domaine Guiberteau is still a fairly young wine out of such a large format, but it has all of the constituent components in place for superb drinking for many decades and is starting to show some generosity on the palate and lovely development on the nose. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of lime peel, quince, chalky soil tones, menthol, beeswax and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and still nicely racy at age ten, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and grip and a long, complex and vibrant finish. This is still just a tad reductive when first poured (at least out of jeroboam), and benefits nicely from some aeration. Fine juice. 2020-2040+. **92+**.

### ***Bourgueil et St. Nicolas de Bourgueil***

#### **2018 Antidote Rouge- Domaine Bertrand Galbrun (Vin de France)**

Bertrand Galbrun is based in Bourgueil, so even though this wine is officially a *Vin de France* appellation, I have listed it here. His vineyards are certified biodynamic by Demeter and though this is an entry level wine from him, the fruit is harvested by hand, foot-trodden, fermented with indigenous yeasts and aged in concrete vats prior to bottling without added SO<sub>2</sub>. The 2018 Antidote Rouge from Monsieur Galbrun is composed of a blend of sixty percent grolleau and forty percent cabernet franc and offers up a bright and inviting nose of red and black cherries, fresh thyme, a nice base of soil, a hint of tree bark and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and nicely light on its feet, with good intensity of flavor, just a bit of backend tannin and sneaky length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This comes in just a whisper over twelve percent octane in 2018 and is a delightful wine and a good value. 2020-2028. **88**.

#### **2018 Bourgueil “Chatrois”- Domaine Bertrand Galbrun**

The 2018 Bourgueil “Chatrois” from Bertrand Galbrun is a lovely example of the vintage. Like all of Monsieur Galbrun’s vineyards, these are farmed biodynamically and certified by Demeter. The vines were planted in 1992, so they are just starting to really come into their own now, and Bertrand foot trods the grapes, uses only indigenous yeasts and raises the wine in concrete prior to bottling. The 2018 Chatrois is nicely ripe at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a deep and complex bouquet of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, a touch of tree bark, dark soil tones and a bit of French roast in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with lovely detail and balance, fine-grained tannins and a long, nascently complex and classic finish. This is very good Bourgueil in the making, and though it is quite approachable already, I would be inclined to tuck it away in the cellar for a handful of years and really let it blossom properly. 2020-2040. **90+**.

### ***Vouvray***

#### **2019 Vouvray “Le Haut Lieu” Sec- Domaine Huët**

Domaine Huët has only produced four cuvées in 2019, as the vintage has produced such perfect raw materials for making Sec that Cellar Master Jean-Bernard Bartholomé decided to focus almost exclusively on this level, with only a little bit of Demi-Sec produced out of the Le Mont vineyard. This is also the final vintage at the domaine for Monsieur Bartholomé, as he is retiring. The 2019 Le Haut Lieu Sec comes in at an even thirteen percent octane, which coupled to excellent acidity, is likely to make this wine last a hundred years. The beautiful pure and concentrated nose offers up scents of lemon, quince, a hint of pear, complex, chalky soil tones,



lanolin and white lilies. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and very precise, with a full-bodied format, a rock solid core, bracing acids and stunning length and grip on the complex and electric finish. I have to imagine that this will drink well for a few years and then close down with a vengeance for a decade or so, after which it will drink for the next eight or nine decades! 2020-2120. **95.**

**2019 Vouvray “Le Mont” Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 2019 Le Mont Sec from Domaine Huët is a touch riper than the Le Haut Lieu bottling, coming in at 13.5 percent, but still utterly classical in all respects. The beautifully refined and still quite youthful nose jumps from the glass in a blend of quince, green apple, beeswax, a kaleidoscopic bath of limestone minerality, a touch of orange peel, lanolin and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and utterly seamless, with again, stunning mid-palate depth and mineral drive, brisk acids and a very long, nascently complex and laser-like finish. This makes the youthfully reserved Le Haut Lieu Sec seem like a flamboyant and wide open wine, this is so buttoned up right now behind its perfect structural chassis. That said, I do not think I have ever tasted a young vintage of Le Mont Sec from Domaine Huët that possessed more potential, so just tuck it away for a decade and then let the fireworks begin! 2030-2120. **95+.**

**2019 Vouvray “Clos du Bourg” Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 2019 Clos du Bourg Sec comes in at the same octane as the Le Mont and is every bit as pure, precise and chiseled in stone as that wine. The bouquet offers up an utterly refined constellation of quince, pear, limestone minerality, a nice youthful touch of chalk dust, floral tones that are mostly lilies and a shading of lavender, bee pollen, lanolin and a touch of lemongrass in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, beautifully balanced and rock solid at the core, with superb mineral undertow, electric acidity, laser-like focus and a very, very long, nascently complex and rapier-like finish. This seems structurally more like the Le Haut Lieu Sec this year and is likely to provide a couple of years’ worth window of drinkability before it closes down for hibernation. It is stellar juice in the making. 2020-2120. **95+.**

**2019 Vouvray “Le Mont” Demi-Sec- Domaine Huët**

The sole 2019 Demi-Sec bottling from Domaine Huët hails from the Le Mont vineyard this year. The wine is also outstanding, offering up a very deep and pure bouquet of sweet quince, pear, chalky minerality, lanolin, bee pollen and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and basking in its purity and mineral drive, with a lovely core of fruit, great soil signature, bright acids and superb length and grip on the nascently complex and very promising finish. The extra residual sweetness here seems to simply buffer the youthful spine of acidity more than in the Le Mont Sec out of the blocks, but is really rather gobbled up by the bottomless expression of minerality that defines this wine. This is every bit as superb as the Le Mont Sec in 2019! 2030-2120. **95.**

**2018 Vouvray “Cuvée de Silex” Sec- Domaine des Aubisières (Bernard Fouquet)**

The 2018 Vouvray “Cuvée de Silex” from Bernard Fouquet is a Sec bottling, though this information is not on the front or back labels. It is also sealed under a screwcap, which I wish would be replaced by a natural cork by Monsieur Fouquet, but that said, I have yet to see any real reduction issues with this bottling when it is young. The 2018 version is a fine example of the vintage, offering up a deep and youthful nose of quince, a touch of pineapple, flinty soil tones, lanolin and white flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, ripe and full-bodied, with

lovely focus and balance, an excellent core of fruit and soil signature, good, solid acids (2018 is not a particularly high acid vintage) and impressive length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is first class Vouvray, crafted from fifty to sixty year-old chenin vines, and which, like all top examples, will probably drink pretty well for a year or two and then close down until its tenth birthday, when the real fireworks will begin. 2020-2050+. **92.**

**2018 Vouvray “les Girardières” Demi-Sec- Domaine des Aubisières (Bernard Fouquet)**

The 2018 les Girardières from Monsieur Fouquet is bottled as a Demi-Sec (maybe it is in most vintages?), but it does not state so on either the front or back labels. The wine is made from a parcel of sixty-plus year-old chenin vines on a combination of clay and flint soils. The wine is sealed under screwcap, but was nonetheless singing when I opened it, revealing scents of quince, apple, a beautiful base of flinty soil tones, spring flowers, a touch of lanolin and a lovely topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, focused and full-bodied, with a superb core of fruit, bright, zesty acids and excellent balance and grip on the long, complex and very classy finish. A superb bottle of Demi-Sec (that really deserves a natural cork Monsieur Fouquet!). 2020-2050+. **93.**



**2018 Vouvray “le Plan de Jean” Moelleux- Domaine des Aubisières (Bernard Fouquet)**

The *lieu à dit* of le Plan de Jean is on clay-limestone soils, rather than the flinty soils of the vineyards that compose the Cuvée Silex, and the 2018 version of this wine comes in as a Moelleux (though again not on the labels). The wine offers up a beautiful, youthful bouquet of

sweet quince, apple, incipient honeycomb, chalky soil tones, white lilies, lanolin and a hint of lavender in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and far more open today than the nose suggests, with beautiful focus and grip, a great core and a very, very long, pure and promising finish. This carries eighty grams per liter of residual sugar and 6.4 grams per liter of tartaric acid, so it has plenty of bounce and backend lift, but will offer a creamy palate texture as it ages. It has no botrytis that I can detect and may age like some of the great 1989s. This is really a beautiful bottle of Moelleux in the making. 2027-2065. **94.**

**2018 Vouvray “Classic”- Domaine Marc Brédif (Baron de Ladoucette)**

The 2018 Vouvray “Classic” from Domaine Marc Brédif seems to fall between a Sec and a Demi-Sec bottling in this vintage, though there is no mention of this on either the front or back labels. The wine is quite good, offering up a bright bouquet of lemon, quince, chalky soil elements, a bit of beeswax and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and nicely light on its feet for a 2018, with a fine core of fruit, zesty acids and excellent balance and grip on the long and complex finish. I am not sure if this bottle will close down for a bit of hibernation down the road, but it is drinking splendidly well out of the blocks! 2020-2045. **92.**

**2016 Vouvray “le Marigny” Sec- Domaine des Aubisières (Bernard Fouquet)**

The 2016 Vouvray “le Marigny” Sec from Monsieur Fouquet is a bit different than the two cuvées of his from 2018 reviewed above, for both of those wines were fermented and aged in stainless steel, but this 2016 Sec was fermented and raised in four hundred liter, “one wine” casks. Like the le Plan de Jean vineyard, le Marigny is a classic Vouvray *terroir* of chalk and clay. The 2016 le Marigny has not closed down on the nose (or is already reopening) and offers up a superb blend of quince, apple, hints of the *mirabelle* to come with further bottle age, chalky soil tones, lanolin, orange peel and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is focused, full-bodied and complex, with excellent depth at the core, lovely soil signature and a long, well-balanced finish. 2016 was a frost vintage and the wine is a touch linear as a result, without the customary backend lift of Monsieur Fouquet’s wines in a classic vintage and without the same typically zesty girdle of acidity to carry the wine for decades. But, the flip side is that it is drinking now with the depth and complexity of a ten year-old bottle of Vouvray Sec, and so, though it will not make really old bones, one does not have to wait another half dozen years to really enjoy the wine with the complexity of maturity, as it already has that in spades! Not a classic bottle, but a very good wine that is drinking nicely today and is a resounding success for a challenging vintage. 2020-2030. **90.**

**2002 Vouvray “Le Mont” Demi-Sec- Domaine Huët**

I had not opened a bottle of the 2002 Le Mont Demi-Sec since 2013 and really had no idea how this wine would be holding up. As readers may recall, Noël Pinguet experimented with the 2002s here at the Demi-Sec level and bottled them with quite a bit lower SO<sub>2</sub> levels that he customarily utilized. It was done for a good cause, but it has occasioned the 2002 Demi-Sec bottlings to age far faster than customary and they are not destined to be the typical seven or eight decade wines of other top flight years. The color on the ’02 Le Mont Demi is now flecked with gold, but the nose remains beautifully deep and complex, offering up a maturing bouquet of quince, candied lemon, barley sugar, chalky soil tones, orange peel, a bit of leather and a topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and still moderately sweet, with a lovely core and soil signature, good acids and excellent length and grip on the complex

and well-balanced finish. Really, the only thing here that is not correct is that it has the aromatic and flavor spectrums a forty year-old example of Domaine Huët Demi-Sec, rather than one that is only eighteen years of age. It is not the breathtakingly brilliant Demi-Sec it was in its first decade of life, but it is holding up pretty well under the circumstances. That said, it has not gotten a whole lot older structurally since I last drank it in 2013 and is still a very enjoyable wine and seems likely to be able to maintain at this point in its evolution for quite some time, rather than starting accelerate into decline. 2020-2040+? **93.**

**2002 Vouvray “Clos du Bourg” Demi-Sec- Domaine Huët**

It had been even a bit longer since I last opened a bottle of the 2002 Vouvray “Clos du Bourg” Demi-Sec from Domaine Huët, as I last drank this wine back in 2011. Like the Le Mont Demi-Sec, it too is also more advanced than it should be, due to the SO2 experiment, but it too is going to take its time in heading into that long goodnight and is still a very lovely bottle for current drinking. The color here is similar to the 2002 Le Mont Demi-Sec and the bouquet seems at about the same point of evolution, but it is deeper and a bit more powerful in profile than the Le Mont, offering up notes of apricot, sweet quince, rhubarb, beautiful, chalky minerality, a hint of leather, honeycomb, orange peel and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine mineral drive and focus, good acids and a long, complex and really still surprisingly good finish. This too has lost some of the sparkle it showed in its absolutely brilliant youth, but the lower sulfur regimen has not been able to take all of the magic away! 2020-2040+? **93.**

***Touraine Blanc et Rouge***

**2019 Touraine Sauvignon Blanc “les Devants”- Domaine de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

Marc Plouzeau’s 2019 Touraine Sauvignon Blanc is made from a parcel of thirty-plus year-old vines. The wine is very high quality, with the nose jumping from the glass in a vibrant blend of gooseberry, lime, cut grass, chalky soil tones and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and rock solid at the core, with great cut and grip, laser-like focus and superb mineral drive on the very long, complex and snappy finish. This is the finest and most serious example of Touraine Sauvignon Blanc I have ever tasted, which is no doubt a testament to the superb quality of both the 2019 vintage and the serious skills in the cellar of Monsieur Plouzeau! Think of this as the quality equivalent of a top flight bottling of Chavignol Sancerre in a great vintage, which will be even better with a year or two of bottle age! 2020-2030+. **93.**

**2018 Touraine Sauvignon Blanc- Domaine de la Rochette (Famille Leclair)**

The 2018 Sauvignon Blanc from the Leclair family is really very pretty and yet another example of just how good these bottlings from the Touraine have turned out in the 2018 vintage. The wine offers up a ripe and vibrant nose of gooseberry, lime, fresh-cut grass, chalky soil tones and white flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, fullish and loaded with fruit and personality, with sound acids, good focus and grip and a long, succulent and very nicely balanced finish. This is quite the bargain! 2020-2024. **89.**

**2018 Sauvignon Blanc “Moulin des Vrillères”- Kévin et Christian Lauverjat (Sury)**

The Sauvignon Blanc “Moulin des Vrillères” from Kévin and Christian Lauverjat is from a parcel of thirty year-old vines planted by Christian Lauverjat’s father, which lie just outside of the official limits of the Sancerre appellation, so this is not really a Touraine Sauvignon Blanc,

but it seemed like the right spot to list it in the article, as it is priced similarly. The soils here are very similar to Sancerre, clay and limestone with plenty of *terres blanches* white stones. The 2018 offers up a lovely bouquet of gooseberry, green apple, chalky soil, cut grass and lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and shows off an excellent core of fruit, with plenty of chalky soil tones, lovely focus and grip and a long, complex and succulent finish. This is not as elegant as the family's various Sancerre bottlings, but it is better than a lot of the commercial Sancerre out there on the market, packs plenty of personality and is a very good value. 2020-2024. **88.**

**2017 Touraine Chenonceaux Sauvignon Blanc- Domaine de la Rochette (Famille Leclair)**

This is the first wine I have tasted from the appellation of Chenonceaux, named for the famous château and home to the steepest hillside vineyards in this section of the Loire. Vincent Leclair has made a lovely wine here in 2017, with the nose wafting from the glass in a deep and complex blend of gooseberry, green apple, a fine base of chalky soil, damp grass and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a good core of fruit, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the very nicely balanced finish. This is fully mature now, wide open and succulent. 2020-2024. **89.**

**2015 Ante Phylloxera “Franc de Pied”- Domaine de Maulevrier (Marc Plouzeau)**

As I have mentioned before, while the Ante Phylloxera “Franc de Pied” bottling from Marc Plouzeau is “officially” only Touraine Rouge AOC status, the vineyard of Clos de Maulevrier lies right on the Chinon border and is for all intents and purposes, this is really a Chinon. And what a Chinon! This is a tiny parcel of truly ancient cabernet franc, as there are only thirty *ares* planted here on their original French roots, with the oldest vines more than two hundred years-old! It has been about eighteen months since I last tasted the 2015 Ante Phylloxera bottling from Marc Plouzeau and the wine gets better and better as it blossoms with a bit of bottle age. The bouquet offers up a superb blend of dark berries, sweet cassis, cigar smoke, a fine base of dark soil tones, tree bark and a nice touch of Cheval Blanc-like menthol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and has plenty of old vine depth at the core, with fine mineral drive, ripe, seamless tannins and great length and grip on the very complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is magical wine. 2023-2060. **94+.**

***Cheverny Blanc and Coeur Cheverny***

**2018 Cheverny Blanc- Domaine l'Epicourchois (Luc Percher)**

Luc Percher's Cheverny Blanc is a classic fifty-fifty blend of chenin blanc and sauvignon blanc. The 2018 version is a beautiful wine, offering up a refined and complex bouquet of quince, a touch of tangerine, lime peel, chalky soil tones and a potpourri of citrus blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent soil signature, bright acids and a very long, well-balanced and zesty finish that closes with a note of beeswax. A lovely wine that is still youthful and will be even better with a few years in the cellar. 2020-2030. **90+.**

**2018 Coeur Cheverny- Domaine l'Epicourchois (Luc Percher)**

The 2018 Coeur Cheverny from Domaine l'Epicourchois is made from extremely old Romarantin vines, as this vineyard is now more than one hundred and ten years of age! The 2018 is exceptional, delivering a youthful aromatic constellation of lemon, a touch of pineapple, lovely minerality, citrus peel, dried flowers and the faintest hint of the beeswax to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and youthful, with fine purity at

the core, very good backend mineral drive and a long, zesty and nascently complex finish. This is still a young wine and is a touch reductive when first opened, so if you wish to drink it now, give it fifteen minutes of air to stretch its wings. It is fine juice. 2020-2035+. **92.**

**2017 Sassayen Blanc- Domaine l'Epicourchois (Luc Percher)**

The 2017 Sassayen Blanc from Luc Percher is composed entirely of sauvignon blanc. It is fermented with indigenous yeasts and spends five months of its *elevage* on its fine lees. The 2017 is fairly ripe, coming in at fourteen percent octane and offering up a very bright and pretty nose of pineapple, lemon, a fine base of soil, a gentle touch of grassiness and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is vibrant, full-bodied and quite plush at the core, with fine focus and grip, sound acids and a long, wide open and complex finish. This is a good example of a riper sauvignon blanc, with plenty of personality, but which probably will be best drunk over the next few years. 2020-2023. **88.**

***Coteaux du Loir***

**2017 L'Orée de la Berterrie- Domaine de la Roche Bleue (Sébastien Cornille)**

The 2017 L'Orée de la Berterrie from Sébastien Cornille is composed entirely of chenin blanc, which Monsieur Cornille raises in stainless steel (unlike his Jasnières bottlings which are raised in older casks). The wine offers up a deep and complex nose of quince, apple, honeycomb, a fine base of soil that hints at chalkiness and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with plenty of stuffing in the mid-palate, good acidity and grip and a long, focused and nascently complex finish. Stylistically, this reminds me of a low octane version of Savennières (this is twelve percent octane), with fine soil signature and plenty of room to grow with bottle age. It is currently in that fairly closed, dusty stage of chenin adolescence and will blossom with a few more years bottle age. It is a superb value. 2022-2035. **89.**

**2017 La Guinguette- Domaine de la Roche Bleue (Sébastien Cornille)**

The La Guinguette cuvée from Domaine de la Roche Bleue is Monsieur Cornille's blend of Pinot d'Aunis, Gamay and Cabernet Franc, which he crafts for early accessibility. The 2017 is composed of a blend of sixty-five percent Pinot d'Aunis, twenty-five percent Gamay and ten percent Cabernet Franc, with the first varietal raised in older casks and the other two in stainless steel prior to *assemblage*. The 2017 La Guinguette offers up a bright and serious bouquet that belies its simple aspirations, jumping from the glass in a mix of red berries, pomegranate, currant leaf, a bit of pepper, a fine base of soil tones, a bit of cinnamon (from the whole clusters) and a gentle topnote of bonfire. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and complex, with a good core, fine transparency and grip, modest tannins and a long, tangy finish. Given the frosts of 2017, I do not know if the stuffing here is typical of this bottling, but I really like it! I am already looking forward to seeing what this wine can do in top flight vintages like 2018 and 2019! 2020-2027. **89.**

***Coteaux de Giennois Blanc et Rouge***

**2018 Coteaux de Giennois Blanc- Domaine Clément et Florian Berthier**

The Coteaux de Giennois Blanc from Clément and Florian Berthier is composed entirely of sauvignon blanc from vineyards that sit just up above the appellation of Pouilly-Fumé. The 2018 version shows a lovely foundation of limestone minerality on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up scents of gooseberry, lime peel, chalky minerality, damp grass and

a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is crisp, ripe and full-bodied, with a very good core of fruit, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and very nicely balanced finish. This is really, really good in 2018! 2020-2024. **89.**

**2018 Coteaux de Giennois Blanc “Terre de Silex”- Domaine Clément et Florian Berthier**

The Berthier brothers’ Terre de Silex bottling hails from a parcel of twenty year-old sauvignon blanc vines that are planted on very flinty soils- just like Pouilly-Fumé, and which gives this wine its unique character. Their 2018 version is a beautiful synthesis of the ripe fruit of the vintage and this flinty minerality, offering up a fine bouquet of gooseberry, lime, fresh-cut grass, white flowers and a beautiful base of minerality. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and inviting, with a lovely core of fruit, fine soil signature and grip and a long, zesty and complex finish. This sows the good framing acids of 2018 and will not make old bones, but for drinking over the next three or four years, for all intents and purposes, this is a lovely example of Pouilly-Fumé! 2020-2024. **90.**

**2018 Coteaux de Giennois Rouge Pinot Noir- Domaine Clément et Florian Berthier**

The 2018 Pinot Noir from Clément and Florian Berthier is really a lovely bottle in the making, with the ripe and complex nose offering up scents of red and black cherries, chalky soil tones, woodsmoke, gamebird, espresso and a touch of fresh thyme in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and moderately tannic, with an excellent core, fine limestone soil signature, lovely balance and grip and a long, complex finish. The 2018 vintage has really given this bottling wings and it is as fine as almost any Sancerre rouge I have had in recent times and is a flat out steal! It will need a few years in the cellar for the tannins to soften up, but this is going to be excellent wine! 2024-2040. **90+.**

***Menetou-Salon***

**2017 Menetou-Salon “les Blanchais”- Domaine Pellé**

The Pellé family’s bottling from the vineyard of les Blanchais is raised in a combination of seventy percent older *foudres* and four hundred liter barrels and thirty percent stainless steel tanks. This was the first single vineyard cuvée bottled on its own by the domaine, back in the decade of the 1980s, and I poured this wine by the glass back in my sommelier days. The 2017 les Blanchais is excellent, offering up a precise and complex bouquet of lemon, pink grapefruit, a touch of gooseberry, limestone minerality, a dollop of grassiness and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and mineral-driven, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a long, vibrant and complex finish. Good juice (as always). 2020-2035. **92.**

**2017 Menetou-Salon- Domaine Karine Lauverjat**

The 2017 Menetou-Salon from Karine Lauverjat is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a complex and quite minerally-defined bouquet of gooseberry, lime peel, chalky minerality, white flowers and just a dollop of fresh-cut grass. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and zesty, with a lovely core, great mineral drive and cut, fine balance and a long, complex and vibrant finish. I really like the structural tension of this wine, with the fruit, minerality and acidity all nicely taut and precise. 2020-2025. **91.**



### ***Pouilly-Fumé and Friends***

#### **2019 Pouilly-sur-Loire Chasselas “la Centenaire”- Domaine Serge Dagueneau et Filles**

Though the label of the Dagueneau family’s very rare Chasselas bottling states that the vines here are one hundred and ten years of age, they are actually now one hundred and fifteen in 2019! The wine is really lovely in this vintage, as these very old vines have sailed through the drought conditions of 2019 and ripened up beautifully, offering a complex nose of breadfruit, a complex base of soil tones, dried flowers, a nice touch of nuttiness and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and succulent at the core, with good soil signature, sound framing acids and lovely length and grip on the vibrant finish. Chasselas never tasted so good! 2020-2027. **90.**

#### **2017 Pouilly-sur-Loire Chasselas “la Centenaire”- Domaine Serge Dagueneau et Filles**

So, how does the Dagueneau family’s very, very old Chasselas age? The 2017 version is really drinking beautifully right now, offering up lovely secondary layers in its bouquet of apple, breadfruit, straw, salty minerality, a hint of beeswax, incipient notes of candied lemon peel and upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with still good framing acids, a fine core and plenty of length and grip on the nicely balanced and vibrant finish. Good juice that is still cruising along nicely. 2020-2025. **89.**

#### **2019 Pouilly-Fumé- Domaine Karine Lauverjat (Sury-en-Vaux)**

It shows how far behind I got on my samples, as I have notes in this report on both the 2019 and the 2018 Pouilly-Fumé bottlings from the Lauverjat family. The 2019 version is bright, expressive and quite classical in composition on the nose, wafting from the glass in a mix of lime, green apple, fresh-mown grass, a lovely base of flinty soil tones and a nice topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is ripe, full-bodied, focused and zesty, with a fine core, good soil signature and a long, youthful and succulent finish. 2019 was another hot summer in France and this wine has nice broad shoulders and a wide open personality as a result. Good juice. 2020-2025. **90.**

#### **2018 Pouilly-Fumé- Domaine de Ladoucette**

The 2018 Pouilly-Fumé from Domaine de Ladoucette is really a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a fine combination of ripe, pristine fruit and lovely soil signature. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a classy blend of lime, green apple, flinty soil tones, white flowers, fresh-cut grass and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core, good mineral drive, fine balance and grip and a long, zesty and very refined finish. This is really lovely Pouilly-Fumé. 2020-2026. **92.**

