

# VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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**KALIN CELLARS  
GREAT OLD SCHOOL WINES  
NEVER RELEASED BEFORE THEIR PRIME**



Kalin Cellars is one of the great old school producers in the world of California wine. While not stretching quite as far back in history as some of the early pioneers, such as Heitz Wine Cellar, Ridge Vineyards or Stony Hill Vineyards, Kalin Cellars is far from a new kid on the block, as the winery produced its first vintage in 1975. The Marin County-based winery was officially founded in 1977 and is the brainchild of Terry and Frances Leighton, who arrived in the winemaking business as a sideline to their regular positions as eminent microbiologists based at the University of California in Berkeley. Both Frances and Terry hold doctorates in microbiology, with Terry Leighton remaining a full-time member of the faculty at Berkeley until his retirement from the university in 2000, as well as co-directing the winery. Frances Leighton left Berkeley a bit earlier than Terry, as the needs of Kalin Cellars grew in the middle of the 1980s “and got too big for us to manage on weekends” recalls Terry, and it was Frances Leighton who took an early leave from academia and “became the full-time guiding light of the Kalin organization” by handling the day to day management of the winery, as well as co-sharing the winemaking duties with Terry. So Kalin Cellars is far from the typical Napa Valley or Sonoma County winery, and its growth in the California wine scene over the years since its

founding in 1977 is really a testament to the vision of Terry and Frances for crafting long-lived California wines that began with their earliest vintages and which has steadily gained a very passionate coterie of clients since the release of their first bottlings from the 1975 vintage.

As Terry Leighton recalls, “we really got started making wine out of curiosity, as we had been contacted by folks who had taken over a massive, hundred year-old bakery up in Emeryville, which they were converting into a winemaking facility and where they had decided to start producing a Port-styled wine.” He continues, “the folks in charge had said that they felt pretty comfortable with the winemaking itself, but were scared about potential bacterial issues and the general scientific side of production and asked if we would come up and consult for them in exchange for all the Port we could ever possibly drink- so we agreed and consulted for this group for a few years in the early 1970s when they were first getting started.” This was the J. W. Morris Port Works, who began producing Port from grapes such as Zinfandel, Petit Sirah and Pinot Noir (rather than indigenous Portuguese varieties such as Torriga Nacional or Tinto Roriz), and after a couple of years of consulting on the Port, Terry and Frances thought it might be interesting to try and make a bit of wine for themselves while they were up at the facility, so in the 1975 vintage they produced a Pinot Noir and a Zinfandel, which they gave the moniker of Kalin Cellars to when the wines were ready for release a few years later. I asked Terry how the couple had come up with the name for Kalin Cellars, and he responded that both “Frances and myself wanted to use a name that came from the language of one of the original indigenous Native American tribes that had once lived in the San Francisco Bay area, and after a few days of digging in the library, I came across one of the tribes’ word for ocean, which was “Kalin”, and I thought- *voila*, that’s it.” Interestingly, the grapes for both the original Zinfandel and Pinot Noir from the 1975 vintage came from the Sonoma County vineyard of Dave Demostene, and this source for grapes would continue to figure very prominently from this first vintage down until very recently in the Kalin Cellars lineup.

When the first two wines were ready for release in 1978, the Leightons decided they might as well price them at the rather formidable price (at the time) of \$8.00 per bottle, as there were less than a couple of hundred cases of each, and much to their surprise, the wines sold out fairly quickly- mostly to top restaurants in San Francisco and Los Angeles in that first vintage. Despite the fact that they had only made a couple of hundred cases of the two 1975s, when they were received so warmly by top restaurateurs and sommeliers in California, the Leightons felt that there just might be something interesting in continuing to make wines and to perhaps to increase their production as good sources of grapes became available. For Kalin Cellars is a classic, *négociant*-styled California winery- owning no vineyards outright, but contracting with farmers for production from some of the top vineyards in Sonoma, Mendocino and the Livermore Valley. This is not to say that vineyard ownership in California wine country was out of the question for the Leightons, as there were some close calls through the years where they had interest in certain vineyards from which they had a history of purchasing grapes, only to see them scooped up by others when they eventually came on the market. While there was the occasional foray into Santa Barbara, Kalin Cellars has generally been a producer focused on the aforementioned regions as the primary sources for their grapes. There has never been any Kalin bottlings from fruit in Napa Valley. From the start, they sought to find top vineyard sites that were cooler in microclimate, as, prior to becoming winemakers, Terry and Frances had both fallen in love with wine while primarily drinking European wines and were looking to make

wines that would age and evolve with bottle age and felt it was necessary to source fruit from generally slower ripening vineyards.

Over the years, the Leightons have had some very interesting vineyard sources arrive at their doorstep without a lot of searching on their own. As Terry Leighton recalls, there have been several instances when “homeless grapes” would arrive at their facility at harvest time, as one person or another would approach them with a request for them to buy grapes, and several of their vineyard sources over the years arrived quite serendipitously. This started very early on in the history of Kalin Cellars, as one of the Leightons’ earliest forays into the region of the Livermore Valley (southeast of Oakland, about twenty miles inland to the east of San Francisco Bay) arrived when they went to investigate an advertisement for “free grapes” in one of the local newspapers. It turns out that a very large ranch, which was then called Stony Ridge in the late 1970s (but, had been traditionally known as Ruby Hill) and was then owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad, was being managed by a team whose primary mission was not producing wine or growing grapes to sell, so the two hundred acres of vineyard land far, far exceeded anything that they could keep up with at that time. The Ruby Hill acreage of vineyards was planted at that time with Sémillon, Zinfandel, Malvasia, Barbera, Moscato and Sauvignon Vert, but the primary attraction to the Leightons was the Sémillon, which was the primary variety that they produced wine from during their association with the Ruby Hill ranch. As Terry recounted, “when Frances and I first went out to take a look at the vineyards here, we found fantastic, hundred year-old vines of Sémillon, but, many had not even been pruned for the last six to eight years, and they really needed to have someone looking after them- so we jumped at the chance to start making wine from here.” The Livermore Valley had been a very, very important wine-producing region in California in the nineteenth century- a fact not lost on the Leightons once that had a chance to do a bit of research on the area- as this was the center of Charles Wetmore’s pioneering viticultural work in the 1880s. For many, Charles Wetmore is the founding father of modern viticulture in California. Most of the vineyards planted in Livermore were planted from cuttings Charles Wetmore had brought back from Europe in the nineteenth century- in the case of the Sémillon that the Leightons soon started to work with, from Château d’Yquem! So while the Livermore Valley was a bit off the beaten path for fine wine production in California in the late 1970s, there was some serious history here and the Leightons recognized the opportunity these great old vines represented.

As Terry relates, “when we told people that we were considering producing a varietal bottling of Sémillon, folks in the wine business told us that it was a cheap blending grape and no one could make anything interesting in California from that grape and even if we did, the market would never buy it.” Once one has spent a little time around Terry Leighton, it does not take too long to know that one of the fastest ways to get him to embrace a project is to tell him it has no chance of success! Kalin Cellars produced their first vintages of Sémillon from these great hundred year-old vines in 1979, with Château d’Yquem’s dry bottling, called Ygrex, serving as an early model for their own Sémillon cuvée. There were 180 cases of Kalin Sémillon produced in that first vintage. Terry Leighton relates that the Kalin Cellars bottling of Sémillon from these great old vines in the Livermore Valley met with commercial success right from the outset, and Kalin produced wines from these very old vines for a handful of vintages, before fate intervened and took this vineyard source from the Leightons. The ranch ended up in the early 1980s being purchased by Computerland to serve as a “corporate retreat” in the country, and once they

purchased the ranch, they razed all the old vines in a matter of days to make room for their executive retreat and destroyed one of the great old vine resources in the state of California! So there was no 1982 vintage of Sémillon from Kalin Cellars, as the vines had been unceremoniously bulldozed, but the vintages from 1979 to 1981 has been such a success (adding some new luster to the old name of Livermore Valley), that the Livermore-based winery of Wente Brothers reached out to the Leightons and offered to allow them to buy grapes from their own vineyards to continue their production of Sémillon. As the Wente Brothers grapes also hailed from very old vines planted with vines propagated from the original Charles Wetmore cuttings taken from Yquem (in 2009 these vines celebrated their one hundredth birthday), there was no hesitation from the Leightons. So, Kalin Cellars was back producing an old vine bottling of Livermore Sémillon again in the 1983 vintage (in the end only missing the single vintage of 1982), and this continues to be one of the flagship bottlings in the winery's lineup to this day.