#### **2018 Pouilly-Fumé- Domaine Karine Lauverjat (Sury-en-Vaux)**

The 2018 Pouilly-Fumé from Domaine Karine Lauverjat is a fine example of the vintage. It is bright, zesty and tightly-knit today, offering up a classic bouquet of green apple, gooseberry, flinty soil tones, cut grass and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is vibrant, fullish and nicely mineral in personality, with a good, but not great core, zesty acids and fine focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This should open up a bit more in the mid-palate with a bit more bottle age. Good juice. 2020-2025. **90.**

#### **2017 Pouilly-Fumé “Baron de L”- Domaine de Ladoucette**

The 2017 Baron de L bottling of Pouilly-Fumé from Domaine de Ladoucette is exceptional in quality. This is a selection made by the Ladoucette team of the finest production

in the vineyard and in the cellar and only produced in very high quality vintages. The 2017 version is stellar, offering up great precision and vibrancy in the bouquet of green apple, lime, fresh-cut grass, very complex, flinty minerality, orange peel and a gentle suggestion of botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with great focus and cut, bright, zesty acids, superb soil signature and a long, complex and utterly refined and balanced finish. This is truly outstanding Pouilly-Fumé that will clearly age for ten to fifteen years and will be an even better drink with a handful of years in the cellar to further stretch its wings. 2020-2035. **94.**



### ***Sancerre Blanc***

#### **2019 Sancerre “Terroir Silex”- Domaine Gérard Fiou (Saint-Satur)**

The Sancerre “Terroir Silex” from Monsieur Fiou is a lovely wine made from sixty-four year-old vines on the hillsides of Saint-Satur. This is on the eastern end of the Sancerre appellation and unique in having a high percentage of flint in the soils here, like Pouilly-Fumé on the other side of the river. The 2019 bottling is young and lovely, jumping from the glass in a mix of gooseberry, tangerine, flinty minerality, cut grass and citrus blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and intensely flavored, with an excellent core, fine mineral signature, zesty acids and a long, complex and very nicely balanced finish. Fine juice. 2020-2027. **92.**

### **2019 Sancerre- Domaine Karine Lauverjat (Sury-en-Vaux)**

The regular bottling of Sancerre from the Lauverjat family is graced by a label with Karine Lauverjat's name on it. The wine hails from thirty year-old vines and is fermented and raised in stainless steel. The 2019 offers up a fine bouquet of lime, gooseberry, limestone minerality, newly-mowed grass, white flowers and a bit of citrus oil in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, bright acids and fine backend mineral drive on the long and youthful finish. The intensity of flavor of the 2019 vintage in Sancerre is clearly on display here, and though this is quite drinkable already, it is still pretty tightly-wound structurally and could do with six months' worth of additional bottle age. It is a fine bottle in the making. 2020-2027. **90.**

### **2019 Sancerre "Perle Blanche"- Domaine Kevin et Christian Lauverjat (Sury-en-Vaux)**

The Sancerre "Perle Blanche" from Kevin and Christian Lauverjat is the family's Vieilles Vignes bottling, as this hails from a parcel of fifty-five year-old vines. It is fermented and raised in stainless steel. The 2019 version is very deep and precise on the nose, offering up scents of lime, green apple, gorgeous limestone minerality, citrus peel, gentle grassiness and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and still fairly tightly-knit, with a rock solid core, excellent mineral drive and lovely cut and grip on the long and complex finish. This has a racier structural chassis than the very good, but more wide open 2018 version and is an outstanding bottle of Sancerre. 2020-2030. **92.**

### **2019 Sancerre- Domaine Yves Martin (Chavignol)**

Pierre Martin is making superb wines right now and he is one of the under the radar, top producers in the village of Chavignol (the Vosne-Romanée of Sancerre). Monsieur Martin ferments his wine with indigenous yeasts in stainless steel tanks. The 2019 version is excellent, exuding the blade of Kimmeridgian limestone minerality that Chavignol is rightly famous for, with a bouquet of lime, green apple, very complex minerality, gentle botanicals and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with superb soil signature, bright, snappy acids and excellent balance and grip on the long and complex finish. I would love to see Monsieur Martin try fermenting and aging his wine in older *foudre* like the François Cotat or Anne Vatan, as the depth of fruit here is every bit as good as those superstars' wines, but the texture is different, with this wine having been raised in stainless steel. In any case, this is first class Sancerre and very much emblematic of Chavignol *terroir*. 2020-2030. **92+.**

### **2019 Sancerre "Cuvée les Croûtes"- Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy (Maimbray)**

The Cuvée les Croûtes from the Reverdy family is made from two different parcels of vines, with both planted on pure *terres blanches* soils. The wine is fermented and aged in stainless steel and the 2019 version offers up a bright and vibrant bouquet of gooseberry, fresh lime, a hint of orange peel, damp grass, white flowers and a beautiful foundation of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and really concentrated at the core from the small berries of the vintage, with superb mineral drive, racy acids and laser-like focus on the very long and snappy finish. This is a dynamite bottle of Sancerre in the making, but it is young today and really could do with at least six months to relax a bit structurally. It is going to prove to be quite long-lived! 2020-2030+. **92.**

### **2018 Sancerre "Vieilles Vignes sur Silex"- Clément et Florian Berthier (Sainte Gemme)**

The 2018 Sancerre "Vieilles Vignes sur Silex" from Clément and Florian Berthier is produced from forty year-old vines that are planted on flinty soils (as the name suggests) that are

much more common in Pouilly-Fumé than they are in the appellation of Sancerre. The wine offers up a bright and complex bouquet of lime, gooseberry, a touch of grassiness, citrus blossoms and a lovely base of flinty soil tones. On the palate the wine is bright, zesty and full-bodied, with a fine core of fruit, good soil signature, bouncy acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This is really lovely. 2020-2028. **91.**

**2018 Sancerre “la Maison d’Anaïs”- Domaine A. et A. Chaumeau (Bué)**

The 2018 Sancerre “la Maison d’Anaïs” from Domaine Chaumeau is a very pretty example of the vintage, offering up a vibrant bouquet of gooseberry, fresh-squeezed lime, a beautiful base of Bué’s chalky limestone soil, cut grass and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and quite deep at the core, with bright acids, good focus and grip and a long, ripe and still bright and zesty finish. This has the deep, ripe fruit of the vintage, but better than average acids for 2018, which gives the wine fine lift on the backend. This is a very good bottle of Sancerre. 2020-2025. **91.**

**2018 Sancerre “les Monts Damnés”- Domaine Anthony et David Girard (Menetou-Ratel)**

The 2018 Sancerre “les Monts Damnés” from Anthony and David Girard is an excellent young wine, with the profound base of minerality of this great *terroir* front and center on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a youthful blend of fresh lime, gooseberry, complex limestone minerality, lovely botanicals, citrus peel and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and mineral-driven, with a superb core of fruit, a very good girdle of acidity for the vintage, lovely focus and grip and a long, pure and nascently complex finish. As the acids here are not snappy, the wine can already be drunk with great pleasure, but there are many more layers of complexity to unfold here with a few years in the cellar. First class Monts Damnés! 2020-2035. **92+.**

**2018 Sancerre- Comte Lafond (Ladoucette- Pouilly-sur-Loire)**

Patrick de Ladoucette sources the grapes for this bottling from the villages of Bué, Chadoux, Chavignol and Verdigny, with the vineyards ranging from twenty-five to thirty-five years of age. It is fermented and raised entirely in stainless steel. The 2018 Comte Lafond Sancerre is a very refined and fairly powerful example of the vintage, offering up a complex bouquet of gooseberry, lime zest, a touch of clementine, complex limestone soil tones, fresh-cut grass and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with superb acids and grip, fine backend mineral drive and a long, complex and very well-balanced finish. This is a really fine bottle of Sancerre that should age very gracefully. 2020-2030+. **92.**

**2018 Sancerre “la Poussie”- Domaine de la Poussie (Ladoucette- Pouilly-sur-Loire)**

The vineyard of la Poussie is one of the top vineyards in the appellation, as this steep, amphitheater of vines just outside of the village of Sancerre has nearly one hundred and eighty degrees of exposition and a fine soil base of chalk and limestone. The domaine ferments and ages this bottling in stainless steel tanks and the 2018 version is really lovely, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a ripe and expressive blend of gooseberry, lemon, a hint of tangerine, complex limestone minerality, grassy overtones and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and has plenty of perfectly ripe fruit at the core, with good soil signature, fine focus and grip, good framing acids and a long, complex and wide open finish. This is very good Sancerre that is drinking extremely well right out of the blocks. 2020-2026. **91.**

**2018 Sancerre “Perle Blanche”- Domaine Kevin et Christian Lauverjat (Sury-en-Vaux)**

The 2018 Perle Blanche bottling from the Lauverjat family offers up a bright and classic bouquet of gooseberry, lime, chalky soil tones, fresh-cut grass, orange zest and white flowers.

On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and vibrant, with lovely, perfectly ripe fruit, a fine core, very good soil signature and a long, zesty and complex finish. This is very typical of the 2018s in Sancerre, with sound framing acidity that keeps the wine light on its feet today, but which will probably be best drunk over the next few years. 2020-2023. **91.**

**2018 Sancerre- Domaine Yves Martin (Chavignol)**

The 2018 Sancerre bottling from Pierre Martin is a quite classic and mineral-defined example of Chavignol sauvignon blanc, offering up a complex and very precise bouquet of green apple, fresh lime, a very complex foundation of Kimmeridgian limestone, lovely botanicals, citrus peel and a hint of mint in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and absolutely rock solid at the core, with excellent backend mineral drive, lovely balance and grip and a long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. This is first class Sancerre! 2020-2035. **92+.**

**2018 Sancerre “Florès”- Domaine Vincent Pinard (Bué)**

Domaine Vincent Pinard in Bué is now run by Vincent’s children, Florent and Clémentine Pinard, and their 2018 Sancerre “Florès” is a lovely example of the vintage. The fruit for this cuvée hails from vines planted between 1982 and 1987 on pure *terres blanches*, so they are reaching a very good age now and the Pinards ferment this bottling half in stainless steel and half in cask for added depth and complexity. The 2018 version offers up a bright and classic nose of gooseberry, lime, fresh-cut grass, a lovely base of chalky soil tones and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is ripe, full-bodied and nicely soil-driven, with a plump core of vibrant fruit, sound framing acids and a long, complex and nicely balanced finish. Like many 2018 Sancerre, this will probably not make old bones, but it will be very tasty during its prime. 2020-2025. **89.**

**2018 Sancerre “les Comtesses”- Domaine Paul Thomas (Chavignol)**

Raphaël Thomas now runs the family domaine in Chavignol, having taken over after his father Paul passed away suddenly back in 2000. His les Comtesses bottling is made from twenty-five year-old vines and fermented and raised in stainless steel, with an extended period of aging on its fine lees to add more complexity. The 2018 Comtesses is deep and beautifully inflected with minerality on the nose, wafting from the glass in a mix of lime, green apple, complex Kimmeridgian minerality, gentle botanicals and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and still youthful, with a fine core of fruit, excellent transparency and grip, good acids and a long, complex and promising finish. This is fairly primary in personality today, though already quite tasty, but it will have another layer of complexity emerge with a year or two of bottle age. A fine example. 2020-2030. **91+.**

**2017 Sancerre “Clos de Beaujeu”- Domaine Yves Martin (Chavignol)**

The 2017 Sancerre “Clos de Beaujeu” from Pierre Martin is made from younger vines, but as this is one of the very finest *terroirs* in Chavignol, the soil is already giving the wine a sense of gravitas that is rare with young vines. The 2017 version jumps from the glass in a superb aromatic blend of gooseberry, lime, citrus oil, a beautifully complex base of limestone minerality, damp grass and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core, stellar soil signature, bright acids and a long, perfectly balanced and complex finish. This is first class juice- particularly for a difficult vintage! 2020-2026. **92.**

**2017 Sancerre “La Côte des Monts Damnés”- Domaine Yves Martin (Chavignol)**

Pierre Martin’s 2017 La Côte des Monts Damnés is his current release from this iconic vineyard in Chavignol. The wine is nicely ripe at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a classic bouquet of lime, green apple, a touch of tangerine, fresh-cut grass, citrus blossoms and a beautiful base of chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and drinking splendidly today, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent mineral drive, sound acids and very good length and grip on the complex finish. Monsieur Martin’s 2017 Clos de Beaujeu has just a bit more cut and grip than his Monts Damnés bottling, but this too has lovely balance and may age just as well. A fine bottle- I cannot wait to sink my teeth into these two single vineyard bottlings from the 2018 and 2019 vintages! 2020-2026. **92.**

**2017 Sancerre “Ovide”- Domaine Pierre Morin (Bué)**

The Ovide bottling from Pierre Morin is one of his old vine cuvées, as these vines were planted in 1950. They hail from the *lieu à dit* of Les Caillottes in Bué and the wine is fermented and raised in stainless steel and bottled without filtration. The 2017 Ovide delivers a very refined aromatic constellation of gooseberry, lime, orange blossoms, a touch of grassiness and a lovely base of chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is bright, zesty and full-bodied, with fine focus and mid-palate depth, a lovely girdled of acidity and a long, complex and bouncy finish. This should age very nicely, and though it is already quite delicious at three years of age, it should have no difficulties keeping through the next half dozen years or more. Fine juice. 2020-2027. **92.**

**2017 Sancerre “Origine”- Mathias et Émile Roblin (Maimbray)**

The Roblin brothers’ sixteen hectares of sauvignon blanc vineyards are primarily planted on *terres blanches* soils, and a bit more than eighty percent of this cuvées hails from this soil type. The 2017 Origine is an excellent bottle of Sancerre, offering up a bright and complex bouquet of gooseberry, green apple, beautiful chalky soil tones, white flowers and a gentle topnote of fresh-cut grass. On the palate the wine is vibrant, full-bodied, focused and soil-driven, with a good core, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the beautifully balanced finish. This wine tastes as if it will age very well and was probably a bit tight when first released, but as I have been slow getting to my Loire samples, it has had six months in my cellar to relax structurally and is now drinking splendidly. 2020-2030+. **91.**

**2017 Sancerre “Clos la Néore”- Domaine Edmond et Anne Vatan (Chavignol)**

It is hard to believe how long I have been drinking and cellaring the wines from Edmond Vatan, as the first vintage I ever sold of his wine was the 1988 all the way back in late 1980s. I should have cellared some then, as I am sure the ’88 is still drinking brilliantly today! However, it took me a decade or so to get my act together and cellar my Vatan for the long haul, so the oldest bottle I have left in my cellar is from the 1997 vintage. In any case, Monsieur Vatan and his lovely daughter Anne have crafted a stellar wine in 2017, with this vintage coming in at an even fourteen percent octane (pretty much standard for Monsieur Vatan’s wines in most vintages of the last twenty years) and offering up that classic, youthful aromatic constellation of lime, pear, complex botanicals, kaleidoscopic minerality, fresh mint, a dollop of petrol, incipient notes of beeswax and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, precise and rock solid at the core, with classic Vatan mineral drive, snappy, buried acids, impeccable balance and a long, complex, focused and vibrant young finish. In these days of global warming, I have found myself drawn more now to the less ripe vintages of this wine and those from François Cotat, as their traditional styles seem to work better in years with a bit less sun. The 2017 from the Vatan family is a legend in the making! Monsieur Vatan was born in 1929 and turns ninety-



one this year, but continues to cruise along in good health. A Happy 91<sup>st</sup> to the maestro of Chavignol, who is proving even more timeless than his wines! 2027-2075+. **97.**



*Sauvignon blanc vines resting comfortably under July sunshine in the village of Bué .*

**2016 Sancerre “le Grand Roc”- Domaine Gérard Fiou (Saint Satur)**

The 2016 Sancerre “le Grand Roc” from Gérard Fiou shows off the flinty soils here in the far eastern end of the Sancerre appellation. The vines for his le Grand Roc bottling are sixty-two years old, and he raises this bottling in a combination of stainless steel, cement and older casks. The 2016 vintage is the current release and it is lovely, wafting from the glass in a complex and nicely mature blend of gooseberry, green apple, complex, flinty minerality, damp grass and lemon peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with an excellent core, a fine girdle of acidity and a long, soil-driven and very well balanced finish. This was probably pretty tightly-knit in its immediate youth, but at age four, it has blossomed beautifully and is drinking quite gracefully. 2020-2025. **91.**

**2016 Sancerre “le Chant de l’Orme”- Domaine Pierre Morin (Bué)**

Pierre Morin’s bottling of le Chant de l’Orme is made from a vineyard parcel of fifty year-old vines, with seventy percent of the cuvée barrel-fermented and raised in older casks, and the other thirty percent in stainless steel. The 2016 version is excellent and really starting to hit its plateau, offering up a complex nose of lime, tangerine, gooseberry, chalky minerality, damp grass and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very



mineral on the backend, with a fine core, bright acids and very good length and grip on the complex and very nicely balanced finish. There is a textural element on the backend here from the percentage of the blend that has been barrel-fermented, but not aromatic or flavor influence. I like this quite well- particularly for the more challenging 2016 vintage! 2020-2026. **91.**

**2016 Sancerre “Cuvée François de la Grange de Montigny”- Domaine Henry Natter**

With his retirement in 2016 Henry Natter passed on the primary responsibility to running this family domaine to his son Vincent and daughter Mathilde. The village of Montigny is on the western end of the appellation of Sancerre, with the hillside vineyards here on pure *terres blanches*. The family’s Cuvée François de la Grange de Montigny is a special, old vine bottling, that is made from vines in excess of fifty years of age, with the wine fermented and aged for a year in old *foudres* prior to bottling. The 2016 version is excellent, offering up a complex bouquet of lemon, a touch of pineapple, damp grass, a beautiful base of limestone minerality and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and zesty, with a lovely core, fine mineral drive and a long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. This is drinking beautifully at four years of age, but still has plenty of life ahead of it as well. Fine juice. 2020-2030+. **92.**

**2014 Sancerre “Ammonites”- Mathias et Emile Roblin (Maimbray)**

The Sancerre “Ammonites” bottling from the brothers, Mathias and Emile Roblin, is their top of the line bottling, from their finest parcels of *terres blanches*. The wine saw twenty percent barrel fermentation in the 2014 vintage, with eighty percent fermented and raised in stainless steel. The brothers were very happy with the bit of older oak influence in the 2014 and subsequent vintages of Ammonites have seen a touch more barrel fermentation. The 2014 version is drinking beautifully, offering up a mature, complex and still very vibrant bouquet of lime, tangerine, damp grass, complex limestone minerality, citrus peel and a gentle touch of paraffin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, complex and full-bodied, with a superb core of fruit, lovely mineral drive and a long, poised and zesty finish. I really like the backend touch of candied citrus here that recalls a bit a mature example of Raveneau Chablis! Fine juice. 2020-2025+. **92.**

***Sancerre Rouge***

**2018 Sancerre Rouge- Domaine Karine Lauverjat (Sury en Vaux)**

As is apparent from the notes above, the Lauverjat family releases their wines under several different surnames. Their 2018 Sancerre *rouge* is aged for ten months in mostly older barrels prior to bottling. It offers up a ripe and nascently complex bouquet of red and black cherries, chalky soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and just a whisper of cedar down deep. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and ripely tannic, with a good core and soil signature, sound acids and a long, youthful finish. This needs a handful of years in the cellar to blossom, but it will be a very good example of the appellation in due course. 2025-2050. **89.**

**2017 Sancerre Rouge- Domaine Yves Martin (Chavignol)**

The 2017 Sancerre Rouge from Pierre Martin is an excellent bottle in the making, exuding fine youthful complexity on the nose and lovely balance on the palate. The bouquet offers up scents of bitter cherry, a touch of dark berry, woodsmoke, gamebird, very chalky soil tones (this is Chavignol after all!) and a touch of Sancerre *rouge* fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and very nicely balanced, with a fine core

of fruit, excellent soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and fine complexity and grip on the long and very promising finish. This is certainly approachable today, but give it a few years in the cellar to really let it start to hit on all cylinders. It is one of the best examples of young Sancerre *rouge* I have tasted in quite some time! 2023-2045. **92+**.

**2017 Sancerre Rouge- Domaine Pierre Morin (Bué)**

Pierre Morin makes his Sancerre rouge bottling using whole clusters and raises the wine half in older casks and half in stainless steel tanks. It is made from a parcel of thirty-five year-old pinot noir vines planted on a combination of *terres blanches* and *caillottes*. The 2027 version is quite lovely, offering up an impressively complex bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, raw cocoa, gamebird, chalky soil tones, a nice touch of cedar and just a whisper of fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows fine depth at the core, with good soil signature, ripe, fairly firm tannins, good focus and grip and a long, complex and quite promising finish. This is quite a refined example of Sancerre rouge, but it is still on the young side and needs a few years' worth of bottle age to really start to hit on all cylinders. 2024-2045+. **91**.

**2017 Sancerre Rouge- Domaine Paul Thomas (Chavignol)**

Raphaël Thomas is the proprietor at the family domaine now, as his father, Paul, passed away suddenly in 2000 and Raphaël returned to Chavignol to follow in his father's footsteps. The lion's share of his nine hectares of vines are in Chavignol, but this pinot noir is from vines planted both in Chavignol and Verdigny. Monsieur Thomas uses one hundred percent whole clusters for this bottling, which undergoes four days of carbonic maceration and then is fermented and aged in cement tanks. The 2017 is an old-fashioned style of Sancerre Rouge, with a good chassis of tannin, fine soil signature and a structure that demands some bottle age before it will blossom. The youthfully complex bouquet offers up scents of desiccated cherries, bonfire, gamebird, chalky soil tones, fresh herbs and a bit of chicory. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, primary and chewy, with a good core and soil signature, firm tannins and a long, soil-driven and slightly rustic finish. Thirty years ago, all Sancerre rouge was styled like this wine, and with a bit of bottle age, many blossomed into good, solid examples. I suspect the same will happen here with some patience. 2025-2045+. **87+**.

**2015 Sancerre "à Nicolas" Rouge- Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy (Maimbray)**

Pascal Reverdy makes this wine in homage to his brother Nicolas, who passed away in a vineyard accident in 2007. The grapes are destemmed, receive a short "cold soak" and are fermented in oak fermenters and then aged in *demi-muids* for twelve months, with a maximum of twenty percent new oak used. The 2015 version is outstanding on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, a dollop of blood orange, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, a beautiful base of chalky soil elements, gamebird and just a touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and very complex, with a beautiful core of fruit, ripe tannins, tangy acids and excellent balance and grip on the long, complex and still fairly youthful finish. Many examples of Sancerre *rouge* are a bit rustic in personality, but this is most emphatically not the case for this stellar bottle! 2025-2055. **93**.



### ***Sancerre Rosé and Friends***

#### **2019 L'Instant Pinot Noir Rosé- Domaine Clément et Florian Berthier (Vin de France)**

According to the Berthiers' website, this wine is from the 2019 vintage, but I could not find the vintage date anywhere on the front or back labels. The wine is a fairly deep salmon color and offers up a gently candied bouquet of cherries, watermelon, chalky soil tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and quite solid at the core, with zesty acids, good length and grip and almost a wisp of backend tannin on the long and quite intensely flavored finish. This has the concentration of the 2019 vintage, but it does not possess the same charm or complexity as the brothers' Coteaux de Giennois Rosé. 2020-2025. **87.**

#### **2019 Coteaux du Giennois Rosé- Domaine Clément et Florian Berthier (Sainte Gemme)**

The 2019 Coteaux du Giennois Rosé from the Berthiers is made from a blend of pinot noir and gamay. It is a beautiful salmon color and offers up a succulent bouquet of cherries, watermelon, violets and a nice base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is bright, zesty and full-bodied, with a fine core of fruit, good focus and grip and a long, vibrant and surprisingly racy finish. The low yields and good summer months of 2019 have given this wine impressive depth and backend conviction. A great value! 2020-2025. **90.**

#### **2019 Sancerre Rosé- Clément et Florian Berthier (Sainte Gemme)**

The 2019 Sancerre Rosé from Clément et Florian Berthier has a fairly deep color, reflecting the concentration of the small berries of this vintage. The wine offers up a deep and vibrant bouquet of watermelon, white cherries, chalky soil tones, a bit of citrus peel and a

topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and quite nicely concentrated at the core, with zesty acids, good focus and grip and a long, succulent finish. This is a well-made bottle of Sancerre Rosé and, due to the depth of 2019, might be even more generous with six months or a year's worth of bottle age. 2020-2025. **89.**

**2019 Chinon Rosé- Domaine de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

The 2019 Chinon Rosé from Domaine de la Bonnelière is a nicely vibrant salmon color and offers up a bright and gently vinous bouquet of cherries, orange peel, gentle smokiness, dried flowers and a nice base of soil tones that I suspect are from sandier soils. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and quite complex, with excellent depth at the core, bright acids and lovely balance and grip on the long and eminently satisfying finish. This is first class Chinon Rosé! 2020-2025. **91.**

**2019 Sancerre Rosé “les Terres Blanches”- Domaine Chevreau (Crezancy)**

The 2019 Sancerre Rosé “les Terres Blanches” from Domaine Chevreau is very pretty and elegant on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of watermelon, white cherries, lovely chalky soil tones and a potpourri of spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and bouncy, with lovely mid-palate depth, good mineral drive and fine length and grip on the vibrant finish. This is lovely juice. 2020-2025. **90.**

**2019 Sancerre Rosé- Domaine Pierre Morin (Bué)**

The 2019 Sancerre Rosé from Pierre Morin is a very pretty example of this vintage, with the concentration of this summer quite evident in the aromatic depth of the bouquet here, which delivers scents of strawberries, orange peel, rhubarb, limestone minerality and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with excellent mineral drive and cut, fine balance and a long, complex and quite seriously structured finish. This is an excellent Sancerre Rosé that will age quite nicely. 2020-2028. **90.**

**2019 Sancerre Rosé “Terre a Maimbray”- Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy (Maimbray)**

The 2019 Sancerre Rosé from the Reverdy family is a lovely salmon pink and delivers a very pretty bouquet of white cherries, a touch of tangerine, limestone minerality, a touch of watermelon and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with superb backend mineral drive, zesty acids and fine cut and grip on the long and complex finish. This is a really good Sancerre Rosé that will drink even better with a bit of bottle age. 2020-2030. **91.**

**2018 Sancerre Rosé- Domaine Clément et Florian Berthier (Sainte Gemme)**

The 2018 Sancerre Rosé from Clément and Florian Berthier is a lovely salmon color. It is produced from a parcel of thirty-five year-old pinot noir vines planted in Sainte Gemme. The 2018 version delivers a complex nose of watermelon, white cherries, chalky soil, discreet smokiness and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and wide open and inviting, with zesty acids and very good length and grip on the easy-drinking finish. Good juice. 2020-2023. **88.**

**2018 Sancerre Rosé- Domaine Karine Lauverjat (Sury en Vaux)**

The 2018 Sancerre Rosé from the Lauverjat family is a lovely, light salmon color and offers up a bright and classy nose of white cherries, watermelon, chalky soil tones and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and wide open in personality, with the good mid-palate depth of the vintage, moderate acids and good length and grip on the

surprisingly concentrated finish. This shows the low yields of 2019 in its concentration and may actually need a bit of bottle age to fully uncoil! 2021-2026. **88+**.