The timing of the generous offer from Wente Brothers, who of course could have used all of the Sémillon that they were growing, was propitious, as the 1983 vintage also saw the arrival of a new bottling at Kalin Cellars- their Sauvignon Blanc. As Terry Leighton recalls, “for a few years, Frances and I had been on the lookout for a source for good Sauvignon Blanc grapes, as we loved Loire Valley sauvignon such as the Baron de L from Château Ladoucette, not to mention, Pavillon Blanc from Château Margaux, but we did not want to make an overtly fruity and very grassy style of Sauvignon Blanc, which was primarily what one was finding out there in those days.” But, prior to the 1983 vintage, they were approached by a vineyard owner up in Potter Valley in Mendocino (the northernmost wine-producing region in California) about tasting a Sauvignon Blanc that he had made (using trash barrels as his fermentation tanks!) from his own grapes. The Leightons were totally surprised that this unlabeled and amateur Sauvignon Blanc was actually excellent- with no overtly herbaceous characteristics and they were intrigued to go take a look at the vineyard. It turned out that the vineyard, the Pauli Vineyard, is planted on a dried-up riverbed, with alluvial topsoils of chalk and clay over a superb base of gravel and the couple knew they had found their source for Sauvignon Blanc! The first vintage produced was the 1983, which was blended with about twenty percent Sémillon from the Wente Brothers' vineyards, as the Leightons thought they could make a very Graves-like style of Sauvignon Blanc from this gravelly soils and a bit of their old vine Sémillon would provide a perfect complementary match for this new source of Sauvignon Blanc. To this day, the Kalin Sauvignon Blanc bottling continues to include about twenty percent Sémillon for added complexity, and for many years now, the Sémillon has also included about the same amount of Sauvignon Blanc, so the cuvées are in several ways, almost mirror images of each other. To my palate, both are the reference point wines produced in California from these two varieties.

Today, Kalin Cellars produces about seven thousand cases a year in their cellars in Novato, in Marin County, though none of the most recent vintage will see the light of day for probably more than a decade! For the winery continues to age their wines for long period of bottle age prior to their release in the market, so that “current” releases in the market include a 1996 Pinot Noir and their 1997 Sauvignon Blanc “Reserve”, and while no timetable is ever set for any particular wine, it seems that eight to ten years of bottle age for all the standard wines in the Kalin Cellars range has now become the norm and it is far from rare for a “new” Kalin release to not have already aged fifteen years in the Leightons' cellars. Terry and Frances Leighton regularly taste their wines that are approaching the threshold for release, and it is only

when the wines have been deemed by both husband and wife as ready for drinking that they are offered to Kalin's clientele. As their New York distributor, Doug Polaner, commented during our tasting out in Livermore in January, when a pair of 2001s were presented in one of the early flights: "Terry, I am certain that these are the first two Kalin wines I have tasted from the new millennium!" Ironically, the two wines in question from the 2001 vintage were from the special "Beau Rivage" project that the Leightons had started around this time, which was to make affordable, everyday wines for early consumption that would sell from the winery for around \$10.00 per bottle and offer up real character for the price. Not surprisingly, this project had evolved from challenges that popped up during conversations with other winemakers that "it was just not possible to make good inexpensive, everyday wines in the California of today- with vineyard and grape prices what they were at the turn of the century" and Terry and Frances were off to prove that it not only could be done, but that it could be done exceedingly well!

When I asked Terry Leighton how the custom of long bottle aging came about at Kalin Cellars, he told me that it was a practice that really evolved over time, "for in the era that we started, wine was purchased by '*amateurs*' who came from a wine culture and **everyone knew** (in those days) that you purchased wine and put it in the cellar until it was enjoyable." He continues, "only after Julia Child so beautifully educated Americans in the 1980s on French wine and food culture did a new generation of (wine) consumers arise that did not have origins in a wine culture" and "many marketing types exploited the burgeoning consumer base by tag lines such as '*Every year is a vintage year in California*' or '*California wine is ready to drink as soon as it is released*' and "we realized the most of our wines would be consumed at approximately ten percent of their potential unless we started holding back at least a fraction of our production." So in the mid-1980s, Kalin Cellars began "reserving" a large percentage of their production with long-term cellaring potential to be released when the wines would be approaching "approximately eighty percent of their potential," recalls Terry, and "as this 'Antiquities Program' gathered momentum, we decided that the goal would be to hold all of the wines up to this point in their evolutions," along the lines of estates around the world such as "López de Heredia, Robert Ampeau, Giuseppe Quintarelli and Château Simone."

From the very earliest years at Kalin Cellars, the wines have been made in a very traditional manner that reflects what many other top producers were doing in California in the era of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as classic European winemaking practices. All of the red wines at Kalin are initially fermented in large, old redwood tanks that hold around four tons of grapes at capacity, and are original to the very first vintage of 1975. After fermentation, the wines are transferred to barrels for a long *elevage*, with the percentage of new oak varying depending upon both the varietal and the style of the vintage. However, the percentage of new oak used has generally been pretty high for many of the Kalin red wines over at least the last several decades, but with the Leightons putting great emphasis on the quality and character of the new wood that they use, I have never encountered a single Kalin Cellars wine that I would term even modestly "over-oaked". As Terry relates, "the first few vintages were, of course, a bit more varied in our use of wood, with a bit of American or Yugoslavian oak sometimes finding their way into the barrel program very early on, but we fairly quickly evolved into only using French oak and looking always for the best quality of barrels and the finest *tonneliers* that we could find." Their search for top quality barrels that synthesized the most seamlessly with the long-lived wines of Kalin eventually led to a long relationship with the French *tonnelier* of Gaston

Billon and his son and the dedication of a special bottling of Pinot Noir from the 1994 vintage to commemorate the passing of Monsieur Billon senior in that year. All of the Kalin Cellars red wines are bottled without fining or filtration.



*Terry Leighton, holding court in Aloxé-Corton during our tasting of Kalin Bourgogne wines a few summers ago.*

White wines have always been barrel-fermented at Kalin Cellars since the very first vintage of Chardonnay was produced from the Calcaire Vineyard owned by Frank Woods in 1977 (folks of my generation may recognize this name, as it was one of the cornerstones of Clos du Bois' single vineyard bottling program in the 1980s). This includes the domaine's white wines from varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon as well, which have also always been barrel-fermented, and this may well account for at least part of the reason for these varieties' uncanny aging ability at Kalin Cellars, as these wines go on and on like top vintages of white Bordeaux. As Terry Leighton observes, "we have always barrel-fermented all of our white wines and do not even own a single stainless steel tank!" All of the Kalin Cellars white wines also go through full malolactic fermentation, are bottled with only a light fining of bentonite and are always unfiltered, so it is not uncommon to find a bit of sediment in the older whites from this fine domaine. The percentage of new oak used for the white wines at Kalin Cellars varies by varietal, with the Sauvignon Blanc Reserve customarily seeing about thirty percent new wood, the Sémillon about the same (or occasionally a touch more, depending on the vintage's characteristics) and the Chardonnays typically raised in fifty percent new oak. Kalin Chardonnays will usually spend about ten months aging on their fine lees prior to bottling and



are never, ever acidulated (none of the Kalin wines ever see their acids adjusted), as the Leightons take pains to find cooler vineyard sources and pick their grapes at responsible sugar levels so as to retain the backbone of acidity necessary for their white wines to age slowly and gracefully in the bottle.

Though Kalin Cellars has produced a wide variety of both red and white wines over the course of its history, with early bottlings of the winery's reds emphasizing a fair bit of Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon, in addition to Pinot Noir, today the winery's production is generally comprised of about eighty percent white wines and twenty percent red wines. Of the red wines, Kalin produces primarily Pinot Noir these days, though the occasional foray back into the world of Cabernet Sauvignon was still in evidence up through the 1992 vintage, as the "current" winery releases include both a 1992 Cabernet bottling from Sonoma and a 1990 bottling from the historic Cresta Blanca Vineyard in Livermore Valley. When I spoke to Terry about how much I had admired his very Bordeaux-styled Cabernets that I knew from my wine merchant days from the vintages of the 1980s, he commented that "the vineyard source for many of those Sonoma wines was absolutely terrific, but unfortunately, the farmer had difficulties and eventually that superb Cabernet source was lost to us." It has been many, many years since a Kalin Cellars Zinfandel has been produced (the last vintage was 1982), and there was even a Merlot "Reserve" from the winery produced in the 1981 vintage, but these days, Kalin Cellars is probably most famous on the red wine side of the ledger for their extraordinary examples of Pinot Noir, which clearly must be ranked up at the very pinnacle of quality for this varietal in California.