**2018 Sancerre Rosé “Origine”- Domaine Matthias et Émile Roblin (Maimbray)**

The 2018 Sancerre Rosé “Origine” from the Roblin brothers is a lovely bottle that really shows fine chalky mineral drive for a Rosé. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a classy blend of rhubarb, white cherries, orange peel, dried flowers and an excellent base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely vinous in style, with a fine core of fruit, impressive transparency and grip and a long, zesty and very nicely balanced finish. This is excellent Sancerre Rosé. 2020-2025. **90**.

**2018 Pineau d’Aunis Rosé- Domaine de la Rochette (Touraine)**

This lovely, very pale salmon-colored Rosé is produced from old vines of Pineau d’Aunis planted in a vineyard with a good base of clay soil in the Touraine. The Leclair family has two parcels of vines here, with one forty years of age and the other fully eighty years-old! The 2018 version comes in at an even twelve percent octane and offers up a pretty nose of casaba melon, cherry skin, a good base of soil, dried flowers and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and really quite solid at the core, with bright acids, good focus and grip and a long, complex and vibrant finish. The ripeness of the 2018 vintage here has given this wine really fine mid-palate depth and impressive length and grip. Great value! 2020-2028. **89**.

## RECENTLY-TASTED AMERICAN WINES LIFTING THE SPIRITS OF THE SAD SPRING OF 2020



Late spring and early summer are usually one of the times of the year when I look forward to settling into a large array of samples of new releases from some of my favorite producers of American wines. As the sad spring of 2020 sees all the world trying to come to terms with how to handle and survive the Coronavirus, the lineup of samples was a bit different this year than in past years, as not everyone was in a position to send samples. With the wine business in the United States suffering badly from the closures of restaurants and bars, it is quite understandable that not every winery or distributor who I contacted about samples would be in a position to send bottles, and I am fully sympathetic with their plight. Fortunately, at least some wineries, distributors and merchants have been able to at least sustain some semblance of cash flow due to the uptick in retail sales of wine during the pandemic, as particularly in the first month of the global regime of social distancing, many people seemed to have decided that it was a good time to drink more wine and, for those who were not immediately brought to the brink of financial disaster by the loss of jobs, there was a bit more free time to peruse merchants' lists and perhaps add a bit to the cellar in addition to stocking up the rack for more immediate needs. But, despite some business still trickling in for many in the wine trade, one cannot overstate just how dire this pandemic has been for so many in the business and I wish to express my sincere

gratitude to those who felt they were in a position to send samples and did so for inclusion in this article.

One of the bright spots in preparation for this report was receiving a case of samples from Doug Tunnell at Brick House Wine Company in the Ribbon Ridge section of the Willamette Valley. I had heard very good things about Doug's wines for several years now and had hoped to visit him at the winery when I was last out in the Willamette Valley, but I could not make that happen and had only subsequently crossed paths with a single bottle of his wine: the 2016 vintage of his Gamay Noir. A friend had served it to me fairly recently, opining that I would like the style, and when I saw the label, I recounted to him how I had very much wanted to visit the winery when I was last out in Oregon. The wine was very good (please see the note below), and it prompted me to write to Doug and see about tasting some of his current releases. He very graciously sent along a mixed case of wines for inclusion in this article- all of which were outstanding. Doug Tunnell purchased the sixteen hectare farm and hazelnut orchard in Newburg that would become Brick House in 1990, after a career as a foreign correspondent for CBS News. After purchasing the property, he immediately started farming here by organic methods, bringing back the soils from what had been a pretty chemically-dependent form of agriculture practiced by the previous owners. Today, just over twelve hectares of the property are planted to vineyards, with the first pinot noir vines having gone into the ground in 1990; chardonnay and gamay vines were to follow soon thereafter. Subsequent to successfully nurturing his farm back to good health, he made the next logical step and started to learn about biodynamic farming in 2002 and by 2005, Brick House had been Demeter-certified as biodynamic. All of Doug's wines are made from estate-grown fruit and are very, very well-made wines and I am sorry that they have taken so long to feature prominently in this report!

Another winery that was completely new to me for this report was Pamplin Family Winery, based in the Willamette Valley in Oregon. It is an interesting project, for though the winery is based in Oregon, they specialize in cabernet sauvignon-based wines and buy their grapes from some of the best vineyards further north in the Columbia Valley in Washington state, including some that are quite familiar to fans of Andrew Will Wines, such as Seven Hills Vineyard, Klipsun Vineyard and Discovery Vineyard. The winemaker here is Robert Henry, who studied Oenology at Fresno State University with David Jeffrey of Calluna Estate, and he reached out to me after seeing reviews of Calluna's lovely wines here in these pages. Robert's wines are all fermented with indigenous yeasts, raised in anywhere from twenty to forty percent new oak (with the percentage of new wood declining down to twenty percent across the board for the most recent vintages) and built to age long and gracefully. He graciously sent me several vintages of each of the estate's bottlings- their Cabernet Sauvignon and their Bordeaux blend that they call J.R.G., which is a blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot, cabernet franc and petit verdot. I very much liked what I tasted, as the wines are deep, balanced and seem to me that they will age beautifully.

This feature also has a fine spread of wines from the long-time Central Coast superstar estate of Au Bon Climat. I have long enjoyed the wines from Jim Clendenen at Au Bon Climat and sold them with regularity back in my wine merchant days, but somehow, I had never gotten my act together to write to him to see about getting samples for review in the newsletter. Recently, a public relations person had asked me if I would ever consider writing an historical



feature on the winery, which was founded back in 1982, and this jogged my memory and I wrote to the winery during the preparation for this article to see about the possibility of getting samples of current releases. I would like to say that the wines were every bit as good as I remember them from my wine merchant days, but in fact, they were even better! Jim and his team at ABC have clearly been fine-tuning things here with each passing vintage and I was treated to a truly remarkable range of pinot noir and chardonnay bottlings from Au Bon Climat! I apologize to readers that I had not covered these wines sooner, as they are true classics that speak very eloquently of their underlying *terroirs* and are among the best wines made in California from their respective varietals. I should also note that Jim has managed to break my long held prejudice against very heavy glass bottles, as he has a range of wines at ABC that are packaged in extremely heavy glass. Almost all of my past experiences with wines packed in super-sized bottles has been that the heavy glass compensated for a lack of soulful quality of the wine on the other side of the cork, but this was emphatically not the case with these special bottlings from Au Bon Climat. I would still rather see everything from Jim bottled in “regular” bottles, as if they are good enough for his superb wines from the Bien Nacido and Sanford and Benedict Vineyards, then they should also be sufficient for the Isabelle and Knox Alexander cuvées, but of course, I am not the target audience for these wines and maybe the heavy glass is considered necessary for certain segments of the California wine collecting market. Still, it would be nice if those bottlings had a carbon footprint as light as their footsteps on the palate.

And yet another completely new producer to me who deserves a bit of mention in the introduction to this article is Adam Sabelli-Frisch. Adam is a former peripatetic cinematographer who eventually settled down in northern California and started making a bit of wine at home for his own amusement, as he had developed a love of wine and cuisine during his many years living in Europe. Eventually, the home winemaker transitioned over to crafting wine for a living, and he makes a several varietally-based wines that are most emphatically not made from the “usual suspects” of grapes. He sent me samples of an amphora-fermented and raised Marsanne, a superb red made from the Mission grape, a very fine Alicante Bouschet and a Rosé made from a grape called Flame Tokay, with the vines for this bottling fully one hundred and eighteen years of age! All of his wines were excellent and far off the beaten path of most California wines today and I am delighted that Adam reached out to me and sent me four of his wines for inclusion in this article. All four were very well-made and offer high quality options for the intrepid wine lover! However, as was the case with a few of the cuvées produced from Au Bon Climat and mentioned above, these are bottled in those very heavy, four pound glass bottles, and I would love to see Adam step down to regular weight bottles sometime in the future, as these wines do not need any extra marketing push from the heavy glass!

While the wines from the Bradley Brown and his Big Basin Vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains were not new for this year’s report, I have only been reporting on them since this time last year and really did not mention them prominently enough in my article from twelve months ago, as their wines are excellent across the board. So, I wanted to give a bit more of a shout out for Big Basin, as I really like the old world style and the strong mountain vineyard *terroirs* of their wines and wanted to make sure that readers did not miss them in a report that has so many pages this year. Big Basin produces chardonnay, pinot noir, cabernet sauvignon, syrah and grenache, amongst others, from their own vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains and from purchased fruit from other top vineyards further south in the Gabilan Mountains (home to Calera

and Chalone). Bradley farms his own vineyards organically, ferments with indigenous yeasts, uses little or low percentages of new oak and bottles his wines unfinned and unfiltered for the most part, to get them into bottle as naturally as possible. As he likes to say, the goal at Big Basin is to “make New World wines with Old World soul.” Bradley Brown has been the winemaker here since he established the winery twenty years ago; in 2017 he has been joined in these duties by Blake Yarger. The first vineyards at Big Basin were planted in 2000 and the first vintage here was from 2002, so this is still a youngster compared to more venerable Santa Cruz Mountain neighbors like Mount Eden Vineyards and Ridge Vineyards, but absolutely everything I have tasted from Big Basin has been excellent over this past year and I recommend the wines very highly!

Beyond the producers featured above, this report is loaded with great new releases from some of the very best estates in all of the United States. Extremely talented winegrowers from Oregon such as Kelley Fox, Brian O'Donnell of Belle Pente Vineyards, Scott Frank of Bow and Arrow Wines all sent a fine range of their current releases. From California, Sean and Joanna Castorani of Model Farm, Stewart Johnson of Kendric Vineyards and Adam Lee of Clarice Wine Company all sent me superb new vintages as well. These folks may not be as famous (yet) as some of the longer-tenured veterans of the Old School American wine renaissance, but they are every bit as talented and future generations will speak of their wines in the same reverential tones that old timers like me use when discussing wines from Joseph Swan, Joe Heitz, Paul Draper and Bob Travers. And, as it is June again, this also means that the new releases from some of these well-established star producers were also available and grace the pages that follow, so there are new releases from Cathy Corison, Lisa Togni, Randy Dunn and Kevin Harvey from Rhys Vineyards also to be found in the report that follows. As is my custom, I have also included recent tasting notes on older vintages of wines from the US in this article, as I still drink plenty of mature wines out of my own cellar and like to keep these notes available as well, for those who want to get a sense of where some of the great vintages of yesteryear are today in their evolutions. American wines from the great old school estates and today's Neo-Classicists are built to age long and gracefully, and though the marketplace seems to have been indoctrinated with American wines needing to be drunk in their first decade or so (which may be true of the modern, spoofulated school of wines here in the US, which probably are best drunk up young if they cannot be studiously avoided), the reality is that most of the American wines that I cover are utterly classical in style and structural foundations and will age for many, many decades.

I should note that the American sparkling wines that I tasted for this issue are not featured here, but in the report on Sparkling Wines and Champagne a bit earlier on in the new issue. The tasting note sections start with Rosé, followed by Off the Beaten Path White Wines, Sauvignon Blanc (a painfully small sampling this year!) and then Chardonnay. Within each section, the wines are listed chronologically and then alphabetically by producer. The red wine sections are Gamay (and associated blends), Off the Beaten Path Reds, Rhône Varietals, Merlot and Sangiovese, Zinfandel, Pinot Noir and Cabernet Sauvignon and Friends.

### ***Rosé***

#### **2019 Rosé “Ode to Lulu”- Bedrock Wine Company (California) screwcap**

The 2019 Rosé “Ode to Lulu”- Bedrock is made up of a blend of fifty-five percent Mourvèdre and forty-five percent Grenache, with the vineyards old for the Mourvèdre and

ancient for the Grenache, as these were planted in the 1880s. The wine comes in at 12.8 percent octane and is quite lovely on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up quince, tangerine, a bit of melon, coriander seed and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and succulent on the attack, with good acids and grip and a long, vibrant finish. This is modeled on the lovely Domaine Tempier Bandol Rosé and is quite a worthy tribute. 2020-2022. **90.**

**2019 Rosé “Flora and Fauna”- Idlewild Wines (Mendocino)**

The 2019 Rosé “Flora and Fauna” from Idlewild Wines is made from a blend of Italian red wine varietals: thirty-eight percent Nebbiolo and thirty-one percent each of Barbera and Dolcetto. The 2019 version is fairly dark salmon in color and offers up a vinous nose of baked cherries, orange peel, rhubarb, gentle smokiness and salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with sound framing acids, good focus and grip and just a whisper of backend tannin. This is really a food wine *par excellence* and is ideal for sipping with a variety of grilled cuisine in these hot summer months. I would not hesitate to substitute this wine for a red with grilled meats this time of year, as it has the structure to stand up to them nicely. Quite unique stylistically and very good indeed! 2020-2022. **89.**

**2019 Rosé of Pinot Noir “Petaluma Gap”- Kendric Vineyards (Marin County)**

Stewart Johnson’s Rosé of Pinot Noir is consistently one of my absolute favorite American Rosé bottlings and the 2019 version is another lovely example. The wine is a lovely salmon color and delivers a vibrant and quite classy bouquet of white cherries, quince, orange peel, salty soil tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and gently vinous in personality, with a fine core of fruit, zesty acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and quite serious finish. First class juice! 2020-2025. **91.**

**2019 Rosé- Poe Wines (Anderson Valley)**

The 2019 Poe Wines Rosé is a blend of pinot noir and pinot meunier grown in the Manchester Ridge Vineyard. The grapes are very gently crushed and allowed to macerate for a few hours to give the wine its lovely salmon color. It is fermented and aged in stainless steel and does not go through malolactic fermentation. The 2019 version is very pretty and expressive on the nose, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, rhubarb, white flowers, salty soil tones and just a bit of citrus zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, medium-full and juicy, with a good, respectable core, fairly moderate acids and good length on the complex finish. I would love to see this have a bit more cut and grip on the backend, but this has depth and dimension and only the fairly low acidity keeps the score down a bit. 2020-2022. **88.**

**2018 Flame Tokay “Lanterna” Rosé- Sabelli-Frisch (Makelumne River)**

The 2018 Flame Tokay “Lanterna” Rosé from Sabelli-Frisch is a lovely and quite structured example of Rosé, as the Flame Tokay grape has pink skins and Adam does three weeks’ worth of skin contact to give the wine its slightly coppery-salmon color. These vines hail from the Chandler Vineyard and are one hundred and nineteen years-old, having been planted in 1899! The wine is fermented with indigenous yeasts and raised in a combination of older oak barrels and clay amphora for fifteen months prior to blending, with the 2018 vintage coming in at a cool 12.6 percent octane. The wine offers up a deep and expressive bouquet of fresh apricot, tangerine, dried flowers, a hint of honeycomb, discreet spice tones, citrus peel and a good foundation of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, bright and quite solid at the core, with a touch of natural wine wildness to its personality, good acids and grip and a long, complex finish. Adam bottles this wine with a minimum of sulfur, and it might be better with just a touch more for stability, but then again, I am hardly an experienced taster of Flame Tokay and perhaps this is

just the natural character of the wine? I like the complexity and the impressive depth here, but its slight natural wildness keeps my score down just a tad. 2020-2025? **88.**

### ***Off the Beaten Path White Wine Varietals***

#### **2019 Pinot Blanc “Barbie”- Kelley Fox Wines (Willamette Valley)**

The Barbie bottling of Pinot Blanc from Kelley Fox is named in memory of her mother, with the grapes having been sourced from the Freedom Hill Vineyard and was fermented in stainless steel and raised in a pair of older Acacia wood puncheons. The wine offers up a very precise and vibrant nose of lime, pear, lovely minerality, spring flowers, incipient notes of beeswax and a gentle touch of acacia wood. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with a beautiful girdle of acidity, excellent balance and grip and a long, nascently complex and impressively serious finish. As Barbara Fox was an artist, I am guessing that the lovely painting that graces the label of this wine was one of her works. This is one of the finest examples of pinot blanc I have ever had the pleasure to taste. 2020-2030+. **93.**

#### **2019 Pinot Blanc “Freedom Hill Vineyard”- Kelley Fox Wines (Willamette Valley)**

The 2019 Freedom Hill Vineyard bottling of Pinot Blanc from Kelley Fox hails from the same parcel as her Barbie cuvée above, but this wine is finished in older French barrels, instead of the Acacia wood puncheons. Both examples of pinot blanc undergo malolactic fermentation in their wood vessels, rather in stainless steel. The wine is lovely on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a very refined blend of white peach, just a whisper of citrus, a lovely base of soil tones, spring flowers, beeswax and a discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, lovely backend mineral drive and a long, complex and dancing finish. This too is an outstanding bottle, but the acacia wood in the Barbie bottling seems to add an extra touch of the exotic to the wine that cannot quite be matched by the subtle element from the French oak casks. That said, this too is truly an exceptional example of pinot blanc, with outstanding backend energy and lift! 2020-2030+. **92.**

#### **2019 Viognier “Petaluma Gap”- Kendric Vineyards (Marin County)**

The 2019 Viognier “Petaluma Gap” from Stewart Johnson at Kendric Vineyards is really a lovely and very classically-inclined example of this varietal. This is the first vintage where Stewart has raised more than half the cuvée in older casks, rather than stainless steel. The wine comes in at 13.7 percent alcohol this year, which is low octane these days for viognier, and offers up a refined bouquet of pear, a touch of casaba melon, acacia blossoms, honeysuckle, a hint of smoked meats (like walking into a German deli) and an elegant foundation of soil tones. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and light on its feet, with good mid-palate depth, zesty acids and fine balance and grip on the long and complex finish. This is really good viognier! 2020-2026. **92.**

#### **2019 French Colombard- Monte Rio Cellars (Mendocino County)**

Man, it has been a while since I have tasted an example of French Colombard! Monte Rio is a joint venture of former sommelier and restaurateur Patrick Capello and winemaker Pax Mahle. Their 2019 French Colombard was made from sixty year-old vines and comes in at a low octane 10.5 percent alcohol. It is fermented with indigenous yeasts and was raised for six months in a combination of stainless steel, old oak casks and concrete eggs prior to bottling. The wine offers up a bright bouquet of lemon, green apple, a nice touch of soil, citrus peel and white flowers. On the palate the wine is vibrant, medium-full and well-balanced, with fine focus and

grip, perfectly respectable complexity and a wide open, zesty finish. This is really surprisingly good and is a fine value. 2020-2025. **89.**

**2019 Chenin Blanc “Saint Farms”- Leo Steen (Dry Creek Valley)**

Leo Steen makes lovely chenin blanc, using a parcel of thirty-nine year-old vines planted on an old riverbed. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and then aged four months in older oak barrels prior to bottling. The 2019 vintage here comes in at an even thirteen percent octane and offers up a fine, youthful nose of lemon, breadfruit, a touch of menthol, lanolin, soil and dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and more open than the reticent nose suggests, with a fine core of fruit, good soil signature and a long, zesty and very well-balanced finish. This is still a young wine, but it is already quite tasty on the palate, and more aromatic generosity is destined to arrive with a bit more bottle age. Good juice. 2020-2027. **90.**



**2018 Melon “Johan Vineyard”- Bow and Arrow (Willamette Valley)**

Bow and Arrow’s 2018 Melon de Bourgogne bottling from the biodynamically-farmed Johan Vineyard pays beautiful homage to classic Muscadet on both the nose and palate. This is properly low octane juice, coming in at 11.5 percent and offering up a classic nose of bread fruit, lemon, dried flowers, a lovely base of soil tones and a nice, gentle topnote of leesiness that really recalls top flight Muscadet. On the palate the wine is bright, medium-full and complex, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine acids and grip and a long, gently wild finish. Like the estate’s

sauvignon blanc bottling, this skirts the limits of natural wine mousiness, without ever going over the line. Good juice. 2020-2025. **90.**

**2018 Chenin Blanc “Mt. Pajaro Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Mt. Pajaro Vineyard Chenin Blanc from Rhys is excellent and a superb follow-up to the high quality 2017 version. The bouquet is deep, ripe and very precise, wafting from the glass in a blend of quince, apple, a bit of lemon peel, gentle notes of lanolin, a fine base of stony soil tones and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and zesty, with a fine core of fruit, excellent backend mineral drive and cut, snappy acids and outstanding focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This is certainly very easy on the eyes right out of the blocks, but this wine is built to age and will be even better with five or six years’ worth of bottle age on it! Superb juice. 2020-2040+. **93.**

**2018 Marsanne “Milk Fed”- Sabelli-Frisch (Sierra Foothills)**

Adam Sabelli-Frisch fermented and aged this Marsanne in clay amphora for four months on its skins. The grapes hail from the organically-farmed, cool vineyard of Ramos Torres in the Sierra Foothills and the finished wine comes in at 12.5 percent octane. It is fairly golden in color from its extended skin contact and offers up a lovely bouquet of fresh apricot, peach, citrus oil, a nice touch of clay from the amphora, hints of the honeycomb to come and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and nicely light on its feet, with a fine core, very good balance and grip and a long, complex finish. The acids here do not seem all that pronounced, so I suspect this wine will be best in the next three to four years, but it is very well-balanced and may well prove longer lived than I anticipate right now. It is really a lovely and quite unique example of Marsanne. 2020-2025. **90.**

**2017 Hildegard- Au Bon Climat (Santa Maria Valley)**

The Hildegard bottling from Au Bon Climat is composed of a blend of fifty percent pinot gris, forty percent pinot blanc and ten percent aligoté. It is barrel-fermented and raised in one hundred percent new oak. The 2017 version offers up a superb bouquet of peach, a hint of fresh pineapple, melon, a nice touch of soil, gentle floral tones and a really nicely suave foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a superb core of fruit, a sound girdle of acidity and lovely balance and grip on the long and classy finish. Jim Clendenen has been making this bottling since the 1998 vintage, but this was the first time I had ever had the pleasure to taste the wine and I am quite impressed. 2020-2026. **92.**

**2017 Bianco “Centennial Mountain Vineyard”- Aeris (California)**

This the same wine as the unreleased Carricante that I reported on last year. Kevin Harvey and his team have decided to release the first vintage as a simple Bianco, saving the Carricante labeling for future vintages and slightly older vines. Readers may recall that the Rhys team planted these vines on Centennial Mountain in Sonoma several years ago, but this is the first commercial release. The extra year of bottle age has allowed the wine to really blossom, as it now offers up a lovely bouquet of green apple, green olive, a bit of pear, spring flowers, a bit of raw almond, a lovely base of minerality and a topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and soil-driven in personality, with a good core, a lovely girdle of acidity, fine focus and grip and a long, youthfully complex and very promising finish. This wine is certainly approachable out of the blocks, but Carricante ages effortlessly and this wine is still a puppy at three years of age. I would opt to cellar it for another three to five years and really let it start to hit on all cylinders. If curiosity gets the best of you and you choose to open a bottle now, decant it for an hour, as it really stretches its wings with some air! 2023-2045+. **93.**

### **2014 Sémillon “David Hill Vineyards” Ode To Chuck- Golden Cluster (Willamette Valley)**

The 2014 Sémillon “David Hill Vineyards” Ode To Chuck bottling from Golden Cluster is from the very old vine Coury parcel that is on its *franc de pied* roots. The “Ode to Chuck” moniker is in reference to Charles Coury, who planted these vines all the way back in 1966. It is effectively a reserve bottling of the 2014 Sémillon and there were only two casks produced. I think this was originally sent to me back in 2017, but as I missed the fine print of Ode to Chuck around the vintage neck label, I thought I had just received two bottles of the regular 2014 Sémillon and tucked one away to follow how it evolved in the cellar. As they say in the movies, “that was lucky!” The wine has blossomed stunningly with bottle age and offers up a gorgeous bouquet of lemon, fresh fig, beeswax, a bit of citrus peel, a lovely base of soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with lovely mid-palate intensity, perfect focus and balance, still fine acids and a very, very long, refined and perfectly *à point* finish. Think of this as Haut-Brion Blanc without the petrol! 2020-2027. **93.**

### ***Sauvignon Blanc***

#### **2018 Sauvignon Blanc “Union School Vineyard”- Bow and Arrow (Willamette Valley)**

The 2018 Sauvignon Blanc “Union School Vineyard” from Bow and Arrow is a lively and extroverted example of the varietal, offering up a bright bouquet of lime peel, tart orange, salty soil tones, white flowers and a discreet topnote of fresh-cut grass. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and racy, with a good core, bright, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the complex finish. This is 12.5 percent octane and nicely taut structurally as a result. There is just a whiff of natural wine wildness on the backend, but it is quite tame and just adds to the complex here. I very much like this wine. 2020-2025. **90.**

### ***Chardonnay***

#### **Chardonnay “Willamette Valley” Memoire I- Morgen Long (Willamette Valley)**

This is the first release of Memoire chardonnay from Seth Long. The wine is composed from a solera that Seth started with in the 2015 vintage, so this first release is a blend of twenty-nine percent each of 2018 and 2017, twelve percent of 2016, twenty-nine percent of 2015 and around one percent of 2014. It includes at least a little bit in the blend of every single chardonnay Seth has produced since he began in 2014, with the small amount of 2014 due to the fact that bottled wines were used to top up the barrel of the 2015s at the start, once the topping up wine from 2015 had been exhausted. The bouquet is bright and fascinatingly complex, offering up a lovely panoply of apple, pear, passion fruit, buttered almonds, acacia blossoms, plenty of soil tones and a gentle foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex, with a superb core, bright acids, fine focus and grip and a long, poised and very energetic and lifted finish. This is a lovely and quite unique bottle of chardonnay. 2020-2035. **93.**

#### **2019 Chardonnay- Monte Rio Cellars (Mendocino County)**

The 2019 Chardonnay from Monte Rio is not a lot riper than its fine French Colombard bottling, as this wine comes in listed at 11.5 percent alcohol. I should also mention that it comes bottled in a Bordeaux-shaped bottle. It is fermented in stainless steel and receives a fairly brisk *elevage* of four months in older casks, followed by *assemblage* back in stainless steel for a couple of months prior to bottling. The wine offers up a youthful nose of apple, tart pineapple, a nice base of soil, dried flowers and an incipient note of beeswax in the upper register. On the



palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and tightly-knit, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, still fairly primary finish. This has the weight and sensibility of a good example of Mâcon-Villages and is priced at about the same level. A good, solid bottle. 2020-2026. **88.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Anderson Valley”- Alesia (Rhys Vineyards)**

The 2018 Alesia chardonnay from Rhys is really lovely, coming in clocked at a cool 12.8 percent octane and offering up a vibrant and generous bouquet of apple, casaba melon, white lilies, a fine base of gently salty soil tones and a discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and beautifully proportioned, with a fine core, lovely soil undertow, zesty acids and excellent balance and grip on the long, complex and very refined finish. This strikes me as fine as any example of Alesia chardonnay I have tasted to date! 2020-2030. **92.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Santa Cruz Mountains”- Alesia (Rhys Vineyards)**

The 2018 Santa Cruz Mountains bottling of chardonnay from Alesia is truly superb and this is definitely the finest bottling of this cuvée that I have tasted, with the quality really right up there with some of the earlier vintages of Alpine or Horseshoe Vineyards chardonnay from Rhys. Of course, this is younger vine fruit from those same vineyards, so it is not surprising how good this wine is in 2018. It comes in at 12.7 percent alcohol and delivers superb aromatic complexity in its refined blend of apple, pear, passion fruit, beautiful minerality, citrus blossoms, refined vanillin oak and a touch of fresh nutmeg in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with bright, zesty acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, complex and utterly refined finish. Alesia never tasted so good! 2020-2030. **92+.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Los Alamos Vineyard”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Barbara County)**

The 2018 Chardonnay “Los Alamos Vineyard” bottling from Jim Clendenen at Au Bon Climat is a lovely bottle for current drinking, with a gently tropical bouquet of pineapple, a touch of coconut, citrus peel, fruit blossoms, a nice dollop of soil and a gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and wide open in personality, with a good core, sound complexity and a long, juicy and well-balanced finish. This is drinking very nicely out of the blocks, and though it will not age anywhere near as long as most of the other Au Bon Climat bottlings of chardonnay, there is plenty of pleasure to be had here over the relative near-term. 2020-2025. **90.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Willamette Valley”- Crowley Wines**

The 2018 “Willamette Valley” bottling of Chardonnay from Tyson Crowley hails entirely from fruit from the Four Winds Vineyard, which has both Wente and Dijon clones of chardonnay planted. The wine is barrel-fermented and the 2018 offers up a lovely nose of delicious apple, almond, a touch of pastry cream, a fine base of soil, vanillin oak and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and gently new oaky, with a fine core of fruit, good soil undertow, solid acids and good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Stylistically, this reminds me of some of the best Oregon chardonnays from the decade of the 1980s and which aged very well indeed. 2020-2030+. **89.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Durant Vineyard” Lark Block- Kelley Fox Wines (Dundee Hills)**

I was very surprised to open up my box of samples from Kelley Fox this year and to find a chardonnay bottling from Durant Vineyard, as I was unaware she was producing this varietal. It turns out that this is the first chardonnay she has bottled since starting her own winery (she worked with the grape previously, of course, when she was one of Oregon’s most sought after winemakers for hire). The vines here were planted by the Durant family in 1991 and the wine

underwent its primary fermentation in concrete amphora, before being racked into older Burgundy barrels for malo and *elevage*. The wine wafts from the glass (with quite Puligny-like sensibilities) in a refined blend of pear, white peach, a touch of fresh almond, salty soil tones, white flowers, a hint of the Échiré butter to come and a very discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, pure and beautifully balanced, with fine mid-palate depth, lovely focus and bounce and a long, dancing and very promising finish. This is still a puppy and deserves another few years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers to emerge, but resisting the temptation to drink it in its youth is going to be no easy matter! 2022-2040. **93.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Petaluma Gap”- Kendric Vineyards (Marin County)**

Stewart Johnson’s 2018 Chardonnay is only his second vintage of this varietal, after having budded over a portion of his vineyard to Wente Clones in 2016. The wine comes in this year listed at 13.7 percent octane, but remains quite cool and precise on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a youthful blend of lemon, pear, salty soil tones, white flowers, a hint of vanillin oak and an incipient topnote of *crème patissière*. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and still quite youthful in personality, with a good core, bright acids and good length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This has fine promise, but it is still quite primary and I would be inclined to tuck it away in the cellar for a year and let it properly blossom. There are good things in store here for those with just a modicum of patience. 2021-2030. **90+.**



**2018 Chardonnay “Willamette Valley”- Morgen Long (Willamette Valley)**

The 2018 regular bottling of Willamette Valley chardonnay from Seth Long hails from six different vineyards in this vintage, all of them dry-farmed, with forty percent of the blend from Seven Springs Vineyard and twenty percent from Durant Vineyard. Part of the blend was barrel-fermented and part in stainless steel, with the *elevage* done in twenty-five percent new oak

and the wine coming in at 13.3 percent octane. It offers up a very stylish, youthful nose of pear, hazelnut, a refined base of soil tones, white flowers and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with bright, zesty acids, excellent focus and grip, fine, nascent complexity and very impressive backend lift and mineral drive on the long finish. Structurally, this wine is already approachable, but it is still quite primary in terms of flavor and aromatic development and there is much more here to unfold with some bottle age. Fine juice. 2020-2040. **92+**.

**2018 Chardonnay “Willamette Valley” Marine- Morgen Long (Willamette Valley)**

The 2018 Marine bottling of Willamette Valley chardonnay from Seth Long is a blend of fruit from three different vineyards, all of which share marine soil, as the name implies. The blend this year is forty-three percent from the Loubejac Vineyard, forty percent from the AlexEli Vineyard and seventeen percent from the Yamhill Vineyard. The Loubejac vines are still fairly youthful, having been planted in 2007, but the other two vineyards are more than thirty-four years of age. The wine was aged in a combination of Burgundy casks, three hundred and fifty liter puncheons and stainless steel, with only fifteen percent of the oak new. After *assemblage*, the wine was given several months to synthesize in stainless steel tanks prior to bottling. The bouquet here is very pretty, offering up a combination of apple, pear, lovely spice tones, a superb base of salty minerality, a touch of buttery oak and just a whisper of citrus blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and has excellent mid-palate depth, with bright acids, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and very well-balanced finish. This is one of Seth’s entry level wines, priced at \$25 per bottle and it is an outstanding value! 2020-2030+. **91.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Willamette Valley” Volcanic- Morgen Long (Willamette Valley)**

The Volcanic bottling of chardonnay from Morgen Long is composed of a blend of two vineyards this year, with sixty percent hailing from the Seven Springs Vineyard (chard vines planted in 2012) and forty percent from the Durant Vineyard (vines planted in 1998). Both parcels are planted with Dijon clones. The wine was fermented in a mix of puncheons, Burgundy barrels and stainless steel and raised in ten percent new oak puncheons, forty percent one wine barrels and the remaining fifty percent in older casks for one year, prior to blending and a finishing winter in stainless steel. The wine comes in at 13.1 percent and offers up a complex aromatic constellation of pear, apple, almond, a good base of soil, apple blossoms and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, young and full-bodied, with a tightly-knit personality, fine cut and grip and a long, promising finish. This has a bit more mid-palate stuffing and length than the Marine chardonnay this year, but it is a more reserved customer out of the blocks and deserves some time in the cellar to properly stretch its wings. 2022-2040. **92.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Willamette Valley” Pink Label- Morgen Long (Willamette Valley)**

As I mentioned last year, the Pink Label bottling of chardonnay from Seth Long takes its name from the unusual inclusion of a small percentage of pinot noir in the *cépages* of this wine. The *cépages* of the 2018 is a bit different from the 2017 version, as this year five percent of the blend is pinot noir from the Maresh Vineyard (both wine and less this year) and the other ninety-five percent is chardonnay from the Seven Springs Vineyard. The 2017 version did not show any overt color from this tiny pinot noir inclusion, but the 2018, with its higher percentage of pinot noir, is a delicate Rosé. The wine offers up a lovely and complex nose of tangerine, pear, a hint of rhubarb, salty soil tones, a discreet touch of fruit blossoms and a very delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, deep and full-bodied, with a fine core of fruit, excellent mineral drive and grip, zesty acids and superb focus on the long, complex and very

well-balanced finish. The influence of the pinot noir here is far more evident on the nose than on the palate, which tastes like a first class bottle of chardonnay and the wine is an excellent value at \$25 per bottle. It will be fascinating to follow how this wine evolves with cellaring. 2020-2040. **92+**.

**2018 Chardonnay “Durant Vineyard”- Morgen Long (Dundee Hills)**

Seth Long’s 2018 Durant bottling of chardonnay is the first I have tasted from him from this fine vineyard. The wine was raised in twenty-two percent new oak this year, but the new barrels were three hundred and fifty liter puncheons, with the Burgundy barrels used for the rest of the *elevage* all older casks. It spent its second winter in stainless steel tanks after *assemblage*. This is one of the riper wines from Seth in 2018, coming in at 13.66 percent octane, but Dundee Hills is a warmer region. The wine is very expressive on the nose, delivering scents of white peach, pear, hazelnut, iodine, a fine base of soil, a touch of pastry cream and a reserved framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and generous on the attack, with a rock solid core, good mineral drive and grip, fine acidity and a long, complex and classy finish. I like to think of this as Seth’s version of Meursault “Charmes”. 2020-2030+. **92**.

**2018 Chardonnay “Seven Springs Vineyard”- Morgen Long (Eola-Amity Hills)**

The 2018 Seven Springs Vineyard chardonnay from Seth Long is another excellent bottle from this biodynamically-farmed vineyard. This year twenty percent of the blend was raised in new, three hundred and fifty liter puncheons, twenty percent in “one wine” Burgundy casks and the rest in older barrels for the first year of *elevage*. The wine was then assembled and spent another six months in stainless steel tanks prior to bottling. The 2018 version is quite superb on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a mix of pear, apple, a touch of iodine, macadamia nuts, a fine signature of soil, fruit blossoms and a discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and intensely flavored, with an excellent core, a fine girdle of acidity and superb balance and grip on the long, energetic and complex finish. This is simply outstanding juice. 2020-2040. **93+**.

**2018 Chardonnay “The Eyrie Vineyard”- Morgen Long (Dundee Hills)**

A few vintages ago, Jason Lett began selling the production from a small parcel of own-rooted vines in the old Eyrie Vineyard to Seth Long, with these vines having been planted back in 1968 on Jory soils over a base of volcanic basalt. There is only a single cask and it is a “one wine” barrel for the *elevage*. The 2018 Eyrie Vineyard bottling comes in this year at 13.44 percent octane and delivers a superb aromatic constellation of apple, pear, almond, a very complex base of soil tones, lemon blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with stellar transparency and grip, a fine girdle of acidity, laser-like focus and a very, very long, nascently complex finish. I sold David Lett’s chardonnays back in the mid-1980s and this takes me back to those times briskly, though the precision here is a step up from those days. This is a brilliant bottle of chardonnay in the making and totally worth the price of admission! 2023-2045+. **95**.

**2018 Chardonnay- Mayacamas Vineyards (Mount Veeder)**

The new release of chardonnay from Mayacamas Vineyards is from the 2018 vintage and comes in at 14.5 percent octane. The wine offers up a bright and classic nose of apple, lemon, lovely soil tones, white flowers and just a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and very well-balanced for its octane level, with a good core, lovely soil signature, zesty acids and fine length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This does not seem to be 14.5 percent alcohol on the backend, as it carries its alcohol quite well and only shows a whisper of backend heat on the finish. Good juice, but given its octane, it seems likely to

not age quite as long as some of the lower alcohol vintages of chardonnay have done in the past. But, for relatively near-term drinking, this is very tasty. 2020-2026. **90.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Sonoma Valley”- Model Farm**

The 2018 Chardonnay “Sonoma Valley” from Model Farm is a beautiful wine in the making. The bouquet is pure, precise and still youthful, offering up scents of apple, lemon, pit fruits, salty soil tones, white flowers, fresh almond, lavender and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with an excellent core of fruit, superb mineral drive and a long, racy and still very youthful finish. This is a great bottle of chardonnay in the making, but I would give it two or three years in the cellar and let it blossom properly, for though it is already quite delicious, the wine is only showing the first vestige of its inherent complexity and there is a lot more to come with a bit of patience. 2022-2035. **93.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Affinités”- Nicolas-Jay Wines (Willamette Valley)**

This is the first vintage of chardonnay offered by the joint venture of Jean-Nicolas Méo and Jay Boberg. The grapes for this bottling are primarily from the estate’s own Bishop Creek Vineyard in Yamhill-Carlton, but these were augmented by some purchased fruit from a vineyard in the cooler Eola-Amity Hills appellation. There were five barrels made in this first vintage, with all of the casks used previously. The wine offers up a pure and youthful bouquet of pear, apple, a hint of passion fruit, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, spring flowers, a good base of soil and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and youthful, with a lovely core of fruit, good soil signature and focus, sound acids and fine length and grip on the still quite primary finish. This is a fine bottle in the making, but it is still a puppy and I would try to give it a couple of years in the cellar to really blossom. 2022-2035. **91+.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Alpine Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

Rhys’ 2018 Alpine Vineyard Chardonnay is beautifully expressive on both the nose and palate this year- right out of the blocks, though it is certainly built for the long haul! The wine comes in at a refined 12.8 percent alcohol and offers up a lovely, sophisticated bouquet of apple, pear, lemon blossoms, fresh almond, salty minerality, citrus zest, vanillin oak and a touch of acacia blossoms as well in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, balanced and just a touch reductive for cellaring, with a marvelous core, stunning mineral drive and grip, ripe, buried acids and laser-like focus on the long, complex and utterly refined finish. I love the backend lift here! Great juice. 2023-2045+. **94.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Bearwallow Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Anderson Valley)**

The 2018 Bearwallow chardonnay from Rhys Vineyards comes in at a cool and classy 12.5 percent octane this year and offers up a simply stellar aromatic constellation of apple, pear, a gorgeous base of Mendocino soil tones, gentle notes of honeysuckle and white lilies, citrus zest, a hint of more savory elements (wild fennel?) and a refined framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and very energetic on the backend, with a superb core of fruit, lovely soil signature and grip and a very, very long, lifted and complex finish. This seems to me to be the best vintage of Bearwallow chardonnay I have yet tasted from Rhys! 2020-2045. **94.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Horseshoe Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Horseshoe Vineyard bottling of chardonnay from Kevin Harvey and his team at Rhys is another cool customer, tipping the scales at a svelte 12.7 percent alcohol in this vintage. The wine was bottled fairly reductively, so it takes a bit of time in the glass to blossom, but eventually soars from the glass in a blend of pear, apple, salty minerality, white flowers, iodine, a

bit of almond and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, zesty and full-bodied, with great mineral undertow, a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. This will need some bottle age to blossom, as it is more reserved in personality out of the blocks than either the Bearwallow or Mt. Pajaro bottlings. 2024-2045+. **93.**

**2018 Chardonnay “Mt. Pajaro Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 is the second vintage of chardonnay I have tasted from the Mt. Pajaro Vineyard. The wine is lovely on both the nose and palate, wafting from the glass in a refined aromatic constellation of apple, pear, stony soil tones, a gentle touch of honeysuckle and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, crisp and full, with outstanding depth at the core, excellent cut and grip and fine length and backend energy on the complex and perfectly balanced finish. This has outstanding intensity of flavor on the palate and very impressive lift on the finish. I really liked the 2017 version, but this is a noticeable step up! 2020-2035+. **92+.**

**2017 Chardonnay “Bien Nacido Vineyard”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Ynez Valley)**

The 2017 Chardonnay “Bien Nacido Vineyard” from Jim Clendenen at Au Bon Climat comes in at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a pure and refined bouquet of fresh pineapple, nectarine, a touch of lemon peel, lovely soil tones, dried flowers and a discreet foundation of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and very elegant in profile, with a lovely core of fruit, very good soil signature, zesty acids and lovely balance and grip on the long, complex and classy finish. This is fine, fine juice that will clearly age beautifully. 2020-2035. **93.**

**2017 Chardonnay “Sanford & Benedict Vineyard”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Maria Valley)**

The 2017 Chardonnay “Sanford & Benedict Vineyard” bottling from Au Bon Climat is another very suave and polished example of this varietal, offering up a classy and quite floral aromatic constellation of pear, apple, white lilies, a beautiful base of soil, citrus zest, a touch of vanillin oak and slightly exotic topnotes that suggest bergamot and mint. On the palate the wine is pure, refined and full, with an impressive core of fruit, excellent transparency down to the soil, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. I love this wine’s understated personality, that invites reflection and unveils more and more with the more attention is paid to it in the glass. First class chardonnays for grownups. 2020-2035+. **93+.**

**2017 Chardonnay “Coastview Vineyard”- Big Basin Vineyards (Monterey County)**

The 2017 Coastview Vineyard bottling of chardonnay from Big Basin Vineyards is barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts and aged for one year in twenty percent new casks, and then finished with an additional six months in stainless steel tanks after *assemblage*. The wine delivers a fine bouquet of pear, white peach, a fine base of minerality, acacia blossoms and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a superb core of fruit, excellent soil signature and grip, zesty acids and a long, beautifully balanced and classy finish. This really reminds me of the old Chalone chardonnays of yesteryear. 2020-2026. **93.**

**2017 Chardonnay “Cascadia”- Brick House Wine Company (Ribbon Ridge)**

Doug Tunnell’s chardonnays are barrel-fermented with indigenous yeasts and raised mostly in older casks for the next ten months, followed by six months of finish aging in stainless steel tanks prior to bottling. The Cascadia bottling is his reserve chardonnay, with the 2017 coming in at a cool twelve percent octane and having seen ten percent new oak in this vintage. It offers up a lovely, youthful nose of pear, apple, fresh almond, a beautiful base of soil tones, a

touch of honeysuckle and a very discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and tightly-knit, with a fine core, superb mineral drive and grip and a long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. This is an excellent bottle in the making, and though it is quite approachable already, it is most emphatically still a puppy and I would try to keep my hands off of it for at least another couple of years and really let it blossom properly. 2022-2035. **92.**

**2017 Chardonnay “Four Winds”- Crowley Wines (Willamette Valley)**

The chardonnay vines at Four Winds Vineyard are self-rooted, ungrafted vines that were planted a bit more than a quarter century ago. Tyson Crowley’s 2017 vintage here comes in at a cool 12.5 percent octane and offers up a refined bouquet of apple, pear, almond, a fine base of minerality, spring flowers and a discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, precise, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, good mineral drive and grip, bright acids and lovely length on the complex and vibrant finish. This is first class juice! 2020-2030+. **92+.**

**2017 Chardonnay- Thomas Fogarty Winery (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2017 Chardonnay from Thomas Fogarty Winery is drinking very nicely today, offering up a deep, pure and complex bouquet of pear, apple, buttery oak, fruit blossoms and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wide open in personality today, with a lovely core of fruit, still good acids and fine length and grip on the gently oaky finish. This is very tasty chardonnay for current drinking, but it is showing its new oak component a bit more today than I imagine it did in its youth, so I would think about drinking it up over the next few years. Good juice. 2020-2023. **90.**

**2016 Chardonnay “Nuits-Blanches au Bouge”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Maria Valley)**

According to Jim Clendenen’s history on the ABC website, the Nuits-Blanches au Bouge bottling had its origin back in the 1990s, when he decided to produce a more obvious, over the top style of chardonnay to cater to the critics of the time that were adrift with his utterly refined chards at Au Bon Climat. The early vintages were labeled as “Nuits-Blanches” and, to quote Jim, were “bold, brash, obvious and overwhelming.” I am glad I did not have to taste them! He decided to rein in the style in the 2000 vintage, adding more structure and an acid spine to the riper style and hence was born the new and improved, “Nuits-Blanches au Bouge” moniker. His 2016 version is sourced from fruit from Bien Nacido and the Au Bon Climat Vineyards and comes in at a quite civilized 13.5 percent octane. It offers up a lovely nose of pineapple, lemon peel, a nice touch of soil, dried flowers and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and wide open in personality, with a lovely core of fruit, good focus and complexity and a long, plush and classy finish. One does not have the impression here, as one does in the Bien Nacido and Sanford & Benedict bottlings, that there are more secrets to be revealed with further bottle age, and what one sees is what one gets. It is a very tasty and well-balanced bottle, but somehow, in the context of ABC, intellectually unfulfilling to my palate. 2020-2030. **91.**

**2016 Chardonnay “Cascadia”- Brick House Wine Company (Ribbon Ridge)**

The Cascadia bottling is the top of the line chardonnay at Brick House, with the grapes all from the biodynamically-farmed ranch here. The 2016 version is a touch riper than the 2017 version, but still lithesome at 12.6 percent octane. The bouquet has opened up beautifully with a year’s worth of bottle age, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of apple, white peach, lovely minerality, gentle notes of hazelnut, orange zest, vanillin oak, apple blossoms and a hint of the



nutmeg tones to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and wide open, with a lovely core and soil signature, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and very nicely balanced finish. This is a beautiful bottle, and given how well balanced it is today, I have a hard time imagining it will not keep at least another decade. 2020-2030. **92.**

**2016 Chardonnay “Ferrington Vineyard”- Poe Wines (Anderson Valley)**

Sam Sheehan’s 2016 Ferrington Vineyard Chardonnay is a very pretty wine that shows fine secondary layering of complexity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined mix of pear, apple, hazelnut, a fine base of soil, dried flowers and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, bright and classy, with a fine core of fruit, good mineral undertow, zesty acids and lovely focus and grip on the long, poised and complex finish. The Manchester Ridge Vineyard bottling (see below) is every bit as complex as the Ferrington, but this has a bit more elegance on both the nose and palate. Fine, fine juice. 2020-2026. **92.**

**2016 Chardonnay “Manchester Ridge Vineyard”- Poe Wines (Mendocino Ridge)**

The 2016 Manchester Ridge Vineyard bottling of chardonnay from Samantha Sheehan is really drinking beautifully today, and happily, this is still available in several markets in the US. The wine is a light on its feet thirteen percent octane and offers up lovely aromatic complexity on its nose of apple, a hint of fresh pineapple, beautiful soil tones, fresh nutmeg, a fine base of almost salty soil tones, a discreet touch of vanillin oak and a gently musky floral topnote. On the palate the wine is bright, elegant, complex and full-bodied, with a superb core, zesty acids, fine focus and grip and a long, poised and vibrant finish. This is really lovely drinking right now. 2020-2026. **91.**



**2015 Chardonnay “Le Bon Climat”- Clendenen Family Winery (Santa Maria Valley)**

The 2015 Chardonnay “Le Bon Climat” from the Clendenen Family Winery is barrel-fermented and aged in entirely new, François Frères barrels during its *elevage*. The wine is beautifully complex on the nose, showing some fine secondary evolution in its constellation of pear, pineapple, a fine base of soil, lavender, just a touch of acacia blossoms and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a lovely core and soil signature, fine acidity and a long, poised and beautifully balanced finish. At age five this is fully into its plateau of peak maturity and is drinking splendidly, but it still has plenty of life ahead of it as well. 2020-2030. **93.**

**2014 Chardonnay “Cascadia”- Brick House Wine Company (Ribbon Ridge)**

The 2014 vintage was one of heat and drought and this is reflected in the 2014 Cascadia bottling of chardonnay from Doug Tunnell at Brick House, as this wine came in at a quite robust 13.7 percent alcohol in this vintage. The wine is ripe and tropical on the nose, offering up scents of pineapple, pear, musky floral tones, a touch of almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and drinking very well at age six, with a fine core of fruit, still sound framing acids and just a whisper of backend heat poking out on the long and quite precise finish. This is a big boy in style and more a creature of its vintage than the winery’s house style, at least as well as I know it thus far, but it is quite tasty and for drinking over the next few years, it still has plenty of pleasure to offer. 2020-2023. **88.**