As far as white wines go at Kalin Cellars today, Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc generally account for a tad less than ten percent each of the annual production of roughly 5500 cases a year of whites, with each cuvée annually ranging in production between 400 and 500 cases depending on the vagaries of the year. The balance of the white wines produced here is comprised primarily of various cuvées of Chardonnay, with each lot of Chardonnay typically produced in quantities of between 500 and 1500 cases in any given vintage. Since the outset of the winery in 1977, Kalin Cellars' wines have almost always been single vineyard bottlings, with the vineyard source for each wine typically identified with a cuvée designation; for example, "Cuvée DD" was used for both the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays that hail from Alexander Valley vineyard of Dave Demostene in Sonoma County and "Cuvée W" for the sixty year-old Chardonnay vines sourced by the Leightons from Wente Brothers. I have never known the winery to produce multiple bottlings of any wines other than Chardonnay or Pinot Noir in the same vintage, so to the best of my knowledge, there have never been any cuvée designations for any other varietal bottlings (excepting of course the winery's superb sparkling wines- Cuvée Blanche and Cuvée Rosé, as well as occasional dessert wines), with both the Sauvignon Blanc and the Cabernet Sauvignon typically labeled as Reserve wines. But, it is quite common for Terry and Frances to produce three, four or even five different single vineyard bottlings in any given vintage of Chardonnay (and up to three of Pinot Noir), and each of these is identified by a different cuvée designation. There have also been some lovely dessert wines produced over the years at Kalin Cellars, with the 1990 Cuvée L d'Or being an example of the winery's take on Sauternes-styled wines, with its heavily-botrytized blend of eighty percent Sémillon and twenty percent Sauvignon Blanc. As I touched upon above, there have also been some absolutely glorious California sparkling wines produced by the Leightons, which are all bottled as Brut Zero (no *dosage*) and are aged for a very long time *sur lies* prior to disgorgement and release into the market. The winery also



produced a handful of inexpensive, *vin ordinaire*-type wines in the early 2000s (the two I tasted were far from *ordinary*) under their *Beau Rivage* project moniker to show that making very good, reasonably-priced wines in the California of today is still quite possible.

One of the unique and very intriguing aspects of the portfolio of wines at Kalin Cellars is that one really has no idea of what is still waiting in the wings in the winery's cellar, as the combination of the intellectual curiosity of the Leightons and the long bottle aging policy of the winery means that there could be several new bottlings that have never been previously produced by the winery waiting patiently in the cellar for the proper time for their eventual release. As Terry Leighton likes to joke, "I always enjoy walking through the library in the cellar and looking at my retirement plan." However, at least at the writing of this piece, it seems likely that the Leightons' ride off into the sunset of retirement is nowhere near and that they will be continuing to craft their beautifully complex, ageworthy and world class "old school" California wines at Kalin Cellars for many more years to come. But, like many of their generation, (Terry Leighton was a young musician and aspiring biologist in Portland, Oregon in the late 1960s- his band used to open in concert for artists such as The Jefferson Airplane and The Doors) the day of retirement will one day come for Frances and Terry, and there is little doubt that we will all be thanking the foresight and willingness to sacrifice short-term gain on the part of the Leightons with a long and varied continuation of new and stunning wines emerging from Kalin Cellars for many years to come as their "Antiquities Program" will roll on long after new Kalin vintages are no longer being produced. Kalin Cellars is a singularly unique California domaine that sits at the very pinnacle of the state's old school producers (which to my palate, of course, translates into the very best wines in California), and the beauty of their holding back their wines until they are nearing their apogees means that one does not have to cellar the wines on release and hope that they are going to evolve in a positive direction- not always a given these days with some of their more trendy, wine-producing neighbors- as it is very rare to cross paths with a single bottle of Kalin Cellars wine that has not already received at least a decade's worth of bottle age prior to its release. This is one of the greatest of all the California classicists!

The following tasting notes are arranged by bottling, with most sections arranged by varietal, with the exception of course of the Sparkling Wines and the "Beau Rivage" project wines, which were produced from a couple of different grapes. Within each section, I have tried to give some background information on the bottling in question, as well as the style of the Kalin Cellars interpretations. For bottlings such as Chardonnay or Pinot Noir, where there have traditionally been several different cuvées produced from different vineyards (remember, every Kalin Cellars wine is a single vineyard bottling, whether or not it is indicated on the label!), I have tried to give brief background sketches on the vineyard origins of each distinct cuvée. Within each varietal section, the wines are listed chronologically from youngest to oldest, and where applicable, alphabetically by cuvée designation. This report would be far less interesting if it were not for the generosity of Terry and Frances Leighton, who warmly invited me out to Livermore in January for a tasting of a selection of Kalin "Antiquities" that really plunged into the depth of the cellar, and they were equally gracious in patiently fielding the litany of questions I sent their way as I tried to piece the history of this great estate together over the subsequent weeks. As we did not quite manage to get through all of the wines prepared by the couple during our tasting in January in Livermore (much to my chagrin, leaving on the table still un-tasted several more old Zinfandel bottlings, the 1981 Merlot Reserve, a couple of Cabernets and two

dessert wines!), the Leightons very generously offered to do a bit more “archeological digging in the cellar” and host a *Part Deux* of our tasting in the not too distant future, so I will very happily be writing a follow-up piece in a coming issue! I should mention that one of the keys to really enjoying any Kalin Cellars wine is to allow the wine adequate aeration time prior to drinking it, as these wines change dramatically in the glass and over the course of the meal. As all the wines are unfiltered, I usually prefer to decant all of my Kalin Cellars wines prior to serving, with the exception of their sparkling wines. This is not only to separate the wines from their (often considerable) sediment, but also to allow them to truly blossom with sufficient airing. At the two large tastings of Kalin wines that form the basis of this article, there was quite a bit of joking that my notes were so slow getting written down as the wines continued to evolve and change in the glass so dramatically that my nearly-finished tasting note was now inadequate for the wine in question!

I should add that I also try to exercise restraint when I have purchased Kalin wines that require shipping, and generally do not open bottles after they have been shipped until they have had, at the very least, a good six months to settle back in from their shaking during transit. These are hand-crafted, artisanal wines that are most emphatically living creatures when they depart the Kalin cellars for the market (of course, they are never young wines once this threshold has been crossed to Frances’ and Terry’s satisfaction and the wines are deemed close enough to maturity to be let out from the winery in the first place!) and so one really must take the time to treat them properly in order to enjoy them at a close approximation to their true character and quality level. To order a Kalin bottling off of a wine list and have it arrive ice-cold from the restaurant’s fridge, popped and poured briskly and then slammed down into an ice bucket is emphatically not the way to truly appreciate the true natural beauty of these wines! As the Leightons and their agents around the country are quite selective as to who receives allocations of Kalin Cellars wines at the restaurant level, this type of treatment is certainly far from characteristic of how most of these wines are handled, but just be attentive, as it may be the head sommelier’s night off and her new assistant may not yet be up to speed on how to best present Kalin wines during service, and it is well worth the effort- if such an occurrence should crop up- to ask for the white wine in question to be decanted and the decanter to be left on the table to come up to proper temperature. And order both your red and white Kalin wines for the dinner at the same time and have the red decanted first, so that it is really going to have had a chance to blossom while you have enjoyed the white wine with the earlier courses! As Terry Leighton sagely observes, “classic, artisanal wine is a journey, not a destination.”