**2014 Chardonnay “Cuvée Forêts Diverses”- Hamacher Wines (Willamette Valley)**

Erich Hamacher worked for stints at Robert Mondavi, Chalone and Etude in California before decamping for Oregon in 1995. His 2014 chardonnay was raised in twenty-five percent new oak and comes in at 13.5 percent. It offers up a ripe, complex and gently musky bouquet of pineapple, acacia blossoms, a bit of citrus peel, a good base of soil and a nice touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and still nicely bright and bouncy at age six, with a plump core, perfectly respectable soil signature, good focus and grip and a long, complex finish. Given the rather singular nature of the 2014 vintage, this has turned out quite well and continues to drink nicely. I would love to taste one of Erich’s chardonnays from a vintage with a more classical profile, as I suspect it would be outstanding, rather than very good. 2020-2026. **88.**

**2010 Chardonnay “Demuth Vineyard”- Knez Winery (Anderson Valley)**

The 2010 Chardonnay “Demuth Vineyard” bottling from Knez Winery has aged beautifully and is at its apogee at age ten and offers up a pure, very complex and still quite vibrant bouquet of fresh pineapple, a touch of passion fruit, candied lemon, a discreet note of beeswax, salty soil tones, citrus blossoms, a hint of bergamot and a nicely understated framing of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and perfectly balanced, with a lovely core and resolution, still good acids and a long, complex and very classy finish. This has aged beautifully and is now at the peak of its powers. I clearly underestimated both its quality and its aging potential when I last tasted it back in 2013! 2020-2025+. **92.**

***Gamay and Gamay Blends*****2018 Rhinestones- Bow and Arrow**

The 2018 vintage of Rhinestones from Bow and Arrow is composed of a blend of sixty-five percent pinot noir and thirty-five percent gamay, both grown at Johan Vineyard. The wine

offers up a lovely bouquet of black cherries, cranberries, smoked meats, a touch of pepper, fresh thyme, a complex base of soil and a hint of dill in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a good core of fruit, tangy acids, moderate, suave tannins and fine length and grip on the nicely balanced finish. This could do with a bit of bottle age to blossom, but it will be a very tasty and quite unique blend in due course. 2024-2045. **91.**

**2018 Gamay Noir- Bow and Arrow (Willamette Valley)**

The 2018 Willamette Valley bottling of Gamay from Scott Frank is his favorite that he has crafted of this bottling at Bow and Arrow, which he has been producing here since the 2011 vintage. The wine comes in at a cool and crunchy 12.5 percent octane and offers up a beautifully black fruity bouquet of black cherries, sweet dark berries, pomegranate, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke, fresh thyme and a dollop of other savory elements in the upper register. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and beautifully balanced, with a fine sense of structural tension between its ripe fruit, tangy acids and moderate, buried tannins. This is still youthful and will be more complex with further bottle age, but given its exceptional charms out of the blocks, good luck keeping your hands off of it and letting it age! Morgon fans will love this wine. 2020-2035. **92.**

**2018 Gamay Noir “Johan Vineyard”- Bow and Arrow**

The 2018 Johan Vineyard bottling of Gamay Noir from Bow and Arrow is the first time this has been bottled on its own; it was raised in a single older oak puncheon and just kept insisting in the cellar that it deserved its own bottling this year. The wine is quite different in personality from the Willamette Valley cuvée, with a more red fruity and botanical personality out of the blocks. The bouquet is bright, complex and precise, jumping from the glass in a mix of cranberry, red cherries, fresh herb tones, a nice touch of whole clusters, peonies, a really lovely base of soil and a hint of gamebird in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and complex, with lovely focus and grip, fine soil signature, modest tannins and a long, vibrant and energetic finish. This is a lovely wine, but I would opt to try and give it a year in the cellar to allow some of its secondary complexity to start to emerge. 2021-2035. **91+.**

**2018 Clos Ladybug “Casserole” Red Table Wine- Brick House Wine Co. (Ribbon Ridge)**

The 2018 Clos Ladybug from Brick House is composed of the unique blend of fifty-three percent gamay, forty-two percent pinot noir and five percent chardonnay. The wine is essentially a blend of the “good leftovers” after the fermenters were full, hence the Casserole rubric. The 2018 comes in at thirteen percent octane and offers up a vibrant nose of cherries, cranberries, woodsmoke, a touch of fresh thyme, gentle spice tones and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and crunchy, with a good core, fine transparency and grip, modest tannins and a long, tangy and surprisingly complex finish. This is done in the style of a Bourgogne *Passetoutgrains*, but the only example I ever tasted this serious in the Côte d’Or came from David Clark when he was running his small domaine in Morey St. Denis. This is a lovely middleweight. 2020-2030. **89.**

**2018 Gamay Noir “Ribbon Ridge”- Brick House Wine Company**

As I mentioned above, Doug Tunnell has been farming his forty acre farm by organic principals since he purchased the property back in 1990. Pinot Noir was the first variety to be planted at Brick House in that inaugural year, but Gamay followed close behind, with this grape going into the ground here in 1992. Doug’s 2018 Ribbon Ridge bottling of Gamay is raised in older French casks and destemmed prior to fermentation. It offers up a bright and vivid, red fruity nose of cherries, red plums, a touch of cranberry, a beautiful base of soil tones, woodsmoke, lovely spice tones and a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-

bodied and beautifully transparent, with a fine core, a bit of ripe, seamless tannin and a long, focused and tangy finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Gamay, and though it is approachable today, I would tuck it away in the cellar for a year or two and let its secondary layers really start to emerge. It has great backend lift and grip and will easily last twenty years in bottle! 2021-2040. **92.**

**2018 Gamay Noir “Due East”- Brick House Company (Ribbon Ridge)**

The Due East bottling of Gamay from Brick House is from a single parcel on the estate that is planted with a clone that is seldom found outside of Beaujolais. It was handled similarly in the cellar to the Ribbon Ridge bottling, with destemming and aging in older French barrel for a year prior to bottling. As the name of the cuvée implies, this parcel of gamay has an easterly exposition and is a bit cooler than the rest of the blocks of gamay planted on the farm, so the 2018 version comes in a quarter point lower in octane than the Ribbon Ridge bottling (13.25 versus 13.5 percent). The wine is already beautifully expressive aromatically, wafting from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, cranberries, vinesmoke, violets, fresh thyme, a very complex base of soil tones, a hint of cedary oak and a bit of gamebird in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and tangy, with a good core, fine soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, complex and dancing finish. This reminds me strongly of a top notch example of Côte de Brouilly. 2020-2040+. **93.**

**2017 Gamay Noir “Willamette Valley”- Belle Pente Vineyards (Yamhill-Carlton)**

This is the first vintage of gamay that I have tasted from Brian O'Donnell at Belle Pente, and, not surprisingly, it is excellent. Brian planted a small parcel of gamay when he bought the farm in 1994 and he has enough to produce only one hundred cases per year. The 2017 version included twenty-five percent whole clusters and was raised in older barrels for just about one year prior to bottling right before the 2018 harvest. The wine offers up a bright and complex bouquet of cherries, cranberries, bonfire, gamebird, soil and a hint of pepper. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and crunchy in texture, with a good core, fine soil signature, a bit of backend tannin and fine focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This is very good juice. It is certainly approachable today, but I am going to age my remaining stock for another three or four years and let the wine really start hitting on all cylinders! 2020-2035+. **91+.**

**2016 Gamay Noir “Ribbon Ridge”- Brick House Company**

The 2016 Ribbon Ridge bottling of Gamay Noir from Doug Tunnell is an excellent example of this underrated variety. The wine is fairly ripe in 2016, coming in at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a youthful and black fruity nose of sweet dark berries, woodsmoke, pepper and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly structured, with a rock solid core, a touch of backend tannin and very good length and grip on the nascently complex and quite promising finish. This is approachable today, but it is really still a young wine and I would opt to tuck it away in the cellar for at least a couple of years and let it develop some of its secondary layers of complexity. For early drinking, both of the 2018 bottlings of gamay from Doug seem to have a bit more early charm, while this fine 2016 version is really like a young Morgon crying out for a bit more time in the cellar! 2022-2035. **91.**

### ***Alicante Bouschet, Mission, Petite Sirah and Other Blends***

#### **2019 Mission- Monte Rio Cellars (Lodi)**

The Mission grape, on which today's California wine world was founded hundreds of years ago, is notoriously light in color. The team at Monte Rio takes advantage of this and bottles this wine in a clear bottle, so that it has the look of a dark Rosé, though it is a red wine that is carbonically macerated like Beaujolais and raised in a combination of cement tanks and older oak casks for six months prior to bottling. The wine comes in at twelve percent octane and offers up a bright nose of cherries, rhubarb, a touch of fresh fig, a good base of soil and a topnote of spices from the whole clusters. On the palate the wine is medium-full, balanced and fairly complex, with a good core and just a touch of backend tannin on the long finish. I would love to see a bit more acidity here, as the wine is a touch flat on the palate, but certainly delivers plenty of character. 2020-2030. **87.**

#### **2018 Alicante Bouschet "Gordon W"- Sabelli-Frisch (Lodi)**

The 2018 Alicante Bouschet from Adam Sabelli-Frisch comes in at a cool 12.7 percent octane. Like all of Adam's wines, it is fermented with indigenous yeasts and bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. It offers up a deep and youthfully sappy nose of black berries, blueberries, a touch of coffee bean, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and tangy, with good balance and grip, ripe, well-measured tannins and a long, still fairly primary finish. This is quite drinkable today, but it is still a puppy and a few years in the cellar will allow some of its secondary layers of complexity to start to emerge. It is the first example of pure Alicante Bouschet I have tasted from the New World and is quite impressive. 2020-2040. **91+.**

#### **2018 Mission "La Malinche"- Sabelli-Frisch (Lodi)**

Adam Sabelli-Frisch sources his Mission grapes from Somers Vineyard, with no one quite sure just how old the vines are, but it is possible that they date back to the dawn of the twentieth century! As Adam notes, "for sure, they are fifty-plus years old" and maybe quite older. The 2018 La Malinche comes in at 13.7 percent and was raised in fifteen percent new oak this year. It is not particularly dark in color, but loaded with personality on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up scents of strawberries, fresh date, beautiful spice tones, a touch of rhubarb, a fine base of soil and a deft foundation of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and nicely soil-driven, with a good core of fruit, ripe, chewy tannins, bright acids and a long, vibrant and transparent finish. This is an excellent wine! 2020-2040+. **92.**

#### **2017 Bricco Rosso- Aeris (Rhys Vineyards) California**

This is the first I have tasted of the red wines planned under the Aeris label produced by winemaker Jeff Brinkman and proprietor Kevin Harvey. The 2017 Bricco Rosso is a blend of fifty percent Nebbiolo, twenty percent Nerello Mascalese and ten percent each of Barbera, Primitivo and Carignan. All of these grapes are planted on the Centennial Mountain Vineyard in Sonoma. The wine is beautifully deep and transparent on the nose, offering up scents of cherries, leather, rose petals, a lovely base of soil tones, bonfire, a touch of cedar and a bit of road tar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and chewy, with an excellent core and soil signature, firm, well-integrated tannins, tangy acids and very good length and grip on the nascently complex and promising finish. The wine comes in at 14.5 percent octane, but carries its alcohol very well and should age long and gracefully. Though it is only fifty percent

Nebbiolo in the blend, it is structured like a young Barolo and built for the cellar. A very exciting new addition to the firmament of California wine! 2030-2070. **92.**

### **2016 Petite Sirah- David Fulton Winery (Napa)**

The David Fulton winery can trace its family roots here in Saint Helena all the way back to 1860. Their 2016 Petite Sirah is a big boy, tipping the scales listed at a hefty 14.9 percent octane and offering up a ripe and jammy bouquet of black cherries, chocolate, damp soil, a touch of prune and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and fairly sweet in style, with a good core, a bit of gritty tannin and a long, slightly warm and balsamic finish. Given the very high alcohol content here, I am really rather surprised how much residual sugar there is as well. The grapes must have been picked with a potential alcohol well north of seventeen percent! Not my cup of tea, though probably reasonably well made for its style. 2020-2030+? **82.**



### ***Syrah and Other Rhône Varietals***

#### **2018 Syrah “Petaluma Gap”- Model Farm (Petaluma Gap)**

The 2018 Petaluma Gap bottling of syrah from Model Farm is from the couple’s estate vineyard. The wine comes in at 12.5 percent octane this year, was entirely whole cluster fermentation and raised in two hundred and twenty-eight liter, used French barrels. The bouquet is pure, youthful and flat out beautiful, wafting from the glass in a complex constellation of red

and black raspberries, smoked meats, pepper, a lovely base of soil, intense notes of lavender, a hint of cedar and a very gentle topnote of violet. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with stunning intensity of flavor and grip, ripe, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and very complex finish. The aromatic and flavor profile of this wine remind me very strongly of Gerard Chave's estate bottling of Saint-Joseph back in the day, but it has far more depth and is a more powerful and mineral wine on the palate than that lovely wine from Domaine Chave's yesteryears. Great juice. 2028-2075. **94.**

**2018 Syrah "La Cruz Vineyard"- Model Farm (Petaluma Gap)**

The La Cruz Vineyard bottling of Syrah from Sean and Joanna Castorani is a touch riper than their estate vineyard bottling, as the La Cruz Vineyard is a bit further inland in the Petaluma Gap and does not have the same constant winds here. But, a touch riper is still only 13.3 percent in the 2018 vintage, with the wine again all whole clusters and raised in five hundred liter, older French casks. The wine is more black fruity on the nose than the estate vineyard version, offering up a nascently complex bouquet of cassis, black raspberries, pepper, black olive, hung game, a touch of *garrigue* and just a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and utterly classic in profile, with a superb core, fine mineral drive, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is a bit broader-shouldered in personality than the estate vineyard bottling this year, but it is an equally superb example of first class syrah. It really reminds me of a young Côte-Rôtie from a vintage like 1978! 2028-2075. **93+.**

**2017 Homestead- Big Basin Vineyards (California)**

The Homestead bottling from Big Basin is composed of a blend of fifty-seven percent grenache, twenty-three percent carignan, twenty percent syrah and five percent mourvèdre. Most of the grapes come from vineyards in the Gabilan Mountains, but there is also a bit of grenache from a Santa Cruz Mountain vineyard in the blend, which is why the wine carries just a generic California designation. The 2017 version comes in at fourteen percent alcohol, includes fifty percent whole clusters and was raised entirely in older barrels. The wine offers up a deep and complex nose of raspberries, a bit of dark berry, bonfire, spiced meats, pepper, *garrigue* and stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, broad-shouldered and peppery, with a rock solid core of fruit, excellent mineral undertow, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and youthfully complex finish. This wine closes with impressive length and grip, but could do with a bit of bottle age to soften up and really start to hit on all cylinders. My only modest concern is that it is sealed with an artificial cork. I would much rather see it under an agglomerated natural cork, as I have not always had good luck aging wine under plastic corks and this wine has the balance and stuffing to really age nicely! But, closure aside, this is really a fine, Châteauneuf-like bottle that recalls the glory days in the southern Rhône. 2027-2050+? **92.**

**2017 Mourvèdre "Enz Vineyard"- None Such Wines (Lime Kiln Valley- San Benito)**

The 2017 Mourvèdre "Enz Vineyard" from None Such Wines is made from some of the oldest vines in the United States, as these mourvèdre vines were planted in the Gabilan Mountains all the way back in 1923. The grapes are foot-trodden, fermented with one hundred percent whole clusters and aged in older casks for ten months prior to bottling. The 2017 comes in at a cool 12.7 percent octane and delivers a fine aromatic constellation of dark berries, roasted meats, chicory, stony soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and tangy, with a fine core of fruit, good mineral drive and grip, plenty of acidity and a



long, nascently complex and moderately tannic finish. This is a very good bottle in the making, but give it a few years in the cellar to soften up. 2025-2045+. **90.**

**2017 Syrah “Horseshoe Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

Sometimes I feel like syrah is the great, forgotten variety at Rhys Vineyards, as it has had to play second fiddle to pinot noir (and chardonnay?) since day one here and is probably moving further back in the pack as the new Italian project really starts to gain steam. But, I truly love what the Rhys team has done over the years with syrah and some of my most-prized bottles in my cellar are their syrahs, which I am doing my best to keep my hands off of while they climb to cruising altitude. The 2017 Horseshoe syrah is a stunning wine in the making, offering up a pure and classic nose of cassis, black raspberry, pepper, grilled meats, great whole cluster spice elements, stony soil tones, bonfire and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and perfectly balanced, with a superb core, great soil drive and grip, ripe, buried tannins and a long, complex and extremely promising finish. This is (yet again) another truly great bottle of syrah in the making. 2030-2075. **94.**

**2016 Grenache “Coastview Vineyard”- Big Basin Vineyards (Monterey County)**

The grenache vines in the Coastview Vineyard in the Gabilan Mountains were budded over from syrah planted in 1999 to grenache in 2009, on a steep hillside of decomposed quartz and limestone. Bradley Brown has only previously made a straight grenache from this parcel in the 2012 vintage, as the grapes will often find their way into his Homestead blend. The 2016 Grenache is a big boy, coming in at 14.9 percent octane and offering up a ripe and complex nose of black raspberry, fruitcake, hung game, pepper, a bit of Sultana raisin, spices and stony soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, powerful in personality and impressively well-balanced for its octane, with a fine core of fruit, firm, chewy tannins and a long, complex and slightly overripe finish. I am not in love with the notes of *sur maturité* on both the nose and palate here, but that is the nature of this grape so often in this age of global warming. For fans of modern Châteauneuf du Pape, this is a great wine. For me, it is not my cup of tea. 2026-2045+? **85-90.** (depending on how one feels about most of the wines coming out of the southern Rhône these days).

**2016 Syrah “Coastview Vineyard”- Big Basin Vineyards (Monterey County)**

I was very impressed last summer with the 2015 vintage of the Coastview Vineyard bottling of syrah from Big Basin, and the 2016 is an excellent follow-up. This vineyard sits at twenty-two hundred foot elevation in the Gabilan Mountains, which run north-south down the eastern side of the Salinas Valley, looking out over the Santa Lucia Highlands towards Monterey Bay. The vineyard sits six miles south of the Mount Harlan AVA and about ten miles north of the Chalone AVA. The 2016 Coastview Vineyard bottling comes in at 14.2 percent octane this year, included ninety percent whole clusters and was raised entirely in older casks. The wine delivers a fine aromatic blend of black raspberries, cassis, smoked meats, a fine base of soil, pepper, a touch of sweet youthful stems, *garrigue*, woodsmoke and plenty of spices in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and tangy, with excellent stony soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins, excellent balance and grip and a long, complex and extremely promising finish. I love the backend lift here on the finish. This is going to be stunning syrah in due course, but let it hibernate for a while in the cellar. 2026-2060. **93+.**

**2016 Syrah “Rattlesnake Rock”- Big Basin Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2016 Rattlesnake Rock bottling of syrah from Big Basin is one of their estate vineyard bottlings, as these vines were planted in 2000 in this windy parcel that sits between

thirteen hundred and fourteen hundred feet above sea level. The 2016 version includes one-third whole clusters, was fermented with indigenous yeasts and aged for twenty-one months in used, three hundred liter barrels. The *cépages* here includes two percent of viognier that was co-fermented with the syrah. The wine comes in at 13.9 percent octane and offers up a deep and properly reserved bouquet of cassis, black raspberry, grilled meats, pepper, a touch of black olive, fine stony soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with a superb core of fruit, firm, ripe tannins and outstanding balance and grip on the long, nascently complex and very, very promising finish. There is a strong vein of iron in the soils here and this really comes across on the backend here. This is outstanding syrah in the making, with plenty of structure and outstanding depth of fruit. Think of old school Hermitage with a different, stony soil signature. 2028-2060. **93.**

**2016 Syrah “Sixty-Two Terraces”- Big Basin Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The Sixty-Two Terraces bottling of syrah from Big Basin hails from a very steep parcel that is planted on a rocky spur that climbs up from right behind the winery to the main mountain ridge above them. The topsoil is very meager and this translates to very small berries on the clusters. Like the Rattlesnake Rock bottling, this includes two percent viognier and was fermented with indigenous yeasts. The whole clusters used here are a bit less at twenty-seven percent, and of the four, three hundred liter barrels that were produced of this wine in 2016, one was new wood. The bouquet is excellent, offering up a spicy blend of red and black raspberries, smoked meats, stony soil tones, a touch of lavender, bonfire, cedar and a beautiful array of spice tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and transparent in profile, with a fine core of fruit, great backend mineral drive, firm, chewy tannins and very good focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This is only the second vintage that Big Basin has bottled of Sixty-Two Terraces Syrah and the 2016 is built for the cellar, but is going to age beautifully and will be outstanding to drink in another eight to ten years. 2028-2055+. **92+.**

**2016 Syrah “Odeon”- Big Basin Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains/Monterey County)**

Big Basin’s Odeon bottling is an interesting blend of sixty percent syrah, two percent viognier and thirty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon. The syrah and viognier hail from the Brousseau Vineyard in the Gabilan Mountains and the cabernet sauvignon from the Betchart Vineyard on the Monte Bello Ridge in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The winery has been producing this bottling for a decade, but the 2016 was my first vintage to try and I was quite impressed. The wine comes in at 13.9 percent octane and included sixty percent whole clusters this year, with the wine raised in twenty percent new oak for twenty-one months prior to bottling. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex blend of cassis, pepper, grilled meats, stony minerality, lavender, cigar wrapper and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a fine core of fruit, excellent mineral drive, ripe, chewy tannins and a long, well-balanced and very promising finish. This is an outstanding blend that works beautifully and will age long and gracefully. I would love to taste some of the earlier vintages of this wine to see how they are evolving, as the 2016 Odeon is excellent juice in the making! 2028-2055. **92+.**

**2015 Syrah “North Canyon Road”- Edmunds St. John (El Dorado County)**

Steve Edmunds’ North County Road bottling of syrah is composed of sixty-five percent fruit from Fenaughty Vineyard and thirty-five percent from Barsotti Ranch. The 2015 vintage comes in at 13.5 percent octane and delivers outstanding aromatic complexity in its mix of raspberries, smoked meats, pepper, lavender, stony minerality, beautiful spice tones, bonfire and

a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and very elegant in profile, with a fine structural chassis, an excellent core of fruit, ripe, seamless tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish that shows superb grip and backend lift. Surprisingly, this is more expressive today on the palate than it is on the nose. It is stellar syrah in the making. 2025-2055. **94.**

### **1995 Syrah “California”- Edmunds St. John**

Steve Edmunds’ 1995 “California” bottling of syrah is a lovely wine that has aged very gracefully and is at its apogee at age twenty-five. The bouquet is deep, complex and *à point*, offering up scents of cassis, pepper, roasted meats, a beautiful array of spice tones, a good base of soil, hickory smoke, a touch of leather and a bit of upper register lavender. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still shows a bit of backend tannin, with a good core, tangy acids, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and utterly satisfying finish. This is not as deep at the core as some of Steve’s single vineyard bottlings of syrah, but it is a fine and complex bottle of syrah at its peak. 2020-2035. **91.**



### ***Merlot and Sangiovese***

#### **2016 Sangiovese “Reward Ranch”- Kendric Vineyards (Shenandoah Valley)**

The 2016 Sangiovese “Reward Ranch” bottling from Kendric Vineyards is a lovely wine that retains that beautiful transparency that the varietal can offer if not allowed to ripen up too much in the generous sunshine of California. The wine still comes in at 13.7 percent octane, but

is nicely light in color and offers up a vibrant bouquet of cherries, strawberries, gentle herb tones, a fine base of soil, orange peel, woodsmoke and a bit of clove in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and soil-driven, with a nice touch of sappy red fruit at the core, fine balance and grip, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This is first class sangiovese in the making, and though it is approachable today, there are really some backend tannins here that could do with resolving and I would opt to tuck it away in the cellar for at least four or five years and let it soften up more completely. Fine juice. 2024-2045+. **92.**

#### **2016 Merlot- Mayacamas Vineyards (Mount Veeder)**

The 2016 is the new release of merlot from Mayacamas Vineyards. It comes in nicely ripe, listed at 13.6 percent octane and offers up a deep and classy bouquet of black cherries, cassis, cigar smoke, a good foundation of soil tones, cedar and a whisper of tobacco leaf in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush at the core, with good soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, nascently complex and well-balanced finish. This is a fine bottle of merlot for the cellar, as in the proper Mayacamas tradition, it is built for aging. It is probably a bit higher in octane than its stated level, but is nicely balanced and should age quite gracefully. Good juice. 2025-2050. **92.**

### ***Zinfandel***

#### **2014 Zinfandel “Mount Veeder”- Sky Vineyards**

The 2014 vintage of zinfandel from Lore Olds at Sky Vineyards is his forty-first harvest, as he purchased his parcel of volcanic red soil up above Mayacamas Vineyards on Mount Veeder all the way back in 1973, after having worked at Beaulieu Vineyards and Mayacamas. The wine comes in at an even fourteen percent and offers up an excellent, brambly young nose of raspberries, spiced meats, a bit of pepper, cloves, a touch of cumin, stony soil tones, bonfire and a bit of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, a firm chassis of chewy tannin, good mineral drive and a long, complex and gently peppery finish. This is going to be an excellent wine when it is ready to drink, but in proper Sky tradition, it will need a good decade to really start to stretch its wings. Stylistically, this is as old school as old school gets! 2030-2065. **93.**

#### **1975 Zinfandel “Sonoma”- Joseph Swan Vineyards**

The 1975 Sonoma bottling of Zinfandel from Joseph Swan is one of the finest examples of this variety that I have ever had the pleasure to taste. Back in this era, Joe Swan was purchasing all of his zinfandel grapes from the Teldeschi Vineyard in Dry Creek Valley, so even though this wine is labeled as “Sonoma” zinfandel, it all hails from Teldeschi. Sadly, the following year of 1976 would be the last where Joe would be able to buy grapes from the Teldeschi Vineyard. This was my lone bottle of the 1975 and I shared it with friends visiting New York from Germany, as I figured this is not the type of wine they would likely have an opportunity to cross paths with in Europe. The wine is still at its apogee at nearly forty-five years of age, offering up a deep and complex bouquet of desiccated red berries, lavender, cloves, a complex base of soil tones, smoked meats and a touch of eucalyptus in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a fine core of fruit and still a touch of backend tannin perking up the long and very classy finish. With extended air, this wine develops an almost Burgundian sense of *sous bois* on both the nose and palate. This is a great bottle of zinfandel that still has plenty of life ahead of it! 2020-2045+. **95.**

### **1974 Cuvaision “Sonoma” Zinfandel**

I reported on this wine back in August of last year, but as I had a chance to chat with Lisa Togni about this wine since then and she asked her father about it, I wanted to set the record straight, now that I know its history a little bit better. 1974 was Philip Togni’s first vintage at Cuvaision, but he was hired here as a consultant during this year and so did not ferment the 1974 zinfandel, though he did oversee the end of its *elevage* and bottle it. As I noted last summer, the first several vintages overseen or made by Philip Togni here were made from purchased grapes, as the original vineyard planting had not been done properly and did not produce fruit up to the necessary quality. Consequently, the 1974 Zinfandel was made from grapes sourced in Sonoma County, as opposed to the 1975 (also reported on last August), which hailed from a vineyard source in the Napa Valley. The 1974 Zinfandel is a bit higher octane than the svelte ‘75, as it tips the scales at 13.8 percent alcohol, but it has aged beautifully and at age forty-five is still drinking at the top of its game, offering up a deep, complex and perfectly-resolved bouquet of black raspberries, fruitcake, lavender, gentle notes of eucalyptus, cigar smoke, a hint of saddle leather and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine pure, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with lovely transparency and focus, melted tannins and a long, complex and very refined finish. Philip Togni just made beautiful wines during his tenure at Cuvaision! 2019-2040+. **93.**

### ***Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier***

#### **2019 Pinot Noir- Loup Solitaire (Kendric Vineyards) Marin County**

Loup Solitaire is a new, second label created by Stewart Johnson at Kendric Vineyards, as he has had very good yields in the 2019 vintage and wanted to use the surplus production to make a pinot noir bottling focused on early accessibility. It would have been a great by the glass pour at restaurants, if they still existed. The wine is very pretty aromatically (as are all the Kendric Vineyards’ pinots), wafting from the glass in a youthful blend of red and black cherries, pomegranate, lavender, a hint of cola, woodsmoke and a good base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and tangy, with a good core, fine balance and grip and a long, nascently complex finish. This is certainly very tasty already, but it has the depth and balance to also age nicely over the medium-term and will be a great value, as it will be priced just under \$25 per bottle! 2020-2035. **90.**

#### **2018 Pinot Noir “Alexander Valley”- Alesia (Rhys Vineyards)**

The 2018 Alesia Alexander Valley bottling of pinot noir is fairly ripe this year, coming in at 13.8 percent alcohol, but also very pure, precise and classy. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of black cherries, pomegranate, raw cocoa, a fine base of soil tones, black tea, woodsmoke and just a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully black fruity in personality, with a generous, broad attack, a fine sense of sappiness at the core, very good soil signature, modest tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This is very tasty out of the blocks, but clearly will age long and gracefully as well. Good juice. 2020-2045+. **90+.**

#### **2018 Pinot Noir “Santa Cruz Mountains”- Alesia (Rhys Vineyards)**

The 2018 Santa Cruz Mountains pinot from Alesia is a touch lower in octane than the Anderson Valley bottling this year, coming in at 13.2 percent. The wine is really, really deep and refined on the nose in 2018, offering up a complex blend of sweet dark berries, cassis, espresso, fresh thyme, a fine base of minerality, bonfire, bitter chocolate and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and sports outstanding mid-palate depth and transparency, with fine-grained tannins, superb balance and grip and a long, complex and utterly

refined finish. This year, the Santa Cruz Mountains have a leg up in the Alesia pinot noir sweepstakes! 2023-2050. **93.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Dune and Mountain”- Big Basin Vineyards (Monterey County)**

The Dune and Mountain bottling of pinot noir from Big Basin is composed of a blend of fruit from two vineyards, the Coastview Vineyard in the Gabilan Mountains that Bradley Brown uses for several of his wines, and the very cool and foggy Olson Vineyard, located only a couple of miles in from Monterey Bay and planted on old sand dunes (hence the name of the cuvée). The wine comes in at 13.3 percent octane in 2018 and offers up a very refined bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a lovely touch of sweet stems from the whole clusters, complex soil tones, a hint of beetroot, fine spice tones and a discreet framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, focused and complex, with a full-bodied format, fine-grained tannins, excellent mid-palate depth and a long, nascently complex and very nicely balanced finish. This is a lovely wine that is approachable now, but still a puppy, and really deserves at least three or four more years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Like all of the 2018 and 2017 pinot noir bottlings from Big Basin, this is sealed with a NomaCork. Good juice. 2023-2050. **90+.**



**2018 Pinot Noir “Willamette Valley”- Bow and Arrow**

The 2018 Pinot Noir “Willamette Valley” bottling from Scott Frank at Bow and Arrow is really a lovely wine, offering up fine complexity already on both the nose and the palate. The



bouquet offers up a refined, black fruity mix of sweet dark berries, black cherries, a touch of stems, dark soil tones, cola, a hint of fir and a very discreet foundation of new oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This is quite approachable out of the blocks, but really deserves a few years in the cellar to allow it to blossom and show more of its secondary layering of complexity. A first class bottle of pinot noir and an insane bargain, as the winery's website lists it as available for \$20 per bottle! 2020-2040+. **91+**.

**2018 Pinot Noir "Santa Lucia Highlands"- Clarice Wine Company (Monterey County)**

Readers may recall how impressed I was with Adam Lee's 2017 pinot noirs, which were the first I had ever tasted from his Clarice Wine Company. His Santa Lucia Highlands bottling in 2018 is a different blend from the 2017, as nearly two-thirds of the fruit hails from Gary's Vineyard this year and just over a third from Rosella's Vineyard (where eighty-five percent of the blend came from last year). The wine includes nearly eighty percent whole clusters this year and is a bit lower in octane than the 2017, as it comes in just a hair under fourteen percent (though listed at 14.1 percent on the back label). There were eight barrels produced of the wine this year, with three of the eight new oak and the rest "one wine" casks. The wine is deep and pure on the nose, wafting from the glass in a youthful mix of cherries, red berries, a touch of cocoa powder, youthful notes of sweet stems from the whole clusters, a lovely base of soil, a hint of mustard seed and a discreet foundation of new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and very nicely balanced, with a fine core of fruit, good soil signature, ripe, buried tannins and very good length and grip on the currently fairly tightly-knit finish. I really like the size and shape of this wine, but it will want three years or so in the cellar to properly start to blossom. As it is sealed under screwcap, I gave it a half hour in decanter prior to tasting it, just to let it stretch its wings a bit. 2023-2055. **91+**.

**2018 Pinot Noir "Gary's Vineyard"- Clarice Wine Company (Monterey County)**

The 2018 Gary's Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Clarice Wine Company is a stellar bottle in the making. The wine is again, right around fourteen percent alcohol this year and included just over three quarters whole clusters. Like all of Adam Lee's pinots, it is fermented with indigenous yeasts after a short cold soak and the 2018 version was raised in just over seventy percent new oak. The wine offers up a gorgeous aromatic constellation of plums, black cherries, cocoa powder, gamebird, lovely soil tones, a dollop of whole clusters and a very suave framing of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full, with a superb core of fruit, fine soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and outstanding length and grip on the superbly balanced finish. This will be very velvety when it is ready to drink and is first class pinot. Decanted thirty minutes ahead of tasting, just in case, due to its closure. 2026-2055+. **93+**.

**2018 Pinot Noir "Rosella's Vineyard"- Clarice Wine Company (Monterey County)**

The 2018 Rosella's Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Adam Lee is very lovely this year, with the whole clusters up to eight percent in this vintage (last year was just under sixty percent) and the alcohol down around fourteen percent (rather than the 14.6 percent octane of the 2017 version). There are eleven casks of this wine in 2018, of which eight were new oak (this works out to 72.7 percent new wood, according to Adam's tech sheet), but the new oak is done beautifully. The bouquet offers up a very promising blend of plums, red and black cherries, a hint of gamebird, raw cocoa, a lovely base of soil, gentle smokiness and a very suave foundation of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and displays fine mid-palate depth of fruit, with good soil signature, ripe tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and grip on the long, youthfully complex and well balanced finish. This still could use a bit more time to more



fully integrated its new wood (which it will have no problems doing in due course) and should age very long and gracefully. It is sealed under screwcap, so I gave it half an hour in decanter prior to tasting, just on principal. It is a beautiful young bottle of pinot noir in the making. What I wouldn't give to see it under natural cork Adam! 2025-2055+. **93.**

**2018 Pinot Noir- Crowley Vineyards (Willamette Valley)**

The 2018 Willamette Valley bottling of pinot noir from Tyson Crowley is a very pretty example of this warm vintage, offering up a juicy nose of red and black cherries, a bit of cocoa powder, lovely soil tones, a touch of fresh herbs and a nice framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely plump at the core, with ripe, fairly firm tannins, good balance and grip and a long, nascently complex finish. This is tightly-knit out of the blocks and could do with a bit of bottle age to blossom; it will be a good bottle in due course. 2024-2045. **88+.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Mirabai”- Kelley Fox Wines (Dundee Hills)**

The 2018 vintage of Mirabai Pinot Noir from Kelley Fox is composed of sixty percent fruit from the Weber Vineyard and forty percent from the Maresh Vineyard, with both parcels planted on *franc de pied*. This is the first vintage of the Mirabai cuvée to include fruit from Weber Vineyard, which Kelley has long desired to make wine from, and the bottling includes a new label in 2018 drawn by Kelley's younger daughter. The wine included thirty percent whole clusters in 2018 and saw no new oak. It offers up a beautifully red fruity bouquet of strawberries, quince, a complex base of soil, a lovely array of spice tones (already shading towards cinnamon from the whole clusters), peonies and a hint of cedar from the older casks. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with a lovely core of fruit, ripe, seamless tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the long, poised and beautifully balanced finish. Given the warmth of the summer of 2018 in the Willamette Valley, the lightness of step of this wine is revelatory. Give it at least a few years in the cellar to soften up those suave tannins and really blossom! 2024-2055+. **93.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Maresh Vineyard”- Kelley Fox Wines (Dundee Hills)**

The 2018 Maresh Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Kelley Fox hails from the vineyard's oldest vines, which were planted in 1970. The wine includes about a third whole clusters in this vintage and was raised entirely in older French barrels. The nose is beautifully defined by a combination of bright red fruit and lovely soil tones, offering up scents of strawberries, bing cherry, blood orange, exotic spices, a touch of Morey St. Denis-like mustard seed, hazelnut, complex soil elements and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tightly-knit out of the blocks, with a lovely sense of sappiness buried at the core, fine soil signature, ripe, refined tannins and a very long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. This is hauntingly beautiful in its sense of balance and precision, and though it is not as complex as the Mirabai today, in due course, it will be the more complex of the two. Stunning juice. 2028-2065+. **93+.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Maresh Vineyard” Red Barns Blocks- Kelley Fox Wines (Dundee Hills)**

The Red Barn Blocks on the Maresh Vineyard are also one of the original parcels to go in the ground here in 1970, when Jim and Loie Maresh planted their first vines. The 2018 vintage will be the last that Kelley produces from this parcel of vines. At fifty percent, the Red Barn Blocks includes just a bit more whole clusters than the regular Maresh bottling this year. It delivers a magical aromatic constellation of cherries, *fraises du bois*, mustard seed, turmeric, gentle smokiness, incipient cinnamon, a gorgeous base of soil, cherry blossoms and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full, focused and dancing, with a sappy core, stunning transparency

and grip, ripe, utterly refined tannins and superb lift and bounce on the very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is a pinot noir of understated magic and mystery. 2026-2065+. **95.**  
**2018 Pinot Noir “Maresh Vineyard” Royal Ann Block- Kelley Fox Wines (Dundee Hills)**

The Royal Ann Block bottling from the Maresh Vineyard is a brand new bottling for Kelley Fox, though she worked with fruit from this parcel of vines for several years when she was the winemaker for Scott Paul Wines. The block lies right next to the vines for the Star-Of-Bethlehem Block, with the vines bordered on the other side by Royal Ann cherry trees from which the block takes its name. The wine is fifty percent whole clusters in 2018 and was raised in entirely used casks. It offers up a deep and very pure nose of red and black cherries, incipient notes of beetroot, black tea, a gorgeous base of soil, woodsmoke, a lovely potpourri of gentle spice tones (cardamom?) and a discreet framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is very refined, deep and sappy at the core, with a full-bodied and dancing format, lovely focus and grip, suave tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. This tastes of flowers at the close! Just a gorgeous, suave new cuvée that seems very likely to be velvety when it is fully mature. 2028-2065+. **93+.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Maresh Vineyard” Star-Of-Bethlehem Flower Block- Kelley Fox Wines**

The 2018 Star-Of-Bethlehem Flower Block pinot from Kelley Fox is another gorgeous example of the vintage. The wine shows lovely ripeness on both the nose and palate, without every losing that inimitable delicacy that I think of as the calling card for this cuvée. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined mix of cherries, wild strawberries, beetroot, a hint of raw cocoa, a refined base of soil, hints of hazelnut, gentle oak, peonies and rose petals. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, refined and elegant, with a superb core of fruit, lovely transparency and grip, suave tannins and a long, complex and light on its feet finish. Though the soil signatures are completely different, this is always the Kelley Fox bottling that strikes me as the most spiritually aligned with les Amoureuses in Chambolle-Musigny. It is a stunning young wine in 2018. 2026-2065+. **95+.**

**2018 Pinot Noir- Franchere Wine Company (Eola-Amity Hills)**

The 2018 Pinot Noir from Mike Hinds at Franchere Wine Company is really nicely low octane for the rather torrid summer of 2018 in the Willamette Valley, coming in at 13.2 percent alcohol and offering up a deep and complex bouquet of black cherries, damson plum, lavender, bergamot, woodsmoke and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and properly structured out of the blocks, with a rock solid core, good soil signature, firm, chewy tannins and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. The concentration of the vintage here is evident on the palate and the wine deserves some time in the cellar to blossom, but it has fine constituent components and with some bottle age, it will be a fine bottle. 2026-2055. **90+.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Alpine Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Alpine Vineyard bottling is perhaps the lowest octane pinot noir in the Rhys lineup this year, tipping the scales at a svelte 12.6 percent. The bouquet is extremely precise and flat out gorgeous, wafting from the glass in a mix of sweet dark berries, black cherries, raw cocoa, beautiful minerality, woodsmoke, a touch of incipient cola notes, sweet stem notes of fresh nutmeg and Ceylon cinnamon and a discreet foundation of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and pulled taut across its structural skeleton, with a lovely core of black fruit, great transparency and grip, suave buried tannins and a long, tangy and very complex finish. I love the backend energy and lift here! 2028-2065+. **95.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Alpine Hillside”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Alpine Hillside pinot noir from Kevin Harvey and his very talented team is just a whisper riper than the regular Alpine bottling, but still under thirteen percent (12.8 percent octane) and beautifully precise on both the nose and palate. The black fruity bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of blackberries, cassis, raw cocoa, a touch of graphite, beautifully complex dark soil tones (or Gevrey-like black minerality), a touch of coffee bean, sweet stem tones and a bit of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and svelte in personality, with a rock solid core of fruit, great mineral drive and grip, ripe, buried tannins, impeccable balance and a long, tangy and very complex finish. This is still a puppy and will demand a minimum of a decade in the cellar to unfold, but its inherent brilliance is already self-evident! 2030-2080. **96.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Bearwallow Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Anderson Valley)**

The 2018 vintage of Bearwallow pinot noir is again pretty ripe for Rhys, but that is the nature of the vintage, coming in at 13.8 percent octane, but still offering lovely purity and bounce. The nose wafts from the glass in a refined and already quite complex constellation of red and black cherries, a touch of raspberry, black tea, a beautifully refined base of soil tones, truly gorgeous spice tones from the whole clusters and a very suave framing of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, balanced and plush on the attack, with an excellent core of fruit, fine soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex and very well-balanced finish. 2028-2065. **92.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Family Farm Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Family Farm Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Rhys is one of their riper examples of the vintage, coming in at 13.7 percent octane. The wine is beautifully expressive and black fruity on the nose, wafting from the glass in a blend of dark berries, black plums, sarsaparilla, dark soil tones, smoked duck, gentle spice tones (from the whole clusters) and a deft touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full, complex and sappy at the core, with fine soil signature, ripe, buried tannins, excellent focus and grip and a long, complex and very nicely balanced finish. This is a touch broader-shouldered in personality than some of the Rhys pinots this year, but it shares the same sappy purity and breed. 2026-2060. **92+.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Home Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Home Vineyard cuvée of pinot noir from Rhys is beautifully expressive on both the nose and palate this year. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a refined mix of black raspberries, black cherries, bitter chocolate, incipient notes of cola, dark soil tones, notes of sweet stems from the whole clusters, exotic spice tones and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and perfectly balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, great soil undertow, fine-grained tannins and a long, vibrant and very classy finish. This is stellar. 2028-2065. **93+.**

**2018 Pinot Noir “Horseshoe Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Rhys Vineyards Horseshoe cuvée of pinot noir is gorgeous right out of the blocks, offering up a very classy and complex bouquet of sweet dark berries, black plums, raw cocoa, beautiful spice tones from the whole clusters, dark soil tones, chicory, bonfire and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and seamless in its balance, with a marvelous core of fruit, great transparency and grip, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and simply superb finish. This will need a full decade of bottle age to properly stir, but it is going to be outstanding when it is ready to sing. 2028-2065+. **94.**



### **2018 Pinot Noir “Horseshoe Vineyard” Ungrafted Vines- Rhys Vineyards**

The Horseshoe Vineyard has three bottlings of pinot noir to pride itself on in this vintage, as there is also an “Ungrafted Vines” bottling from here in 2018! These vines planted on *franc de pied* were planted in a high density formation back in 2008, and the team at Rhys has been patiently waiting for them to really get rolling. The 2018 Ungrafted Vines Horseshoe pinot noir comes in slightly riper than the regular bottling (13.5 percent versus 13.3 percent), but shares the same great purity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet offers up a very complex mix of dark berries, cassis, espresso, fresh thyme and bay leaf, lovely spice elements from the whole clusters, a gorgeous base of minerality, graphite and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a great core of fruit, fine-grained tannins, tangy acids and superb lift and focus on the long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. In terms of absolute quality, this is not remarkably different from the regular bottling of Horseshoe pinot (which is outstanding in 2018), but the difference is akin to the difference between a great digital recording of music and the same recording done in analog: there is just an extra level of precision here that may fall just beyond the conscious range of perception, but which we pick up on inherently and recognize intuitively as more complete. 2028-2065+. 95.

### **2018 Pinot Noir “Horseshoe Hillside”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Pinot Noir “Horseshoe Hillside” bottling from Rhys Vineyards is a gorgeous young wine in the making, with a beautiful sense of sappiness this year that I have not encountered in this bottling before. The wine is gently ripe at 13.4 percent and delivers a very

complex bouquet of black plums, black cherries, espresso, sweet stems (which will turn into a myriad of spices in due course), dark soil tones, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tangy and nascently complex, with outstanding mid-palate depth, ripe, very well-integrated tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the long, vibrant and very, very promising finish. Like all of the previous Hillside bottlings I have tasted from the estate, this is a nicely structured wine and built for the long haul, so give it time in the cellar to really reach cruising altitude before pulling the cork! Stunning juice in the making. 2030-2080. **95+**.

**2018 Pinot Noir “Mount Pajaro Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

Last year’s 2017 was the first release of pinot noir from the Mount Pajaro Vineyard that I have tasted from Kevin Harvey and his talented team at Rhys Vineyards and it was very good. The follow-up 2018 version is every bit as fine, offering up a black fruity and classy nose of cassis, black tea, a fine base of dark soil tones, a bit of smoked meats, lovely fresh herb tones (mostly thyme and mustard seed), cedar and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused, soil-driven and nicely spicy (from the whole clusters), with a fine core of fruit, suave, buried tannins, tangy acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and very well-balanced finish. This comes in at 13.8 percent octane this year, but seems cooler in personality. Once again, this strikes me as the most Gevrey-Chambertin-like of the Rhys pinot noir bottlings. Fine juice. 2026-2060+. **93**.

**2018 Pinot Noir “Porcupine Hill”- Rhys Vineyards (Anderson Valley)**

The Porcupine Hill bottling of pinot noir from Rhys hails from the only parcel of the Bearwallow Vineyard that is planted to high density, making this quite unique than the other Bearwallow fruit (above and beyond the differences of *terroir* of this section). The 2018 Porcupine Hill cuvée comes in at the same octane level as the Bearwallow, 13.8 percent, but it seems just a touch more precise and soil-driven. The bouquet delivers a superb combination of sweet dark berries, black plums, raw cocoa, lovely whole cluster spice tones, a complex base of soil, woodsmoke, cardamom, gently savory elements and a discreet framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and very refined, with a great core of black fruit, excellent mineral drive and grip, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and youthfully complex finish. This is deeper, tighter-knit and even more defined by its underlying soil tones than the very good Bearwallow bottling. Outstanding juice. 2028-2065. **94**.

**2018 Pinot Noir “Skyline Vineyard”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2018 Pinot Noir “Skyline Vineyard” bottling from Rhys Vineyards is a beautiful wine in the making. The wine is cool and collected, coming at 12.9 percent and reveling in its gorgeous minerality on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is pure, complex and black fruity in personality, wafting from the glass in a mix of cassis, sweet dark berries, espresso, bonfire, a touch of gamebird, stunning soil signature, cedar, sweet stems and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full and focused, with a stellar core of fruit, great mineral drive and grip, refined tannins and excellent length and complexity on the perfectly balanced and oh, so promising finish. This has great intensity of flavor and yet is effortlessly light on its feet this year. Great juice! 2030-2065+. **95**.

**2018 Pinot Noir “Swan Terrace”- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The tiny subsection of the Alpine Vineyard, Swan Terrace, is one of the stars of the 2018 lineup of pinot noirs from Rhys. The wine is deep, pure and shows perfect ripeness (coming in at 13.1 percent octane) in its black fruity aromatic constellation of black plums, sweet dark berries, a superb base of minerality, woodsmoke, black tea, raw cocoa, cedar and lovely spice tones from the whole clusters in the upper register. On the palate the wine is very pure, full-bodied and very

promising, with excellent mid-palate depth, bright acids, fine-grained tannins and excellent nascent complexity on the very long and soil-driven finish. This is perfectly balanced, but will still want plenty of bottle age to let it completely blossom and show all of its myriad layers of complexity in total harmony. 2028-2065. **95.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Bien Nacido Vineyard”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Maria Valley)**

The 2017 Bien Nacido Vineyard cuvée of pinot noir from Au Bon Climat includes sixty percent whole clusters this year. It is precise and very refined on the nose, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of red currant, sweet cranberry, a superb signature of soil, discreet herb tones, a whisper of cedar and a pungent topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and beautifully transparent, with fine depth at the core, ripe, buried tannins and a long, complex and well-balanced finish. This comes in listed at 13.5 percent octane, but probably is just a bit north of this in reality, but the wine is nicely balanced and will age long and gracefully. Give it some time in the cellar to start to stretch its wings. 2025-2055+. **93.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Runway Vineyard”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Maria Valley)**

The Runway Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Jim Clendenen and the team at ABC is a relatively new single vineyard bottling here, as it made its debut in the 2013 vintage. The 2017 version comes in at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a very pretty and gently sappy bouquet of cherries, beetroot, a touch of mustard seed, a beautiful base of soil tones, woodsmoke and a discreet framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, bright and full-bodied, with lovely bounce and grip, a sappy core, suave tannins and a long, nascently complex finish. I really like the size and shape of this wine, with its lovely sappiness at the core, fine soil signature and plenty of blossoming personality. It reminds me of the fruit and spice tones of Morey St. Denis, with a different base of soil elements. Fine juice that is quite approachable now, but still quite primary, and the wine will clearly reward patience with many more layers of complexity. 2020-2055. **92+.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Sanford and Benedict Vineyard”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Ynez Valley)**

The Sanford and Benedict Vineyard bottling of pinot noir is probably the oldest vine cuvée made by Jim Clendenen, as these vines were planted back in 1971. The vineyard is located in the Santa Rita Hills and the grapes here are harvested in the early morning to take full advantage of the cool microclimate here, with the wine undergoing a short cold soak prior to the onset of fermentation. The 2017 Sanford and Benedict offers up a beautiful bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of beetroot, woodsmoke, a lovely touch of sarsaparilla, gentle spice tones from some whole clusters, a fine base of soil and just a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, soil-driven and full-bodied, with a beautiful core of fruit and backend mineral drive, lovely acids, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. This closes with the backend energy of a Côte de Nuits grand cru of impeccable pedigree. It is perfectly balanced and could be drunk now, but that would most emphatically be infanticide, so let it have a decade in the cellar and really enjoy the fireworks in the glass! 2027-2055+. **94+.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Alfaro Family Vineyard”- Big Basin Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

Alfaro Family Vineyard is a cooler microclimate, moderated by both cool air off of Monterey Bay and morning fogs, so the late season heat spike of 2017 had little or no effect on the vines here. The 2017 comes in at 13.3 percent alcohol, was one hundred percent whole clusters and delivers a lovely, spicy aromatic constellation of bing cherries, raspberry, a lovely and wide array of spice tones, a good foundation of soil, a lovely touch of salinity and a topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a good

core, fine mineral drive and grip, tangy acids and a long, ripely tannic and complex finish. I really like the backend lift here. 2025-2055. **92+**.