*While the focus of this article is on the Kalin Cellars wines from California, I should mention that Frances and Terry Leighton do not limit their winemaking to the US, as they have been making two superb red Burgundies from two tiny slices of vineyards which they own in the Côte de Beaune and which are sold under the “Kalin Bourgogne” label. The two bottlings, a Côte de Beaune “Les Pierres Blanches” and a Beaune premier cru from the Chouacheux vineyard hail from small parcels they purchased from a retiring friend in Burgundy in the mid-1990s. For those interested in the full background on these excellent bottlings, as well as tasting notes on several vintages, please see the feature on the Kalin Bourgogne wines in the 2009 Burgundy report in Issue Thirty-Five (or email me and I will send you a copy).*

## ***Sparkling Wines***

The first Kalin Cellars sparkling wine was produced in the 1986 vintage, and this continues to be an ongoing project, though not too many bottlings have yet been released from the winery, as these wines receive as much or more bottle age in the cellars as any wine in the portfolio. All of the Kalin Cellars sparkling wines are in reality Brut Zero bottlings (though this does not appear anywhere on the labels) and receive no *dosage*. As Terry Leighton relates, “if you are not going to use any *dosage* on your sparkling wines, then you are simply going to have to resign yourself to the fact that they are going to require some long cellar time before they are really going to get interesting to drink.” Hence the very long aging in the winery’s cellars prior to release. As is the case with all of the Kalin Cellars bottlings, the sparkling wines here are always produced from single vineyards. I have only had the pleasure to taste three Kalin sparklers (thus far): the 1988 Cuvée Blanche, which is a Blanc de Blancs bottling produced from Chardonnay sourced from the Lorenzo Vineyard in the Russian River Valley (Marcassin fans might recognize the name), and two different bottlings of Kalin Cellars’ Cuvée Rosé- the “regular” and the Reserve- hailing from the 1987 vintage. The two 1987 Cuvée Rosé bottlings are quite different, both in vineyard source and in *cépage*, as the “regular” 1987 Cuvée Rosé is one hundred percent Pinot Noir and hails from the B JL Vineyard in Potter Valley in Mendocino. In contrast, the 1987 Cuvée Rosé “Reserve” comes from the Pasternak Vineyard in Marin County (owned and farmed by Mark Pasternak), which is planted to forty percent Chardonnay and sixty percent Pinot Noir and is one of the coolest vineyards sites in all of California- making it a great retainer of acidity in the grapes and ideal for sparkling wine production. The Pasternak Vineyard, which was the source of the first Kalin sparkler in 1986, directly overlooks the Pacific Ocean and is routinely harvested in October. The soils here in these rolling hills, ocean-side hills are comprised of stony shale and limestone.

All the Kalin sparklers go through full malolactic fermentation, age around ten months in older barrels (three to four year-old wood is usually used for these base wines) prior to bottling up for the secondary fermentation and are given long lees aging prior to disgorgement and eventual release for the market. Like every wine produced by the Leightons, there are no acid adjustments for these wines (de-acidification might be the proper approach for the grapes from the Pasternak Vineyard if one were prone to intervention!) and they are probably the longest-lived sparkling wines produced in California today (or, in this case, yesterday, as the most recent vintage I have tasted is the 1988). Certainly, I have not tasted any bubbly from the state with this kind of bottle age coupled to such superb potential for continued, positive evolution in the bottle! There are at least several more vintages of Kalin Cellars sparkling wine aging comfortably in the winery’s cellars, awaiting release (according to the Kalin website, the domaine has also released a 1988 vintage of Cuvée Rosé which I have not yet tasted). As noted above, none of the bottlings state that they are Brut Zero wines on the label, with the labels simply stating- or should I say- “under-stating”- that they are “California Sparkling Wine”. Like so many of the Kalin Cellars’ wines, the three sparklers here improved dramatically as they had a chance to open up in the glass, and each time a fresh pour was added to the glass by the sommelier at the tasting, one had to wait a few minutes for the nose to start to blossom again. The three examples I tasted are amongst the most beautiful California sparkling wines I have ever had the pleasure to taste, and when one speaks of the great wines crafted by Terry and Frances Leighton over the years at Kalin Cellars, one should most emphatically not forget their brilliant sparkling wines!



### **1988 Cuvée Blanche “California Sparkling Wine”- Kalin Cellars**

The 1988 Cuvée Blanche was made from Chardonnay grapes sourced from the cool Lorenzo Vineyard in the Russian River Valley, where the grapes are routinely collected in October. The base wine was barrel-fermented in older wood and unfiltered, and this particular bottle was then aged *sur lies* for seventeen or eighteen years prior to disgorgement. (The first commercial release of the 1988 Cuvée Blanche was disgorged in 1997 and released in 2008 or 2009, but the bottle that I tasted had been disgorged later.) The color is a lovely, pale golden and the wine offers up a superb and very complex bouquet of warm peaches, orange zest, a touch of brown butter, lovely minerality, rye toast, a touch of fresh nutmeg and caraway seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows plenty of acidity still, with a fine core, delicate, fairly gentle *mousse* and beautiful length and focus on the complex and very classy finish. This wine has plenty of life still ahead of it, but it is at its apogee and I cannot think of a better time to drink it than right now! Superb wine. 2013-2025+. **94.**

### **1987 Cuvée Rosé “California Sparkling Wine”- Kalin Cellars**

The 1987 Cuvée Rosé “regular” bottling hails from Pinot Noir grapes that were sourced in the cool Potter Valley in northern Mendocino. The wine is made with no red wine addition and takes its color from “the color of the juice that comes out of the press after its very gentle pressing” as Terry Leighton likes to say. The base wine was raised in three to four year-old barrels and went through full malo, prior to being bottled up for the secondary fermentation. The 1987 is not particularly deep in color, with a gentle salmon shading and offering up a superb,

deep and very fine nose of dried cherries, smoke, wheat bread, a beautifully complex base of soil, smoky tones and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very complex, with almost a touch of old Barolo shadings to its flavors as it evolves in the glass to offer up nuances of dried roses and a gentle meatiness. The wine is beautifully-balanced and shows lovely *mousse*, with excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. Fine juice at its apogee. 2013-2025+. **92.**

### **1987 Cuvée Rosé Reserve “California Sparkling Wine”- Kalin Cellars**

The 1987 Cuvée Rosé Reserve is another absolutely stellar bottle of sparkling wine, but it is quite different in complexion from the regular bottling. Hailing from a completely different vineyard site, the Pasternak Vineyard in Marin County, which overlooks the Pacific Ocean, and being comprised of a blend of both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, the wine offers up a high-toned and still fairly youthful bouquet of dried cherries, a touch of blood orange, smoke, hints of dried peppers, rye seed, complex soil tones and again, a subtle bass note of meatiness that really recalls very old, very refined Barolo. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and nascently complex, with a great core of fruit, refined and gentle *mousse*, bright acids and laser-like focus on the very, very long, classy and perfectly-balanced finish. Amazingly, the 1987 Cuvée Rosé Reserve is probably still not really at its peak and will continue to improve for at least then next couple of decades! A brilliant bottle of sparkling wine. 2013-2030+. **95.**

### ***Beau Rivage Project Wines***

The Kalin Cellars “Beau Rivage” wines take their name from one of the Leightons’ favorite restaurants in Burgundy, Restaurant Beau Rivage in the small village of Allerey, which lies about fifteen kilometers southeast of Beaune. The restaurant sits right along the riverside of the Saône River and specializes in freshwater fish and has a wine list chock full of inexpensive, bright and minerally local white wines produced from the Chardonnay grape. As Terry Leighton likes to recall, “this project came about, as so often is the case, when our conversations with fellow winemakers came around to the fact that America will never have a real wine culture until high quality, everyday wines can be produced at affordable prices.” So, to the skeptical responses of their winemaking colleagues, who said it simply could not be done in California these days- due to the state’s vineyard areas being too hot, very high vineyard and grape prices, and the dearth of good, limestone-based soils that impart the racy minerality such a part of good everyday-based chardonnay wines in the outer-limit appellations in Burgundy- the Leightons set about showing that it could indeed be done, and both of these wines from the 2001 vintage were eventually released from the winery at the price of \$10 per bottle. The Chardonnay “Cuvée R” hails from a vineyard source up in Clarksburg (just outside of Sacramento) that overlooks the Sacramento River, and it does indeed have a fairly high degree of chalk in its soils. The bone-dry and superb 2001 Chenin Blanc “Beau Rivage” bottling hails from vineyards in Marin County and must have been the best bargain in California wine when it was released after a few years of aging. Both wines were barrel-fermented (like all Kalin white wines) and raised in older barrels, with the Chenin spending ten months on its fine lees prior to bottling without filtration. Most of the production of both wines was sold off to long-time restaurant clients of Kalin Cellars and provided a highly provocative and satisfying “wine by the glass” pour for those lucky enough have secured some cases of either wine. Terry Leighton had dug up a bottle of each from the cellar for one of our tastings in Livermore, as our theme was “just what is possible in the world of California wine” and I was sorry to hear that this had not become an ongoing project at Kalin, as the two wines were really quite wonderful and offered stunning quality for their release prices.

I do hope that somewhere down in the treasure trove of the Kalin cellars, there might be more vintages of Chenin Blanc waiting in the wings, as this was really a wine that would be a welcome, “every vintage” addition to the firmament of California wine!

### **2001 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée R”**

This is a very good wine that was crafted to be drunk right out of the blocks by the Leightons (probably the only Kalin wine ever made with that intention!) and was probably even better on release than it is today- though it has aged quite well and still has some life ahead of it. The deep and mature nose offers up scents of ripe apples, apricots, orange peel, a touch of spiced meats (this would be great with a dish with sausage in it) and a pretty stylish base of chalky soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and still impressively fresh, with a good core and sneaky length and grip on the crisp and focused finish. Good juice and great bang for the buck! 2013-2017+? **88.**

### **2001 Kalin Cellars Chenin Blanc “Beau Rivage”**

The 2001 Beau Rivage bottling of Chenin Blanc from Kalin Cellars is stunning wine and a very strong argument for the Leightons making more wine from this grape. The wine tips the scales well above thirteen percent alcohol, as it was fermented to total dryness and aged for ten months in three and four year-old barrels prior to bottling. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a still quite youthful blend of pineapple, quince, lemon zest, beautiful, chalky soil tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with a rock solid core, superb focus and grip and a very long, poised and still quite youthful finish. Whereas the Cuvée R Chardonnay from this same project has had a good run and is starting to hear the far side of its plateau, the 2001 Beau Rivage Chenin Blanc is still a puppy and has decades of life still ahead of it. Imagine a top flight Vouvray Sec produced from a fine plot of vines in California and one can get a sense of how lovely this wine is and will continue to be for many years to come! 2013-2025+. **92.**

### ***Sauvignon Blanc***

Since the inaugural release of the Sauvignon Blanc Reserve in the 1983 vintage, this has always been one of my favorite bottlings from Kalin Cellars. I was very fortunate in my early wine merchant days to have access to some of the earliest vintages of this wine and I have very fond memories of the countless bottles of the Kalin Sauvignon Blanc Reserve that I tried to cellar (but always ended up drinking within a few years of the bottles being placed in my collection, as I simply could not keep my hands off of them!) and happily drank in the last years of the 1980s and the decade of the 1990s. In my experience, no one in California crafts a Sauvignon Blanc even remotely in the same quality class as the Kalin example. Year in and year out, this wine ages brilliantly and offers up a depth of complexity out of the blocks (well, err, after release, as this wine is, of course, given several years of bottle age by Frances and Terry prior to be sent out into the market). Clearly, the Potter Valley is a special place in general for this variety, and I have little doubt that the Pauli Vineyard from which this wine has originated since its inaugural vintage must be a particularly fine *terroir* for this grape. As noted above, the Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve is really a wine crafted along the lines of the Pavillon Blanc bottling from Château Margaux and is (like all Kalin wines) built to age. The cuvée has included at least twenty percent Sémillon from the Livermore Valley since its inaugural vintage of 1983, and has always been barrel-fermented and bottled with only a light fining and no filtration.

Having had the chance to work back through several vintages during our tasting in Livermore in January, I would venture to state that to my palate, this is the one varietal at Kalin Cellars that I am most happy to drink once it has been released from the winery, as it has already had invariably seven or ten years of bottle age (or more) and is usually at a magical peak of drinkability when it is released. While the Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve clearly will age for many, many more years after its release, I tend to really like it with the bounce and vibrancy it shows when the Leightons have deemed it ready for the market. It may be my memory playing tricks, but it seems to me that back when I was first becoming enamored of the Kalin Sauvignon Blanc, the wine was held back in the cellars for a bit shorter time than it is today, and I for one would be perfectly happy to see it released a bit earlier again in the future, for it often had just as much character and complexity at age seven or eight as it does today when it is released at age twelve to fifteen. The aromatic and flavor profiles were of course different at that younger age, but to my palate, no less compelling than the current releases are today with significantly more bottle age on them when they first leave the nest of the winery's cellar and stretch their wings in the open market. And being old enough to remember when most wines were meant for cellaring, I would have no problems (today- now that my cellar is a bit deeper or my self-control is a bit more developed!) keeping some of these in the cellar, while having the possibility of drinking a few bottles in the really bouncy and bright stage of this wine at age seven or eight years of age!

#### **1997 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (Potter Valley)**

The 1997 Kalin Sauvignon Blanc Reserve is a lovely bottle that is now fully mature and offering up layers of secondary aromas and flavors. This is a very ripe vintage for this bottling, with the alcohol level above 13.5 percent, and not surprisingly, it is not my favorite as a result of the style of the year. The deep and complex nose is a mélange of lemon, orange, a touch of honey, lovely soil tones, a hint of lanolin and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite mature, with fresher flavors than the deep-pitched nose suggests, with good mid-palate depth and lovely framing acidity to keep the wine focused and well-balanced for at least a few more years. I tend to like my Sauvignon Blanc flavors a tad less evolved than the '97 Kalin is today, but in terms of depth, complexity and continued structural integrity, this remains a very impressive bottle- particularly for a sixteen year-old bottle of California Sauvignon Blanc- but, the riper side of the 1997 vintage will probably make this one of the shorter-lived examples of this varietal at Kalin. 2013-2020. **89.**

#### **1996 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (Potter Valley)**

Whereas the 1997 Kalin Sauvignon Blanc is really quite ripe and uncharacteristically ready for primetime drinking today, the 1996 remains a younger and more vibrant wine and shows decidedly more long-term cellaring potential than the darker-hued 1997. Interestingly, though the 1997 hails from the riper and softer vintage, the 1996 is certainly its equal in alcohol level, tipping the scales at 13.7 percent. However, the wine is much lighter on its feet than its 1997 counterpart, offering up a deep and classic bouquet of fig, fresh coconut, a touch of beeswax, a beautiful base of soil tones, a bit of lanolin and incipient notes of the candied lemon peel to come with a bit more bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and stunning, with lovely purity and mid-palate intensity, crisp acids and superb length and grip on the focused and perfectly poised finish. To my mind, 13.7 percent alcohol is pretty heady for Sauvignon Blanc, but this wine is beautifully balanced and shows absolutely no signs of *sur maturité* or even the faintest wisp of heat. A superb wine. 2013-2025+. **93+.**



### **1995 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (Potter Valley)**

The 1995 Kalin Sauvignon Blanc Reserve is an absolute classic in the making. The alcohol is a tad lower than the 1996 and 1997 versions, coming in at 13.2 percent, and the wine has even more cut and backend drive as a result of its slightly lower octane. The brilliant nose soars from the glass in a youthful constellation of figs, a touch of lime zest, beautiful, delicate notes of dried eucalyptus, gravelly soil tones, a bit of wild fennel, smoke and a deft framing of vanillin oak. With air, this wine developed a beautiful aromatic layer of Chartreuse-like herb tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and laser-like in its focus, with brisk acids, superb balance and a rock solid core of fruit. The finish is very, very long and even less evolved than the 1996 version, with superb complexity and grip. A brilliant wine. 2013-2030+. **95.**

### **1990 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (Potter Valley)**

The 1990 Sauvignon Blanc Reserve from Kalin Cellars is a tad less far along its evolutionary arc than the 1997, as the wine hails from a less ripe vintage and only tips the scales at a more customary 12.5 percent alcohol. The deep, mature and very classy nose wafts from the glass in a mix of dried apples, fresh apricot, a touch of toasted coconut, very gentle grassiness, orange zest and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and *à point*, with a fine core, gentle acids and impeccable focus and balance on the very long and complex finish. Though there is not a lot of acidity in reserve here these days, the 1990 Sauvignon Blanc remains very light on its feet and shows plenty of life still ahead of it, as the excellent balance here will carry it for many years to come. 2013-2025. **92.**

### **1987 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (Potter Valley)**

Terry and Frances Leighton opted to pick the Sauvignon Blanc grapes early in the drought vintage of 1987 and the wine has aged beautifully and seems every bit as young today as the 1997! The complex and vibrant nose offers up a fine mélange of apple, tangerine, a fine base of almost salty soil tones, a bit of marzipan with air, orange peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully resolved, with fine mid-palate depth, impressive complexity and a very long, focused and still quite vibrant finish. Lovely juice. 2013-2020+. **92.**

### **1986 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (Potter Valley)**

The 1986 Sauvignon Blanc was bit singular in our lineup of older wines from this varietal at the tasting in Livermore, and I suspect that there is a bit of botrytis in this vintage. The bouquet is deep-pitched and complex, offering up scents of orange peel, new leather, toffee, smoky tones and a fine foundation of salty soil nuances. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and younger structurally than either the 1990 or the 1987, with a good core, but not the same suave nuance and complexity as found in most vintages of Kalin's Sauvignon Blanc. There is plenty of life here, but it deserves a quite specific food companion at the table (wild mushroom risotto or roasted goose would work very well) to bring out its best. 2013-2025. **88.**