**2017 Pinot Noir “Coastview Vineyard”- Big Basin Vineyards (Monterey County)**

The 2017 Bradley Brown’s Coastview Vineyard cuvée of pinot noir included seventy-five percent whole clusters this year, and like all of his wines, was fermented with indigenous yeasts. The wine is one of the riper pinots in the Big Basin lineup in 2017, coming in at 13.5 percent octane and delivering a fine bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, black tea, a refined base of soil tones, incipient notes of cola, fresh thyme, cinnamon and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and nicely structured, with a good core, ripe, buried tannins and fine backend bounce and grip on the long and nascently complex finish. Whereas it would not be a crime to drink the Old Corral bottling of pinot noir in its youth, this wine is a bit more buttoned up out of the blocks and will demand at least a handful of years in the cellar to blossom properly. It will be excellent once it starts to stretch its wings. 2027-2055+. **92+**.

**2017 Pinot Noir “Lester Family Vineyard”- Big Basin Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The Lester Family Vineyard is only three miles in from the Pacific coast and Monterey Bay and is quite a cool vineyard. The 2017 from Bradley Brown is an excellent wine in the making, having included one hundred percent whole clusters in this vintage and coming in at 13.3 percent octane. It offers up a lovely, expressive bouquet of cherries, beetroot, woodsmoke, beautiful sweet stem tones, a complex base of soil, a hint of venison and a gentle framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, elegant and transparent, with a fine core of fruit, suave tannins, sound acids and lovely focus and grip on the long, complex and beautifully spicy finish. This reminds me a bit of the aromatics and flavors of Clos de la Roche with a different foundation of soil elements. 2024-2055+. **92**.

**2017 Pinot Noir “Old Corral”- Big Basin Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2017 Old Corral bottling of pinot noir from Big Basin is all from their steep, rocky estate vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The wine is one hundred percent whole clusters this year, fermented with indigenous yeasts and was raised in forty percent new oak for eighteen months prior to bottling. It comes in at 13.2 percent octane and is nicely light in color, offering up fine aromatics of cherries, sweet beetroot, woodsmoke, lovely spice elements, a fine base of soil and a discreet framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with good soil signature and grip, fine focus, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex finish. I really like the personality of this wine this year, which reminds me (if you can picture the combination) of a cross of Morey St. Denis and Mount Eden pinot noir. Fine juice. 2023-2055. **91+**.

**2017 Pinot Noir “Chehelam Mountains”- Biha (Biggio Hamina Cellars)**

Todd Hamina makes his Biha line of pinot noirs for earlier consumption and these bottlings usually get gobbled up by sommeliers pouring them by the glass, but the current situation makes them available at retail for the time being. The 2017 Chehelam Mountains bottling includes seventy percent whole clusters, was fermented with indigenous yeasts and raised for nineteen months in barrel, with all of the casks previously used. It comes in at thirteen percent octane and offers up a pretty bouquet of cherries, a touch of beetroot, a lovely base of soil, woodsmoke, raw cocoa and a spicy topnote reminiscent of curry. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and nicely balanced, with good mid-palate depth, suave tannins and sneaky length and grip on the quite serious finish. Good juice. 2020-2035. **89**.



**2017 Pinot Noir “Eola-Amity Hills”- Biha (Biggio Hamina Cellars)**

The 2017 Eola-Amity Hills bottling under the Biha label included fifty percent whole clusters, saw no new oak and hails entirely from volcanic soiled vineyards. The wine offers up a very pretty nose of cherries, red plums, a touch of cocoa powder, a touch of meatiness, a fine base of minerality, a wisp of mustard seed and a topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely transparent, with a good core, fine focus and grip, tangy acids and excellent backend lift on the long and complex finish. This is excellent pinot noir, and at \$25 a bottle, an absolute steal! 2020-2035+. **91+**.

**2017 Pinot Noir “Ribbon Ridge”- Biha (Biggio Hamina Cellars)**

Todd’s 2017 Ribbon Ridge bottling under the Biha label is entirely whole cluster in this vintage and was raised all in used casks. Like all of the 2017 Biha bottlings, this comes in listed at an even thirteen percent octane and offers up a fine nose of red and black cherries, plum, raw cocoa, bonfire, a fine base of soil, gamebird and a lovely array of spice tones in the upper register from the whole clusters. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and tangy, with a fine core, good soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a long, nascently complex and quite classy finish. This is the one Biha cuvée that I would tuck away in the cellar for a few years and let it soften up a bit more, as it has very good structure and is going to age nicely, so why rush to drink it out of the blocks! Another fine bottle and value! 2024-2040. **91**.



*Pinot noir vineyards in the Dundee Hills section of the Willamette Valley, Oregon.*

**2017 Pinot Noir “Hughes Hollow Vineyard”- Bow and Arrow (Willamette Valley)**

The Hughes Hollow Vineyard is located in South Salem and was planted in 1990. It is on *franc de pied* and has a northerly exposition and is dry-farmed. The 2017 Pinot Noir bottling from Bow and Arrow comes in at a cool 12.5 percent octane and is quite reductive out of the blocks, so give it some extended aeration in decanter if you are interested in drinking it right out of the blocks. With air, the wine does eventually blossom to offer up a promising bouquet of red and black cherries, a bit of meatiness, woodsmoke, a touch of fresh herbs and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and nicely transparent, with a good core, tangy acids, moderate tannins and a long, nascently complex finish. This is really good, once the reduction lifts, but I worry a bit about how reduced it was when first opened. If we assume that the reduction will not lockdown the wine with extended bottle age, but eventually dissipate, it will be really lovely in due course. But, be forewarned that it stubbornly reductive right now and took a good hour in decanter before my sample bottle blossomed. 2025-2055. **91.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Cuvée du Tonnelier”- Brick House Wine Company (Ribbon Ridge)**

The Cuvée du Tonnelier hails from the oldest pinot noir vines at Brick House, as these vines were planted in 1990, once Doug Tunnell had purchased the property. The 2017 Cuvée du Tonnelier includes about twenty-five percent whole clusters and comes in at 13.5 percent octane this year. It offers up a bright and red fruity bouquet of strawberries, cherries, cinnamon, beetroot, a lovely base of soil, peonies and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and very transparent in personality, with a good core of fruit, fine-grained tannins, tangy acids and outstanding focus and grip on the long, complex and energetic finish. This is first class pinot noir in the making. Give it at least five or six more years to really stretch its wings! 2025-2055+. **93.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “les Dijonnais”- Brick House Wine Company (Ribbon Ridge)**

The 2017 Pinot Noir “les Dijonnais” from Brick House hails, as the name implies, from a parcel of Dijon clones that came into production here in 1998. It is made from a mix of five different Dijon clones of pinot noir and is the parcel that is the warmest microclimate on the farm, with a southerly exposition. The 2017 version included roughly one-third whole clusters, was fermented with indigenous yeasts and ended up being raised in thirty-five percent new oak for sixteen months prior to bottling. On the nose, it has a bit of plum fruit to go along with its red fruity core personality, delivering a refined aromatic constellation of cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, cinnamon, mustard seed, a beautiful base of soil tones, just a hint of oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit more structured than the Cuvée du Tonnelier, with an excellent core of fruit, very good soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, tangy and nascently complex finish. This is going to be stellar, but be patient. 2029-2060. **93+.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Evelyn’s”- Brick House Wine Company (Ribbon Ridge)**

The Evelyn’s bottling of pinot noir is a barrel selection, made of approximately a fifty-fifty blend of Dijon and Pommard Clones and only produced in top vintages. It is Doug Tunnell’s top example of pinot noir and is named for his mother. Like all of the Brick House pinots, it is fermented with indigenous yeasts, includes a high percentage of whole clusters, and sees a bit more new oak than the other pinot cuvées in the cellar, as it is designed to be a long distance runner in the cellar. The 2017 Evelyn’s Pinot Noir offers up a more primary, but equally superb bouquet of red plums, cherries, pomegranate, a hint of the beetroot to come with bottle age, raw cocoa, a fine signature of soil, clove-like spice tones and a still fairly restrained framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and more structured than the

les Dijonnais, with a rock solid core of fruit, excellent mineral drive and grip, ripe, firm tannins, tangy acids and great length and grip on the nascently complex and very, very promising finish. This is going to be stunning pinot noir when it is fully ready to drink. 2030-2065. **94.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Entre Nous”- Crowley Vineyards (Willamette Valley)**

Tyler Crowley’s Entre Nous bottling of pinot noir is a blend of two clones: Pommard and Wadenswil, which hail from the Laurel Hood and Four Winds Vineyards respectively. As Tyler likes to say, the “Pommard is long and supple and graceful,” whereas “Wadenswil has more attack and density and is somewhat exotic in nature” and they marry together beautifully. The 2017 version comes in at an even thirteen percent octane and was raised primarily in older casks; it offers up a lovely, red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, lovely spice tones, a fine base of soil, a hint of mustard seed and just a touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is bright, fullish, focused and tangy, with a good core, fine transparency and grip, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex and very nicely balanced finish. This will be a lovely wine with a bit of bottle age. 2025-2055. **91+.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Four Winds- Crowley Vineyards (Willamette Valley)**

The Four Winds Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Tyler Crowley is made from twenty-six year-old vines that are planted in these thin volcanic Jory soils, which provides a fine mineral undertow in the wine. The 2017 Four Winds bottling comes in at an even thirteen percent again and delivers a fine aromatic constellation of cherries, red berries, a bit of blood orange, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, lovely minerality, a fine array of delicate spice tones and a touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, very well-balanced and rock solid at the core, with lovely transparency and grip, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, tangy and youthfully complex finish that closes with pronounced sappiness and lift. This is first class pinot noir in the making! 2027-2060. **93.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Hyland Vineyard” Coury Clone- Kelley Fox Wines (Dundee Hills)**

Kelley Fox’s 2017 Coury Clone bottling from the Hyland Vineyard is her inaugural release from these vines, which were planted in 1988 and are now farmed biodynamically, after years of certified organic farming. The wine includes fifty percent whole clusters in 2017 and offers up a simply beautiful bouquet of raspberries, red and black cherries, violets, a very complex foundation of soil, gentle spice tones, gentle nutskin, a whisper of cedar and a topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and tangy, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent transparency and complexity, ripe, buried tannins and a long, elegant and dancing finish. This has just lovely acidity, which gives the wine lift and great precision on the backend. This is still quite youthful and deserves a solid decade in the cellar to really blossom, but it will be excellent in the fullness of time. 2027-2060. **93.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Petaluma Gap”- Kendric Vineyards (Marin County)**

The 2017 vintage of Stewart Johnson’s pinot noir is once again a beautifully refined and transparent example of this varietal, with wonderful complexity on both the nose and palate and a lovely sense of lightness of step on the palate. This year the wine comes in at 13.3 percent octane and included it forty percent whole clusters. It was raised in thirty percent new wood for twenty-four months, with only a single racking and was bottled unfiltered. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of cherries, plums, cinnamon, a hint of fresh thyme, beautiful soil tones, cedary oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and beautifully soil-driven, with a lovely core of fruit, tangy acids, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and superbly balanced finish. This lovely wine will need some bottle age to blossom fully, but there is plenty of pleasure ahead. The Kendric Vineyards’ Petaluma Gap

bottlings of pinot noir are some of the most Burgundian in spirit that one can find in the US and remain one of the best bargains out there in the world of wine, as this wine sells for under \$40 per bottle! 2027-2055+. **93.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Willamette Valley”- Domaine Nicolas-Jay**

The 2017 vintage of pinot noir from Nicolas-Jay comes in at 13.5 percent octane and was raised this year in thirty percent new oak. The wine offers up a pure and complex bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of beetroot, raw cocoa, gamebird, woodsmoke, a touch of mustard seed, a fine base of soil and a deft framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off lovely mid-palate depth of fruit, with a fine base of soil, ripe, buried tannins, tangy acids and fine focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This is an excellent wine in the making! 2027-2055+. **93.**

**2017 Pinot Meunier “Van der Camp Vineyard”- Poe Wines (Sonoma Mountain)**

I was very happy to find that the 2017 Pinot Meunier bottling from the Van der Camp Vineyard from Sam Sheehan is still in the market and that a bottle showed up in my samples for this article. As readers may recall from the January newsletter, these vines were planted back in 1953, making this truly and old vine cuvée. The 2017 version is a touch deeper in color than the lovely 2018 I reviewed a couple of issues ago, but is nicely poised at thirteen percent octane and offers up a fine bouquet of black cherries, dark berries, a bit of gamebird, a fine base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and light on its feet (like all of Sam’s wines), with a sappy core, fine focus and complexity, modest tannins and a long, tangy and very well-balanced finish. This is fine juice and is already drinking quite nicely, with impressive backend lift and grip. 2020-2040+. **92.**

**2017 Pinot Noir “Van der Camp Vineyard”- Poe Wines (Sonoma Mountain)**

The pinot noir vines here at the Van der Camp Vineyard were also planted back in 1953. Samantha has the grapes picked in the cool of the night, ferments them with thirty percent whole clusters and native yeasts and does foot-trodding of the grapes and must, rather than punch-downs. The wine is aged in thirty percent new oak and the 2017 version offers up a lovely nose of cherries, pomegranate, woodsmoke, gamebird, a fine base of soil and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and sappy at the core, with good soil signature, ripe, buried tannins and fine length and grip on the complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is lovely pinot noir! 20227-2055+. **92+.**

**2016 Pinot Noir “Knox Alexander”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Maria Valley)**

The Knox Alexander bottling at Au Bon Climat is named for Jim Clendenen’s son, Knox, and is a blend of the best parcels in Bien Nacido and Le Bon Climat vineyards, which lie alongside of each other. The vines here in these selected parcels are not all that old, having been planted between 1994 and 1998, but they are in prime real estate and even include a trace amount of pinot meunier amongst the various clones of pinot noir. The 2016 Knox Alexander comes in listed at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a very pure and pretty blend of cherries, strawberries, beetroot, woodsmoke, fresh thyme, a hint of dill, a complex base of soil tones and a touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still quite primary, with a lovely core of fruit, fine foundation of soil tones, ripe tannins, tangy acids and a long, youthful and promising finish. This has as bit more new oak to it and has not yet fully integrated its wood tannins on the backend, though this will certainly occur in due course, so this is a bottle to bury in a corner of the cellar and let it come into its own with some serious bottle age. This will be an excellent wine when it is ready to drink, but it needs time! 2028-2055. **93.**



### **2016 Pinot Noir “Isabelle”- Au Bon Climat (Santa Maria Valley)**

The cuvée Isabelle from Jim Clendenen is quite singular in the pantheon of pinot noir bottlings from ABC, as this has been a blended bottling from its first vintage of 1994, rather than hailing from a single vineyard. It has always been made from a barrel selection of the best barrels from several different vineyards, ranging as far away as the Sonoma Coast and Anderson Valley, as well in the Central Coast, and the mix changes every year. The wine takes its name from his daughter, who was born in 1995. The 2016 Isabelle offers up a beautiful bouquet of red and black cherries, plum, a dollop of mustard seed, fresh thyme, woodsmoke, incipient notes of cola, roses, complex soil tones and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, complex, full-bodied and impeccably balanced, with a superb core, bright acids, fine-grained tannins and a very long, focused and extremely classy finish. This is a fascinating wine, as Jim Clendenen is so adept at allowing the underlying soil to shine in all of his wines, but here, the soil is present, but a blend of different elements, making for a quite unique experience, as most great examples of pinot noir are intimately tied to a single soil signature. Give this some bottle age to really start firing on all cylinders! 2026-2055. **94.**

### **2016 Pinot Noir “Belle Pente Vineyard”- Belle Pente Wine Cellars (Yamhill-Carlton)**

The 2016 Belle Pente Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Brian O'Donnell is a beautiful example of the vintage, coming in at 14.1 percent and including just under ten percent whole clusters this year. It saw a five day “cold soak”, was fermented with indigenous yeasts and raised

in one-third new oak in this vintage. It offers up a superb bouquet of sweet black fruit (redolent of blueberries and black plums), raw cocoa, fine soil signature, gamebird, fresh nutmeg and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, precise and full-bodied, with a fine girdle of acidity, a fine core of fruit, excellent transparency and fine-grained tannins perking up the long and nascently complex finish. This is tightly-knit out of the blocks and will want some bottle age to uncoil, but it is going to be excellent in due course! 2026-2055+. **93.**

**2016 Pinot Noir “Murto Vineyard”- Belle Pente Wine Cellars (Dundee Hills)**

The 2016 version of Murto Vineyard pinot noir from Belle Pente is a lovely example of the vintage. The Murto Vineyard was planted back in 1978 on *franc de pied* and is a higher elevation vineyard in the Dundee Hills. It was totally destemmed this year and underwent its customary five to seven day cold soak prior to fermentation with indigenous yeasts; it was raised in just over forty percent new oak in 2016. The wine offers up a lovely, ripe and succulent nose of plums, cherries, a touch of dark chocolate, good soil tones, violets and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is refined, full-bodied and potentially quite velvety, with a fine core of fruit, good soil elements, ripe, buried tannins and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. This will be the first of these three excellent 2016 pinots from Brian to blossom, but it will be equally long-lived. 2024-2055+. **92+.**

**2016 Pinot Noir “Estate Reserve”- Belle Pente Wine Cellars (Yamhill-Carlton)**

The Estate Reserve bottling from Brian O'Donnell is always made as a vineyard selection from their Belle Pente Vineyard, as he is looking to “cherry pick” the best parcels in a given year to make this, their top bottling. The 2016 version included about fifteen percent whole clusters and was raised in a bit less new oak than the 2015, with twenty-two percent of the casks new this year. The wine spent eighteen months in barrel, with a single racking, and comes in at 14.4 percent in this vintage. It offers up a superb bouquet of red and black cherries, pomegranate, cocoa powder, a very complex base of soil, fresh nutmeg, violets, a dollop of fresh thyme and a discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and already starting to get a bit velvety on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, lovely soil signature, with excellent focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and tangy finish. This is outstanding. 2026-2055+. **93+.**

**2016 Pinot Noir “H”- Hamacher Wine Cellars (Willamette Valley) screwcap**

The “H” bottling is the second label from Eric Hamacher, as he notes it is simply the production that “did not fit into the 2016 Hamacher blend.” The wine comes in at 13.6 percent octane and was aged for fourteen months in cask, with twenty percent of the barrels new for this bottling. The wine offers up a good nose of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, a nice base of soil tones, woodsmoke, gentle spices and a deft framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, poised and nicely transparent, with a good core, modest tannins and a long, complex and tangy finish. This wine is already starting to get a touch reductive from its screwcap and will be best drunk up over the near-term; I had to decant it for a bit to get it to unlock, and it is already feeling “pinched” on the backend from the closure. But, with aeration, it is quite tasty today. I just wish Eric had bottled it under natural cork, as the raw materials here would have aged nicely for twenty-plus years, but it does not seem likely to happen with its screwcap. 2020-2023+? **88.**

**2016 Pinot Noir “Rancho la Cuna”- Clendenen Family Vineyards (Santa Barbara County)**

This wine hails from a vineyard in Los Alamos Valley, which does not have its own AVA yet, hence the Santa Barbara County designation on the label. The wine is aged in one hundred percent new François Frères casks for twenty-four months prior to bottling without filtration. The wine offers up a very pretty bouquet of red and black cherries, plums, fresh herb



tones, a lovely base of soil, bonfire, cinnamon, brown spices and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and tangy, with a lovely core, a sound foundation of ripe tannins and a long, complex and tangy finish. This is already quite complex, but I would still love to tuck it away in the cellar for a few more years and let its structural relaxation catch up with the fine development of the aromatics and flavors. One of my favorite parts about this wine is the myriad of botanical tones in evidence on both the nose and palate, which may put off some tasters, but which I feel just adds another layer of complexity to the wine. 2026-2050. **92.**

#### **2014 Pinot Noir- Hamacher Wine Cellars (Willamette Valley)**

The 2014 Pinot Noir from Eric Hamacher is composed of fruit from eight different vineyards. It was raised in thirty percent new oak casks for eighteen months prior to bottling and comes in listed at 13.6 percent alcohol. The wine offers up a ripe and still youthful nose of black cherries, damson plums, raw cocoa, a fine signature of soil elements, woodsmoke, an exotic array of spice tones (cardamom and thyme perhaps?) and a suave framing of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core, well-integrated tannins and a long, tangy and youthful finish. This seems a bit riper than its stated octane and is a stylistic prisoner of its vintage, but it is a big, broad-shouldered pinot that still has a fine aesthetic sensibilities. Give it a bit of time to blossom properly. 2025-2055. **90+.**

#### **2014 Pinot Noir “Alpine Vineyard” Hillside- Rhys Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2014 Pinot Noir “Alpine Vineyard” Hillside bottling from Rhys Vineyards is starting to blossom aromatically at six years of age, though in reality, it remains quite a young wine and has decades and decades of life still ahead of it. The very complex bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of black cherries, plums, lovely spice tones, a bit of black tea, a superb base of soil, espresso, fresh thyme and a deft touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is still quite tightly-knit, as it was upon release, with its full-bodied format showing a superb core of black fruit, excellent mineral drive and grip, suave, buried tannins and a very long, tangy and nascently complex finish. This was tasted out of half bottle, and even in halves, this wine is still several years away from primetime drinking. Its quality remains self-evident and all that is needed is more patience (particularly than what I showed with this half!) to let it really start to open up on the palate. 2026-2075. **96.**

#### **2010 Pinot Noir “Anderson Valley”- Knez Winery (Anderson Valley)**

I last tasted this wine back in the summer of 2013, where I liked it quite well at the time. At ten years of age the wine is nicely mature, offering up a complex, tertiary and wide open bouquet of baked cherries, woodsmoke, forest floor, a touch of spiced meats, beetroot, cedar and fresh herb tones. On the palate the wine is bright, full and nicely soil-driven, with a good core of fruit, still a bit of tannin, tangy acids and a long, gently weedy finish. This is good juice that is now at its peak and quite autumnal in personality, but has plenty of life still ahead of it. 2020-2030+. **90.**





### ***Cabernet Sauvignon and Associated Blends***

#### **2018 Cabernet Sauvignon “Involuntary Commitment”- Andrew Will (Columbia Valley)**

The 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon “Involuntary Commitment” is effectively a second label for Andrew Will Winery, which was first launched in the 2016 vintage, when the crop was generous. Rather than sell off the production that did not find its way into one of their regular bottlings, they created the Involuntary Commitment label. Their 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon was raised all in used casks and offers up a fine young nose of cassis, black cherries, cigar ash, dark soil tones, a bit of tobacco leaf and a delicate topnote of cedar from the used oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and well-balanced, with a good core, ripe tannins and a long, promising finish. This has quite an old school *Bordelais* personality and will be very tasty with a handful of years in the cellar. Good juice and a fine value. 2026-2050. **89+**.

#### **2018 Cabernet Sauvignon- Bedrock Wine Company (Sonoma County)**

Bedrock Wine Company is the brainchild of Morgan Twain-Peterson, the son of Joel Peterson of Ravenswood Vineyards fame. His Sonoma County bottling of cabernet sauvignon is a blend of casks from the Monticello and Monte Rosso Vineyards (adorned with a bit more production from the less well-known vineyard of Lichau Hill). It was raised in around fifteen percent new wood and comes in listed at 14.5 percent octane. The wine offers up a deep and classy bouquet of red and black cherries, tobacco leaf, a lovely base of soil, roses and a hint of new oak. On the palate the wine is bright, ripe and full-bodied, with a fine core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and a long, nascently complex and slightly warm finish. This is good

juice that is a touch riper than I personally find ideal, but quite nicely balanced in its riper guise and should age well. 2028-2055. **90.**

**2018 Cabernet Sauvignon- Ultraviolet (Poe Wines)**

The Ultraviolet label was started by Samantha Sheehan of Poe Wines back in 2009 to offer up a value cabernet that was not short on quality. Sam sources grapes for this bottling from both St. Helena in Napa Valley and Coombsville, with the *cépages* including five percent cabernet franc. The *elevage* is eighteen months for this wine, with only ten percent new oak utilized. The 2018 Ultraviolet comes in at 13.8 percent octane and offers up a fine nose of red and black cherries, tobacco leaf, a fine base of soil, gentle spice tones and a discreet touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and beautifully balanced, with a good core of fruit, fine soil signature, ripe, buried tannins and lovely length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is the first time I have tasted this bottling from Sam Sheehan and it is really an extremely well-made bottle of cabernet and an insanely good value, as this sells for well under \$20 a bottle on the East Coast and under \$15 in California! It will age very gracefully and is a flat out steal! 2025-2050. **90.**

**2017 Air Guitar- Bow and Arrow (Willamette Valley)**

The 2017 version of Air Guitar from Scott Frank is a fifty-fifty blend of cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc. The former comes from the Borgo Pass Vineyard in Alpine and the latter from Johan Vineyard in Rickreall. The wine is aged for one year in *puncheons* prior to bottling and offers up a superb, youthful bouquet of cassis, black cherries, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones and a topnote of cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile, with excellent depth at the core, ripe, seamless tannins and excellent focus and grip on the long and nascently complex finish. The 2017 Air Guitar comes in listed at 12.5 percent octane and is properly built for the cellar, so let it hibernate for six to eight years before broaching bottles. Fine juice. 2026-2055. **92.**

**2017 Helios Cabernet Franc “Sunbasket Vineyard”- Corison Winery (St. Helena)**

Cathy Corison’s 2017 Cabernet Franc bottling from the Sunbasket Vineyard is outstanding. The wine comes in at 13.9 percent octane and offers up a precise and classy bouquet of sweet dark berries, a touch of raspberry, beautiful spice tones, a touch of menthol, tobacco leaf, lavender, lovely soil tones and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and impeccably balanced, with a lovely core, very good soil signature, ripe, buried tannins and a long, tangy and vibrant finish. This is very light on its feet for nearly fourteen percent alcohol and is built to age long and very, very gracefully. First class juice. 2027-2055+. **93.**

**2017 Cabernet Sauvignon “Napa Valley”- Corison Winery (St. Helena)**

The 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon “Napa Valley” bottling from Cathy Corison is excellent- no surprise there! This is quite a bit riper than the old school 2016 vintage, as the 2017 tips the scales at 14.2 percent octane, but still delivers all of the purity and elegant refinement one expects from Cathy’s cabernets. The youthful bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of black cherries, cassis, cigar smoke, Rutherford Dust and a nice touch of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and already quite suave on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, very good soil signature, ripe, beautifully integrated tannins and a long, nascently complex and very well-balanced finish. Given my palate predilections, it is obvious that I am more drawn to the freakishly classical, lower octane 2016 version, but this too is an absolutely superb bottle of cabernet in the making and all it needs is time in the bottle to blossom properly. 2030-2080. **93.**



### **2016 Cabernet Sauvignon “Napa Valley”- Dunn Vineyards**

I had not tasted a young vintage of cabernet from Randy Dunn in a month of Mondays and was delighted to find the 2016 Napa bottling included in a recent delivery of samples. The wine comes in listed at 13.9 percent octane and offers up a fine young nose of cassis, sweet dark berries, cigar wrapper, a fine base of soil tones, a discreet framing of spicy new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe, full-bodied and nicely chewy (in that inimitable Dunn style), with a superb core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. There is just a whisper of backend heat here that suggests the octane is a touch higher than reported, but the wine remains well-balanced and will age very nicely. Like all proper vintages from Dunn Vineyards, it will want a wee bit of bottle age! 2030-2080. **92+**.