### **1984 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve (Potter Valley)**

I sold and drank with some frequency the 1984 Kalin Cellars Sauvignon Blanc Reserve back in the day, and I was very happy at our tasting in Livermore to see the second vintage of this bottling still cruising along brilliantly at nearly thirty years of age! The deep, pure and utterly classic nose offers up scents of apple, tangerine, a beautifully mature and suave touch of herbaceousness (I love the grassy element of this grape when it is managed with such understated sensibility), a bit of petrol, orange peel, great soil tones and still a faint whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and resonant with tertiary

complexity. The finish is long and very vinous, with excellent focus and superb length and grip. The 1984 Kalin is a beautiful bottle of Sauvignon Blanc that has been drinking brilliantly for many, many years and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon! Given how gorgeous this wine was to drink in its relative youth, I suppose I can forgive myself for not keeping the bottles around in my cellar for a longer period of aging, but given how beautifully this showed in January in Livermore, I really wish I could have kept my hands off of at least a couple of bottles! 2013-2025+. **94.**

### ***Sémillon***

As the Leightons like to observe, Sémillon is not a grape that takes kindly to rich and fertile soils such as those found in the nutrient-rich, alluvial Napa Valley, and it is really only in the quite unique, thin, iron-infused clay topsoils and very deep bed of gravel subsoils of Livermore Valley that the grape really does well in California. Where the vines do not have to struggle a bit, they end up producing rather heavy-handed and innocuous wine that is far less interesting, as the yields climb exponentially where the grape is most at home and pampered. Today, the Sémillon bottling at Kalin Cellars will typically include about twenty to twenty-five percent of Sauvignon Blanc in the blend, and as noted above, this bottling always goes through a full malolactic fermentation and is bottled after a light fining and no filtration. While the vines that the Leightons have been working with from the Wente Family Vineyards since 1983 are not quite as ancient as the vines used for those first few vintages, prior to the folks at Computerland destroying the even older Sémillon vines at Ruby Hill, they were planted from cuttings taken from the same original vines brought back to Livermore from Château d'Yquem by Charles Wetmore and were planted in 1909. In my experience, this bottling at Kalin Cellars can vary quite a bit in terms of its alcohol, depending on the style of the vintage out in Livermore, as it is always fermented to total dryness. Witness the 1980 vintage coming in at 13.7 percent and the 1999 at 13.8 percent alcohol, while the 1983 Sémillon only tipped the scales at 12.5 percent alcohol. The color on this wine can also vary quite a bit depending on the ripeness and style of the vintage, and I should caution folks that the color here is hardly indicative of either the quality of the style of a particular vintage, as some of the amber-colored wines at age fifteen can still be stunningly bright, zesty and light on their feet. This has been a flagship bottling from Kalin Cellars right from the initial release of the varietal in the 1979 vintage, and the wine ages extremely well and is probably one of the longest-lived white wines in all of California. In fact, of the vintages we tasted in early January in Livermore, my favorite for current drinking was actually the 1983! Interestingly, Frances and Terry Leighton tend to alternate releases of their Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc bottlings, so that one succeeds the other into the market at the appropriate time- perhaps reinforcing my impression that the two bottlings are mirror images of each other! The Kalin Cellars Sémillon is one of California's greatest and longest-lived dry white wines and probably its most underrated.

### **1999 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The 1999 vintage of the Kalin Cellars Sémillon is one of the riper vintages in recent memory, with its alcohol level at 13.8 percent and its color decidedly more evolved than is typical of this wine when it is first released. The wine offers up a deep and ripe nose of apricot, orange zest, toasted coconut, a lovely base of soil, just a dollop of honey and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and tasty, with a good core, fine focus and complexity and a long, wide open finish. This seems like it is totally ready to drink

right now and strikes me as a vintage of the winery's Sémillon that will be relatively short-lived- by the high standards of ageability of this particular cuvée- but, I may be wrong, as it is beautifully balanced and may continue to cruise along for many more years to come. 2013-2020+? **90.**

**1998 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The 1998 Kalin Sémillon, which was, until very recently, the current release of this bottling, is just beautiful on both the nose and palate. The superb bouquet offers up a complex mix of apple, fig, a touch of petrol, gentle grassiness, citrus peel, a lovely base of soil tones and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and zesty, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely focus and balance, bright acids and lovely grip on the complex and still quite youthful finish. This should have no difficulties keeping at least another fifteen years and maybe longer and should prove to be one of the reference point vintages for this iconic California wine. 2012-2025+. **93+.**



**1997 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The 1997 Kalin Cellars Sémillon is one of the riper recent vintages, coming in at around 13.8 percent alcohol, but the wine is fresh, vibrant and marvelously complex on both the nose and palate. The color shows just a touch of amber, but the nose is young and classy, wafting from the glass in a constellation of tangerine, petrol, peach, a touch of beeswax, lovely soil tones, a hint of walnut and a lovely, smoky complexity in the upper register. On the palate the wine is

deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with excellent complexity and mid-palate concentration, lovely acids and a very long, ripe and superbly focused finish. This wine is ripe, but never even comes close to any overripe elements and is a classic in the making. 2013-2030+. **93+.**

**1996 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

Interestingly, while the 1996 Kalin Cellars Sémillon comes in with the same alcohol level as the 1997 at 13.8 percent, it is a shade darker in color and seems just a touch riper in personality. The complex bouquet is decidedly more evolved than the 1997, offering up a fine blend of tangerine, yellow plum, a touch of peach pit, petrol, orange peel and a dollop of new leather. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite complex, with a fine core of ripe fruit, lovely soil inflection and very good length and grip on the focused and classy finish. There is just a whisper of backend heat in the 1996 Sémillon that keeps its score down a bit, but this is also a very well-made wine that works marvelously at the table. 2013-2020. **88.**

**1994 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The 1994 Kalin Sémillon is another from a fairly ripe vintage, with the wine coming in at 13.5 percent alcohol. This is a lovely wine that is now fully into its apogee, wafting from the glass in a blend of tangerine, orange peel, toasted walnuts, a touch of petrol, hints of new leather and very lightly-roasted coffee beans. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully structured, with more apparent youth on the palate than the nose suggests. The wine is rock solid at the core, complex, beautifully-balanced and still has an excellent spine of acidity to carry it along for many more years to come. A fine, fine vintage for this iconic California wine. 2013-2030. **93.**

**1991 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The 1991 Kalin Cellars Sémillon is one of the lower octane bottlings of recent memory from the winery, coming in at a very cool and svelte 12.8 percent alcohol and the wine is an absolute stunner! The color is quite light still for a twenty-two year-old white wine, with both the '96 and '97 far deeper-hued. The absolutely brilliant bouquet of the 1991 Sémillon is still quite youthful and very vibrant, soaring from the glass in a complex blend of fresh spearmint, dried eucalyptus, fresh fig, green apple, lanolin, a touch of petrol, beeswax and a delicate touch of white pepper. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and racy, with glorious complexity, a rock solid core, laser-like focus and simply magical length and grip on the endless and perfectly balanced finish. This utterly great wine is still in climbing mode and will only get better with further bottle age, but it is already and absolutely brilliant glass of wine! 2013-2040. **96.**

**1985 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The 1985 Sémillon from the Leightons is a stunningly pure and fully *à point* wine of excellent breed and complexity. This, too, is a less ripe vintage, as the wine tips the scales at 12.5 percent alcohol- not that there is any direct correlation between ripeness level and quality with the Kalin Sémillon bottling! The deep and beautifully mature nose offers up scents of baked apples, figs, orange peel, a touch of peach pit (a tone I find very reminiscent of old Brauneberger rieslings!), salty soil nuances, lanolin and gentle notes of beeswax in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with superb structure, a great core, sound acids and outstanding complexity and breed on the long, focused and classic finish. Like so many of the Kalin white wines, the 1985 Sémillon really blossomed brilliantly with extended aeration. 2013-2030. **94.**

### **1983 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The first vintage of the Kalin Cellars Sémillon to hail from the Wenté family's vineyards, the 1983 is cruising along just beautifully at age thirty and is truly a great joy to drink. In comparison to the 1994, the lower octane here (12.5 percent) has produced a fresher profile and slightly more complexity on both the nose and palate, as the wine offers up a superb mélange of toasted coconut, fresh fig, orange, petrol, salty soil tones and a delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very poised, with excellent focus and balance, a fine core and simply stunning length and grip on the complex and still quite vibrant finish. Qualitatively, there is not a big step up from the 1994, but I absolutely love the style and silhouette of this racy 1983 Sémillon. A beautiful wine. 2013-2025+. **94.**

### **1980 Kalin Cellars Sémillon (Livermore Valley)**

The 1980 Kalin Cellars Sémillon, from only the second vintage that the winery produced a varietal bottling from this grape, is still a lovely wine and shows no signs of any imminent decline. The color is far more golden than the 1983, but offers up a deep-pitched and still quite vibrant nose of apricot, coffee, a touch of honeycomb, soil, leather and orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tertiary, but with good structural integrity, fine mid-palate depth and very good length and grip on the focused and still Quié extant finish. This is drinking very well indeed in its more mature profile, but has plenty of life still in it and would really sing paired with the right dish. It is a bit more rustic in style than the wines from 1983 forwards- perhaps owing to the different vineyard sources (and perhaps the greater TLC that the Wenté vineyard received when the vineyard at Ruby Hill was not even being pruned!), but still a complex and very tasty wine. 2013-2025. **90.**

### ***Chardonnay***

As is the case with Kalin Cellars' Pinot Noir bottlings, the Leightons have long employed a labeling of their wines from different vineyard sources under a "Cuvée" name, such as "Cuvée LD" or "Cuvée W" to differentiate the various sources from which they have produced Chardonnay bottlings over the years. The naming of each bottling takes the initials either of the vineyard name or the owner of the vineyard, so for example the "Cuvée W" is from the Wenté Brothers' vineyards in Livermore Valley and the "Cuvée LD" hails from the Long Vineyard in the Dry Creek Valley section of Sonoma County (and which has nothing to do with the Napa-based winery of Long Vineyards). Chardonnay was the very first white wine produced by the Leightons, as they made a 1977 Chardonnay from the Calcaire Vineyard owned by Frank Woods in Sonoma County- though this was the only vintage that Kalin ever made a wine from this particular vineyard source. Like all of the Kalin Cellars wines, their Chardonnays are very long-lived wines that improve dramatically with bottle age and are probably amongst the very longest-lived Chardonnays in California, alongside those of Stony Hill Vineyards. However, the two house styles of Chardonnay are quite dissimilar, as the Stony Hill bottlings never go through malolactic fermentation, whereas every Kalin Cellars Chardonnay goes through full ML. However, both wineries share the ability to craft Chardonnays that age very long and gracefully and improve dramatically with bottle age, as is (or was, prior to premoxy) the case with white Burgundies. Interestingly, I asked Terry Leighton how his experience with premature oxidation has been with his Chardonnays at Kalin and he reported that he has had no difficulties whatsoever- and our old bottles at the tasting in Livermore in January bore this out- so one wonders in what important way the vinification and barrel aging techniques at Kalin are at variance with those in most white wine-producing cellars in Burgundy. One thing that jumps out

at me is that the Leightons have always used an old-fashioned mechanical press, rather than one of the relatively new pneumatic presses for their wines, and perhaps (as others have also speculated), by exposing their Chardonnay juice to a bit of oxygen during the pressing with their mechanical press, they have been able to avoid any issues with premoxylation for their white wines.

In any case, the Kalin Cellars Chardonnays are clearly some of the greatest wines produced by this old school estate, with the ability to age and blossom with cellaring far better than any other American Chardonnays of which I am aware, other than those from Stony Hill (though I have also had outstanding success aging Mount Eden Chardonnays). The Leightons have always been very meticulous to search out cool climate vineyards for their Chardonnay bottlings, and have been adamant to only purchase fruit from vineyards where crop yields are kept in the one and a half to two tons per acre range. In fact, the history of Kalin Cellars has witnessed several vineyard sources abandoned by the Leightons after the vineyard became renowned for the quality of its fruit and the farmer decided to let yields creep up over time to take advantage of the heightened demand for his or her grapes. One wonders how much of the growing fame of some of these vineyard sources was due (at least partially) to the superb wines that had been produced from these vineyards by Kalin Cellars! The Kalin style of Chardonnay is always a deep, rich and racy style that shows great emphasis to the underlying soil character of each vineyard from which it was bottled. The wines are always high in natural acidity to age (as acidulation is eschewed at Kalin Cellars) and typically, these days the Chardonnays here are raised in fifty percent new oak- though there has been the occasional “special bottling” raised entirely in new wood. The most single vineyard bottlings of Chardonnay ever produced in a single vintage at Kalin Cellars was five, which were made in the 1995 vintage (and perhaps in one or two others around that time). Typically, a particular bottling will range from 500 to 1500 cases in a given vintage, and these days, the Kalin Chardonnays are generally not released until they have had at least a dozen years of bottle age and recent releases include wines from the 1995, 1994, 1993 and 1991 vintages! They are invariably some of California’s greatest Grand Cru Chardonnay bottlings.

### ***Kalin Cellars’ Chardonnay Cuvées:***

***Cuvée BL:*** This bottling hails from grapes grown in the BJJ Vineyard in Potter Valley in northern Mendocino County. This is the northernmost, officially-recognized viticultural region in California, which means cooler growing seasons, slower ripening and better acid retention in the grapes. The soils are clay and limestone, layered over a gravelly, alluvial base from a dried up riverbed. This is the same source that the winery gets its Sauvignon Blanc grapes. Kalin Cellars only produced Chardonnay bottlings from this vineyard in the 1986, 1987 and 1988 vintages.

***Cuvée CH:*** The Cuvée CH bottling of Chardonnay originates from the Charles Heintz Vineyard on the Sonoma Coast. The vineyard is located in Occidental, which is about a dozen miles due west of Santa Rosa. It is situated at the top of a steep hillside, with limestone and shale subsoils and a cool microclimate from the morning fogs that roll in from the nearby Pacific Ocean. It is about five miles further west of the Dutton Ranch Vineyard in Graton, but shares similar soil types. The Charles Heintz Vineyard is planted with low-yielding Burgundian clones and is still a fine source utilized by Ted Lemon at Littorai. There have been Kalin bottlings from this vineyard

source solely in the 1990s (and perhaps in the new millennium?), with 1999 the most recent release and the 1995 still waiting in the wings to fully blossom and be sent packing by the Leightons.

**Cuvée D:** The grapes for this bottling hail from the famed Dutton Ranch Vineyard in the extreme western end of Sonoma County's Russian River Valley. It is an extremely cool microclimate, with coastal influences and fog. The soils of this hillside vineyard are limestone and shale, which used to keep yields down here, making possible long-lived wines with superb natural acidity levels. Dutton Ranch is probably best known for the wines made from here by Kistler Vineyards, but the Kalin bottlings from Dutton are my own personal reference points for maximized potential from this fine vineyard. It has been an infrequent member of the Kalin lineup, with a handful of vintages produced here in both the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. According to Terry Leighton, there is still an unreleased 1995 Dutton bottling of Kalin Chardonnay aging in the winery's cellars.

**Cuvée DD:** The Cuvée DD is named for vineyard owner Dave Demostene and the grapes hail from his ranch in Alexander Valley in the northern reaches of Sonoma County, across the Russian River from the Robert Young Vineyard. The Demostene family has been grape growers and farmers in Alexander Valley for more than 125 years, and owned the Sausal Vineyard for many years, until its recent purchase by Silver Oak. Most of the Demostene vineyards were planted to Zinfandel and, to a lesser degree, Pinot Noir, but they had a couple of acres of Chardonnay planted close to where the winery was built, and which the Leightons purchased fruit for many years. The soils here are composed of clay, silt and limestone, and the vineyard lies quite close to the river. Sadly, since its purchase by Silver Oak Vineyards, a lot of fine, old Pinot Noir and Zinfandel parcels have been planted over to Cabernet Sauvignon. There were Kalin "Cuvée DD" Chardonnays produced in a handful of vintages in the early 1990s.

**Cuvée LD (or Cuvée L in the earliest vintages):** This designation has been used for wines produced from the Long Vineyard on the western end of the Dry Creek Valley in central Sonoma County. It is planted with the original Wente Clones of Chardonnay that hail back to the cuttings John Wente took from Louis Latour's parcel in Corton-Charlemagne. The soils here are light loam over a bed of gravel. The vineyard is a hillside vineyard rising up from the Dry Creek River, with early morning and late afternoon fogs contributing to one of the coolest microclimates in Sonoma. The LD bottling from Long Vineyards hails from a north-facing section of the vineyard.