### **2016 JRG Red Wine- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The JRG bottling is named for Robert Pamplin’s three grandsons, Justin, Robert and Grant. It is a Bordeaux blend, with the 2016 version boasting a *cépages* of eighty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon, nine percent merlot and three percent malbec. The wine comes in at 14.3 percent octane and offers up a fine, ripe nose of cassis, black raspberry, cigar wrapper, dark soil tones and a suave framing of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and plush at the core, with good focus and grip, still quite a primary personality, buried tannins and a long, ripe and well-balanced finish. This seems a touch riper than its stated octane, but I like the balance here and it should age quite nicely. 2026-2055. **90+**.

### **2016 Cabernet Sauvignon- Philip Togni Vineyard (Spring Mountain)**

The 2016 vintage of cabernet sauvignon from Lisa Togni is a simply outstanding wine in the making. The wine offers up a deep, pure and very promising bouquet of cassis, sweet dark berries, tobacco leaf, a really lovely base of soil tones, a hint of juniper berry, gentle smokiness and a very refined base of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is refined, focused and full-bodied, with a great core of fruit, a supremely elegant structural chassis, fine-grained tannins and a very long, nascently complex and stellar finish. This is a very young wine, but it is so impeccably well-balanced that it is almost approachable today, though like all of the Togni family's cabernets, it is unrepentantly built for the long haul and opening bottles today is infanticide. This is a simply great wine in the making! 2030-2100. **95+**.

### **2015 Cabernet Sauvignon- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon from Pamplin Family is composed entirely from this varietal, with the wine raised for twenty-one months in cask prior to bottling. Only thirty-eight percent of the barrels were new for the *elevage* of this wine. It delivers a fine, youthful aromatic constellation of black cherries, cassis, cigar wrapper, a touch of coffee bean, currant leaf and nutty oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and quite promising, with a lovely core of fruit, suave, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. I really like this wine's promise, but it deserves to be tucked away for a decade before drinking. 2030-2065. **92.**

### **2015 JRG Red Wine- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2015 JRG bottling from Pamplin Family Winery comes in at the same 14.3 percent as the 2016 bottling, but the *cépages* is a bit different this year, with the blend composed of eighty-four percent cabernet sauvignon and sixteen percent merlot. At age five the wine is starting to settle in nicely on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet delivering a mix of cassis, dark berry, cigar ash, a good base of soil, a suave foundation of new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and well-balanced, with a good core of fruit, fine-grained tannins, blossoming complexity and very good length and grip on the promising finish. Again, this seems a bit riper than its purported 14.3 percent octane, but again it has the balance and focus to age gracefully. 2025-2055. **91.**

### **2015 Cabernet Sauvignon- Philip Togni Vineyard (Spring Mountain)**

The 2015 vintage of cabernet sauvignon from Lisa Togni is a superb wine in the making, with a very classical personality and structural chassis and the potential to dazzle for more than fifty years! The bouquet offers up a youthful and very refined blend of black currant, black cherries, tobacco leaf, a lovely base of mountain soil tones, a proper touch of youthful bell pepper and a very discreet foundation of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and rock solid at the core, with fine soil signature, ripe, chewy, but beautifully-integrated tannins, lovely focus and grip and a long, promisingly complex and very well-balanced finish. This seems a touch higher in octane than the stellar 2016 version and shows just a whisper of backend heat on the finish today, but it has very good balance and should still age impeccably. 2030-2080+. **94.**

### **2014 Cabernet Sauvignon- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2014 cabernet sauvignon from Pamplin Family Winery comes in listed at the same 14.4 percent octane as the JRG bottling in this vintage, but to my palate, it tastes just a touch higher than this. The nose is deep, ripe and quite classy, offering up a youthful blend of cassis,

black cherries, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones, nutty new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. This is a good bottle in the making, but it is not as close to full maturity as the 2014 JRG cuvée and really should be buried for several more years. In due course, it is going to be very good. 2027-2055. **91+**.

**2014 JRG Red Wine- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2014 vintage of JRG from Robert Pamplin and Art North is composed of a *cépages* of seventy-three percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty percent merlot, five percent malbec and two percent petit verdot. The wine comes in listed at 14.4 percent octane and delivers a fine, complex nose of cassis, sweet dark berry, cigar ash, dark soil tones, incipient notes of chipotle pepper, a touch of merlot herb tones (that here recall Pomerol) and a discreet foundation of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with a good core of ripe fruit, firm, buried tannins and excellent focus and grip on the long and nascently complex finish. This wine is starting to really blossom and is already easy to drink, but it will be even better with another five years in the cellar. Fine juice. 2024-2055. **92**.

**2013 Cabernet Sauvignon- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

Robert Henry is the winemaker here at Pamplin Family Winery and he has made a very good bottle of cabernet sauvignon in the 2013 vintage. This wine comes in listed at 14.2 percent alcohol and offers up a nicely developing bouquet of black cherries, a bit of blueberry, cigar wrapper, menthol, chocolate, a nice touch of soil and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and just a touch hot on the backend, with a good core of fruit, nicely buried, moderate tannins and fine length and grip on the complex and focused finish. Despite the touch of backend heat here (which makes me think it is a bit higher octane than its stated level), the wine is really quite nicely balanced and is aging quite gracefully. It is quite tasty today, but still climbing and it will soften more with further bottle age. Good juice. 2022-2050+. **91+**.

**2013 JRG Red Wine- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2013 vintage of JRG red from the Pamplin Family Winery has a *cépages* of seventy-five percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty-two percent merlot and three percent malbec. It is starting to nicely develop some secondary layers of complexity at age seven, with the bouquet wafting from the glass in a black fruity mix of cassis, dark berry, cigar ash, dark soil tones, a nice touch of bell pepper (which recalls old school claret) and a discreet framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is suave, full-bodied, focused and nicely balanced, with a good core, moderate tannins and lovely length and grip on the ripe, classy finish. This is very good and starting to drink nicely, but still has decades of life ahead of it. 2020-2045. **92**.

**2013 Cabernet Sauvignon- Volker Eisele Family Estate (Chiles Valley)**

The Eisele family first purchased this parcel of land in the Chiles Valley in 1974 and have been farming it organically since day one! The first vines went into the ground in 1975 and are almost entirely dry-farmed, as the cooler microclimate of the Chiles Valley does not necessitate drip irrigation. The wine's *cépages* in 2013 is eighty-seven percent cabernet sauvignon and thirteen percent merlot, with the *elevage* lasting two years and having been done in fifty percent new oak. The octane level this year is listed at 14.3 percent and the wine offers up a lovely bouquet of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, a touch of dried eucalyptus and a refined framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe and full-bodied, with a plush core of fruit, firm, buried tannins and fine length and grip on the nascently complex and gently warm finish. This will need some bottle age to blossom properly. 2026-2055. **89**.





### **2012 Cabernet Sauvignon- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon bottling from Pamplin Family is a riper vintage here, coming in listed at 14.5 percent alcohol and offering up a plush nose of black cherries, crème de cassis, gentle balsamic tones, dark soil, cigar wrapper, a bit of tariness and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe and rock solid at the core, with still a fair bit of tannin, good focus and grip and a bit of backend heat on the long finish. This is a good, solid bottle for its octane, but at the riper level, there is less complexity here than in the vintages listed closer to fourteen percent. This is still a young wine and more complexity may yet emerge with further bottle age. It carries its alcohol pretty well, with only a touch of heat on the finish, but my gut instinct is that it will never match the complexity of the slightly lower octane vintages of the Pamplin cabernets. 2026-2045+. **88.**

### **2012 JRG Red Wine- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2012 JRG bottling is composed of a blend of seventy-one percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty-five percent merlot and two percent each of petit verdot and malbec in this vintage. The wine is a bit riper than the 2013 vintage, as it comes in at 14.5 percent octane and offers up a sappy nose of sweet dark berries, black cherries, dark chocolate, cigar ash, a hint of bell pepper, smoke and new oak. On the palate the wine is ripe, full-bodied and plush on the attack, with a good core of fruit, modest tannin and fine length and grip on the slightly warm finish. With its slightly higher octane, there is a slight “baked black fruit” element here and, as a result, the wine does not have quite the same vibrancy as found in the 2013 version, though it is still nicely complex and quite light on its feet for its ripeness level. A good solid wine, but the slightly less ripe vintages are a step up in terms of precision and backend lift. 2020-2045. **89.**

### **2011 Cabernet Sauvignon- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2011 vintage of cabernet from the Pamplin Family Winery comes in listed at 14.1 percent and is really quite lovely in its bouquet of cassis, black cherries, cigar wrapper, a touch of dark chocolate, a nice touch of lavender and spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and focused, with a good core of fruit, moderate tannins and a bit of backend tariness on the long and well-balanced finish. Like many of these Pamplin cabernets, I have the distinct impression the octane is a bit higher than its stated level on the label, but the wine remains nicely balanced and is aging quite nicely. This vintage includes three percent petit verdot in the blend. I would still give the 2011 cabernet another few years in the cellar to allow it to blossom a bit more completely. 2023-2055. **91.**

### **2011 JRG Red Wine- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The *cépages* of the 2011 vintage of JRG *rouge* from Pamplin Family is one of the lowest in cabernet sauvignon of the range that I tasted, with the blend this year being composed of fifty-one percent merlot, thirty-seven percent cabernet sauvignon, nine percent cabernet franc and three percent petit verdot. The higher percentage of merlot shows here on the nose, but by no means in an unfavorable manner, as the bouquet is bright and complex, offering up scents of cassis, dark berry, hints of chipotle pepper to come, cigar ash, a touch of lavender, dark soil tones and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is full, focused and suave on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, some velvety texture from the merlot, modest tannins and fine length and grip on the ripe and complex finish. This too comes in listed at 14.1 percent, but seems a bit riper on the backend. Still, this is aging very nicely and I really like the personality of this vintage of JRG with the higher percentage of merlot in the blend. 2020-2045+. **92.**

### **2010 Cabernet Sauvignon- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon from Pamplin Family is a pretty ripe wine, coming in listed at 14.7 percent octane; this vintage includes two percent petit verdot in the *cépages*. The wine offers up a fine nose of black cherries, cassis, cigar wrapper, dark soil tones, a touch of eucalyptus, spicy new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly youthful, with a very good core of fruit, fine focus and balance and still a fair bit of chewy tannin perking up the long and nascently complex finish. Like the 2010 JRG bottling here, though this is listed at 14.7 percent alcohol, it does not seem all that different in octane from some of the more recent vintages listed at 14.2 percent, though the texture of the tannins in the 2010 are not as refined as in some of the more recent examples. Still, with a bit more bottle age, this will be a good, solid bottle of cabernet, but things have progressed here dramatically with the textural sophistication of this varietal as the years have gone by. 2026-2045. **88.**

### **2010 JRG Red Wine- Pamplin Family Winery (Columbia Valley)**

The 2010 vintage of JRG is more cabernet-dominated than the 2011 version, with this vintage being comprised of seventy-four percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty-five percent merlot and one percent petit verdot. It is a big, ripe wine, coming in with a listed alcohol content of 14.7 percent and offering up a jammy nose of blackberries, dark chocolate, sweet cigar wrapper, dried eucalyptus, a touch of tariness and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, ripe, complex and full-bodied, with a polished attack, a good core of fruit, melted tannins and quite nice length on the well-balanced finish. This carries its alcohol quite nicely on the palate and does not seem particularly riper than some of the vintages that are listed a half point lower, though perhaps it is not quite as vibrant on the nose. 2020-2035+. **90.**



### **1994 Cabernet Sauvignon “Monte Bello”- Ridge Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The last time I tasted the 1994 Monte Bello, all the way back in 2007, I was totally disappointed in the wine and felt it was not a great vintage for this bottling. However, this most recent bottle clearly shows that I had an off bottle back then, as that previous example bears absolutely zero resemblance to this brilliant bottle of 1994. This is clearly a great classic vintage in the making for this iconic wine, and I am sorry to have written a note on a poor example of the wine. Today, the 1994 offers up a pure and blossoming nose of cassis, cigar smoke, stony soil tones, tobacco leaf, dark berries and a touch of spicy wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with an excellent core of fruit, fine soil signature, blossoming complexity and a very long, focused and ripely tannic finish. This is a great vintage of Monte Bello in the making, and while the wine is eminently approachable today, it is still just a tad on the young side and I would be inclined to still let it rest comfortably in the cellar for at least a few more years before really starting to drink it in earnest. It has a very long life still ahead of it, so why not let it completely reach its plateau? 2022-2075. **95+**.

### **1991 Cabernet Sauvignon “Monte Bello”- Ridge Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

This particular bottle of '91 Monte Bello showed a bit of volatile acidity, but not enough to mar the wine to my palate and I found the wine quite enjoyable and starting to drink at a very good point in its evolutionary arc. The bouquet is deep, complex and nicely vibrant (with its bit of VA), as it offers up scents of cassis, cigar ash, complex soil tones, a touch of black raspberry and spicy American oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and packs plenty of backend energy, with a fine core, lovely focus, fine-grained tannins and a long, focused and classy finish. A very good Monte Bello that is getting pretty close to primetime drinking, but I would still give it a few more years in the cellar to more completely blossom and really start to show its secondary layers of complexity. I had not drunk a bottle of the 1991 Monte Bello in a decade and was very happy to see it showing well and even a bit more impressive than I had found it ten years ago. 2021-2060. **93**.

### **1989 Cabernet Sauvignon “Estate Reserve” Charles Wetmore Vineyard- Wente Brothers**

The 1989 Wente Brothers “Estate Reserve” Cabernet Sauvignon is from their Charles Wetmore Vineyard in Livermore Valley. However, unlike some of the other vineyards owned by Wente Brothers, this is not comprised of old vines, as it was abandoned for twenty years and only replanted in the early 1980s, so the 1989 is made from fairly young vines by the standards of this old line winery. The wine is properly ripe at thirteen percent octane and offers up a wide open and nicely mature nose of cassis, bell pepper, cigar ash, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones, incipient notes of chipotle pepper and just a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and focused, with a good core of fruit, still some backend tannin to resolve, fine balance and grip and a long, really quite good finish. This is not as light on its feet as similarly aged cabernets from top producers in regions such as Sonoma, Napa or the Santa Cruz Mountains would be from this era, but it is a good, solid example of mature cabernet that is drinking very nicely today and still has decades of life in it. 2020-2045+. **89**.

### **1985 Cabernet Sauvignon “Monte Bello”- Ridge Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

To this day, I can still vividly recall the moment I purchased my four bottles of 1985 Monte Bello, which was all I could afford at the time. I was selling both the 1984 and 1985 vintages, side by side, and debated which vintage to purchase (or to split my budget with two

bottles of each), and ended up going with four of the 1985. At the time, I had not tasted either vintage and was basing my choice on press reports of the relative merits of the two vintages. A few years later, I had a chance to drink the brilliant 1984 at a tasting and have spent the rest of my time hoping the 1985 would somehow be able to catch up to the stunning 1984. Well, this was the last bottle of the four, and I have to say that this vintage will always have to be content with second place to the preceding year's Monte Bello. The 1985 Monte Bello is still a very good wine, but it is just a bit "bretty" and some folks may be put off by this characteristic. It remains still fairly young structurally and deserves a bit more cellaring to completely blossom on the palate, but its bouquet is deep, complex and promising. The nose is a blend of cassis, cigar ash, stony soil tones, singed wood, medicinal overtones and the aforementioned bit of *brettanomyces* (which comes across as a bit of sweaty saddle leather). On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature, tangy acids and still a bit of tannin in need of resolution on the long and focused finish. This will be a complex wine in its style with more bottle age, but it is really too young for primetime drinking. It is a good, solid vintage for Monte Bello, but not one of the great ones from this era. 2022-2050+. **90+.**

#### **1981 Cabernet Sauvignon "Jimsamore- Monte Bello" Ridge Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mtns)**

This note is a few years old, as I had tucked it away for an historical piece I was planning to write on Ridge Vineyards and it had not yet made it into any features on American wines. This 1981 is an interesting vineyard blend cabernet from Ridge, as it was comprised of seventy-eight percent Jimsamore Ranch fruit and twenty-two percent from the Monte Bello Vineyard, which lies higher up on the same peak. The wine is deep and complex, though fairly marked by brett, as it offers up an aromatic constellation of cassis, cigar ash, lovely soil tones, leather and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and very nicely balanced, with a good core, melting tannins and very good length and grip on the focused finish. I am usually pretty tolerant of a bit of brett, but this wine is a bit above my threshold for complete enjoyment and the *brettanomyces* keeps the score down just a bit for me. Without the brett, this would merit four points higher. 2016-2030. **88.**

#### **1980 Cabernet Sauvignon "Vintage Selection"- Burgess Cellars (Howell Mountain)**

It had been two years since I last drank a bottle of the 1980 Burgess Vintage Selection cabernet and I thought I should check in and see how it was evolving. As readers may recall (or can check through the database), I had really liked this vintage from Tom Burgess when I first drank it in 2010, but the bottle two summers ago was a bit less impressive. The bouquet remains quite complex and stylish, offering up notes of sweet cassis, a touch of bell pepper, cigar smoke, a fine base of soil, dried eucalyptus and a discreet framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and drinking at full maturity, with a good core, still a bit of backend tannin and a long and complex finish that closes with a bit of tariness. Sadly, I have the same impression of this bottle as I did two years ago, with the wine now showing just a touch of imperfect ripening in its fruit profile on the palate and with the acids just a touch stiff on the backend. I am guessing that the bottle I really liked back in 2010 was still in its sweet spot of peak maturity and the wine is starting to lose a bit of steam ten years down the road. As I said back in the note on the wine in 2018, this is still a good bottle of fully mature Napa cabernet, but it is clearly starting to lose just a bit of its luster. It is not going to fall off the cliff immediately, but I am going to make plans to drink up my last few bottles in the near future. 2020-2030+? **89.**

### **1978 Cabernet Sauvignon “Fay Vineyard”- Heitz Wine Cellars (Napa Valley)**

It had been a decade since I last opened a bottle of the 1978 Fay Vineyard bottling of cabernet sauvignon from Joe and David Heitz and I figured I really should check in to see how it is evolving a further ten years down the road. This particular bottle had a crumbly cork, so perhaps the wine itself was showing just a touch advanced as a result, but as I have only a handful left down in the cellar, I decided I would just happily drink it and report on this bottle and let the others continue to snooze for the time being. The bouquet remains very deep and complex, with the black cherry fruit in this particular bottle showing a bit desiccated in tone, to go along with classic notes of cigar smoke, a touch of chipotle pepper, dried eucalyptus, allspice, a fine base of soil and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite solid at the core, with good soil signature, fine focus and grip, modest tannins and a long, tangy and very well-balanced finish. I suspect that the crumbly cork has more to do with this bottle not singing quite as much as the last couple I have drunk, rather than the passage of time, but I will have to pull another bottle one of these days to confirm that supposition. But, even with a crumbly cork, this was still a lovely bottle to drink. 2020-2035. **92+**.

### **1978 Cabernet Sauvignon- Rancho Yerba Buena (Alexander Valley)**

The 1978 Rancho Yerba Buena Cabernet Sauvignon hailed from a vineyard in Geyserville. I do not know anything about this label, but bought a bottle a couple of years ago at auction, when I was writing a feature on the 1978 cabernet vintage. As the wine did not ship from California until fairly close to the deadline for that article, I decided to let it settle in, rather than pop it too soon after travel. I am happy that I waited, as the wine has turned out to be very good indeed and it would have been a waste to try and taste it through muddy sediment after its three thousand mile voyage. The octane level here is 13.4 percent and the wine offers up a complex and still quite vibrant bouquet of black cherries, cassis, cigar wrapper, a touch of chipotle petroleum jelly, really quite lovely soil tones and a dollop of eucalyptus in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with still a very good core of fruit, fine focus and grip, just a whisper of backend tannin remaining and a long, tangy, complex and surprisingly complete finish. The only thing that keeps this wine's score down a couple of points is that it was acidulated, and perhaps not all that skillfully, as the acids today are no longer perfectly integrated on the backend of the palate. But, this is just a minor flaw. As Bertrand Chevillon might say, *“une bonne surprise”*! 2020-2035. **90**.

### **1976 Cabernet Sauvignon “Monte Bello”- Ridge Vineyards (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

In the drought year of 1976, the Monte Bello bottling from Ridge has turned out very well indeed, but it is a tad on the leaner side from what I imagine was a period of hydric stress when the vines would have shut down a bit. The wine eventually topped out at 12.7 percent alcohol, but this is not particularly low by Monte Bello standards, which has never been a very heady wine. The bouquet on the 1976 is now quite mature and offers up a complex blend of cassis, desiccated dark berries, cigar ash, stony soil tones, a touch of remaining tobacco leaf and just a whiff of herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a good, but not great core, fairly resolved tannins, good acids and a long, complex finish. There is not quite the same mid-palate amplitude of a classic vintage of Monte Bello evident in the 1976, but this wine has aged quite well and is a complete and very classy middleweight that is now at its apogee, but clearly has plenty of life remaining. Good juice. 2018-2030+. **91**.



### **1975 Cabernet Sauvignon- Robert Mondavi Winery (Napa)**

In my feature on the fine cabernet sauvignon bottlings from the Robert Mondavi winery several years ago, I did not have a note on the 1975 regular bottling of cabernet, so I was very happy to find a bottle at auction not too long ago to add to my cellar. As I mentioned back in that feature, the distance between the “regular” and the “Reserve” cabernets here was not all that dramatic back in the decade of the 1970s and the 1975 has aged long and gracefully and remains at its apogee of peak drinkability today. The bouquet offers up a refined blend of black cherries, cigar wrapper, a complex base of soil tones, dried eucalyptus and a gentle framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and at its peak today, with a fine core of fruit, melting tannins and a long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. 1975 is one of the most powerful vintages for cabernet in this decade and the Mondavi regular bottling displays a beautiful synthesis of the elegant style of the estate and the fine structure inherent in the vintage. This has miles to go before it sleeps! 2020-2050. **92.**

### **1973 Sterling Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)**

This most recent bottle of the 1973 Sterling cabernet was getting towards the end of its plateau and probably starting to peak over the edge at the slope downwards. I had last drunk a bottle of the 1973 back in the spring of 2018, when I was working on my feature on the long and illustrious career of Ric Forman. At that time, the wine seemed likely to still cruise nicely for another decade or more, though it had clearly been fully mature for at least thirty years.

However, this time around, the wine was getting a bit more fragile structurally and this may well be one of the Sterling cabs crafted by Ric Forman that needs drinking up in the near future. The bouquet is still quite lovely, offering up a complex blend of desiccated black cherries and cassis, a dollop of Rutherford Dust, petroleum jelly, cigar ash, gentle notes of eucalyptus and a discreet foundation of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is still deep and full, but quite tertiary in flavors, with melted tannins, tangy acids and a long, complex finish. There is still good depth of fruit here, but in this era, Ric Forman was acidulating his cabernets and the acids are starting to stick out a bit uncovered on the backend now, which is a sign of imminent fragility. Still tasty, but I am going to start drinking up my remaining bottles. 2020-2030. **89.**

**1960 Gemello's "California" Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Clara County)**

The 1960 Gemello cabernet sauvignon is remarkably still drinking quite well, at age sixty! The wine was aged a very long time in cask prior to bottling, as according to the back label it spent its first two years in large, American oak *foudres* prior to being racked into six hundred and sixty-five liter casks (again American oak, but presumably none of this wood was new back in 1960) where it rested until bottling in May of 1970! The wine was pretty ripe by the standards of the day, as it comes in listed at 12.5 percent octane and still has plenty of black fruit in its nose of cassis, black cherries, cigar ash, gentle tariness, damp soil tones, a touch of autumn leafiness and a topnote of chipotle pepper. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and beautifully resolved, with still fairly broad shoulders, a solid core, melted tannins and a long, complex and slightly raisiny finish. This has probably been a bit four-square its entire life, but at age sixty, one is inclined to forgive this trait and marvel at the wine is still alive and kicking! 2020-2030. **87.**