**Cuvée LR:** The Cuvée LR is also a bottling of Chardonnay produced from the Long Vineyard in Dry Creek Valley. The LR designation is for a parcel of vines that rises up directly from the river and was sufficiently unique to be bottled on its own. In contrast, the Cuvée LD bottling hails from another section of the Long Vineyard not immediately adjacent to the river. The LR bottling from Kalin Cellars was last made in the 1991 vintage and designated by Terry and Frances Leighton as a "Fin de Siècle" specially-designated bottling, as it will be the last from the vines in this riverside section of Long Vineyard. There were only a handful of vintages here designated from this section, as the first bottlings were done in the vintages of the late 1980s and the vines here contacted Pierce's Disease from a neighboring vineyard and had to be grubbed up after the 1991 vintage. As noted above, there is a 1991 "Stealth Cuvée" of the LR that carries the



*additional designation of “Fin de Siècle” and commemorates the last vintage of these older vines from this section of the vineyard. However, this parcel has now been replanted and there may one day be- it could already be resting in the cellars as a matter of fact- another Cuvée LR bottling from Kalin.*

***Cuvée LV:*** *The Cuvée LV designation at Kalin has been used for two different vineyard sources over the years. In the late 1980s, the Cuvée LV was for grapes that hailed from the Lorenzo Vineyard in western Sonoma County. This is a cool, coastal microclimate, with foggy mornings and typical western Sonoma soils of limestone and shale also found in the Dutton Ranch. It is planted to Burgundy clones that produce small yields. In the decade of the 1990s, once Kalin Cellars stopped using grapes from the Lorenzo Vineyard, the “LV” designation was shifted over to grapes from the Long Vineyard’s upper sites located close to Dry Creek Road, so as to distinguish this from both the LR bottling from the vines down by the river and the LD from the cooler, north-facing part of the vineyard.*

***Cuvée W:*** *These grapes hail from the Wente Estate Vineyards just outside of the small city of Livermore. These are old vines planted with the original “Wente Clones” brought from Burgundy by John Wente at the start of the twentieth century and which were originally taken from cuttings from the Louis Latour vineyards in Corton-Charlemagne. The topsoils are thin and comprised of clay with a strong vein of iron in them, over a deep bed of gravel (as is the case with the Sémillon that the Leightons also get from the Wente Estate). These are the oldest Chardonnay vines with which the Leightons work and now range from fifty to sixty years of age. The first vintage produced from these grapes was the 1987, and it continues to be an important Chardonnay source up to the present day for Kalin Cellars.*



*Vineyards in Livermore Valley- the development in the background testifies to the fate of many old vineyards. (This photo appears courtesy of Melissa Mermin- her fine work can be found on her website: [www.melissamermin.com](http://www.melissamermin.com). )*

### **1995 Kalin Cellars “Cuvée LD” Chardonnay (Sonoma County)**

Kalin’s Cuvée LD Chardonnay hails from the Long Vineyard in Dry Creek Valley, which is one of the coolest sites in Sonoma, due to morning and late afternoon fog patterns. The

vineyard is planted with the Wente Clone of Chardonnay, which as the article on Stony Hill shows, is probably California's finest Chardonnay clone. The 1995 Cuvée LD is a superb bottle of Chardonnay that offers up a complex aromatic mélange of fresh nutmeg, pears, tangerines, lovely soil tones, a touch of cardamom, lemon oil and a judicious framing of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very classy, with fine focus and balance, a lovely core of fruit, bright acids and superb length and grip on the very refined finish. Classy juice. 2010-2025+. **94.**

**1995 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LV” (Sonoma County)**

The Cuvée LV hails from a slightly warmer section of the Long Vineyard in Dry Creek, and though I did not take a note on the alcohol level of the '95 Cuvée LD when I tasted it a couple of years ago, it is probably a touch lower than the 13.8 percent reported on the label of the 1995 Cuvée LV bottling. That said, this wine seemed a touch less evolved structurally than the very fine LD bottling from the same year, offering up a deep and utterly superb nose of pear, tangerine, fresh mint, a complex base of salty soil, a nice streak of herbal complications, orange zest and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core, excellent acids and exceptional length and grip on the focused and racy finish. This is a brilliant Chardonnay in the making, but as good as it is today, I would be strongly inclined to give it at least another year or two in the cellar and allow it to even more fully blossom! Superb wine. 2015-2045. **94.**

**1994 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LV” (Sonoma County)**

The 1994 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LV” purports to the same ripeness level of the 1995 (13.8 percent), but our particular bottle seemed quite a bit more advanced than the one year difference in calendar age might suggest. The deep, complex and quite tertiary bouquet offers up scents of apples, baked peaches, oranges, a touch of cinnamon, a lovely signature of soil, a touch of custard, buttery oak and a gentle topnote of honey. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely *à point*, with fine focus and complexity, sound framing acids and just the faintest whisper of backend heat suggesting that the wine is getting towards the far side of its plateau of peak maturity and should probably be drunk up in the relatively near-term. Perhaps our bottle was just a touch more advanced, but if it is representative, I would be inclined to drink this wine over the next decade, as it is still quite lovely. 2013-2023. **90.**

**1994 Kalin Cellars “Cuvée W” Chardonnay (Livermore Valley)**

This has long been Terry Leighton's oldest vine bottling of Chardonnay, as he makes this from one of the Wente family's oldest vineyards, which was planted with cuttings of Chardonnay they brought back from Corton-Charlemagne very early in the history of post-prohibition California viticulture. The 1994 is the current release, and it is a terrific bottle of Chardonnay, as it offers up a deep and complex bouquet of buttered pears, apples, salty soil tones, fresh nutmeg, lemon zest, just a hint of beeswax, toasted almonds and buttery new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wonderfully refined, with a slightly herbal streak through it that only adds to the complexity, excellent mid-palate depth, vibrant acids and truly exceptional length and grip on the perfectly focused finish. Just a terrific bottle of mature Chardonnay with years and years of life still ahead of it. 2013-2030+. **94.**

**1991 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée DD” (Sonoma County)**

While the Demostene Ranch in Alexander Valley is best known amongst “Kalinities” for the brilliant Pinot Noir that originates here, the Chardonnay is no slouch! The 1991 is excellent, offering up a precise and racy personality that delivers a bouquet of lemon, orange zest, a beautiful base of soil, vanillin oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep,

full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with lovely, nascent complexity, crisp acids and excellent focus on the long and zesty finish. The DD Chardonnay may not be quite as inherently complex as the LD or W bottlings here, but this is a top-flight cuvée that shows decades of life still ahead of it and may yet improve with further bottle age. 2013-2030+. **91+**.

**1991 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LD” (Sonoma County)**

Occasionally, the Leightons experiment with different bottling dates for their wines, and this particular bottle of the 1991 Cuvée LD was one of the late-bottled examples. This is an utterly brilliant wine, soaring from the glass in a stunning mélange of tangerine, pear, salty soil tones, orange zest, a touch of straw-like overtones (that recall Chablis a bit), citrus peel and a judicious framing 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, nascent complexity, laser-like focus and exquisite balance on the very long and racy finish. At age twenty-two, the 1991 Cuvée LD is still a young wine that has not even reached its apogee! Stunning juice. 2013-2035+. **95.**

**1990 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée CH” (Sonoma County)**

The 1990 Kalin bottling from the Charles Heintz Vineyard in Sonoma is lovely, but with a decidedly more amber tinge to its color than the 1991 Cuvée LD that preceded it in the lineup. The lovely and quite mature bouquet delivers scents of honeyed oranges, almond-like nutty tones, orange peel, a complex base of soil and a nice touch of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with lovely mid-palate depth, stunning freshness (and far more than the tertiary nose might suggest) and excellent focus and grip on the very long and classy finish. This is a lovely wine for drinking over the next ten to twelve years. 2013-2025+. **92.**

**1990 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LD” (Sonoma County)**

The 1990 Cuvée LD Chardonnay from Kalin Cellars is a truly beautiful example of a fully mature bottle of Sonoma Chard at its apogee, as the wine offers up superb refinement and complexity on both the nose and palate. This is a pretty low octane chard by the standards of the 1990 vintage, tipping the scales at an even thirteen percent. The deep and very classy nose wafts from the glass in a complex mix of pineapple, orange, fresh apricot, wonderfully complex soil tones, a sophisticated base of vanillin oak and a lovely, gentle topnote of browned butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely *à point*, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids, excellent focus and balance and a very long, refined and suave finish. While the 1990 Cuvée LD is very much at its peak of drinkability, but it shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon and has plenty of life still in it. One of my favorite Kalin Chardonnay bottlings for current consumption. 2013-2025+. **93.**

**1988 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LD” (Sonoma County)**

The 1988 Kalin Cuvée LD Chardonnay drinks very much like mature Corton-Charlemagne, which is of course interesting, as the cuttings for this vineyard did actually originate in Corton-Charlemagne. The nose is deep, mature and vibrant, as it wafts from the glass in a wonderfully complex blend of oranges, fresh apricot, a touch of honeycomb, salty soil tones, citrus peel and a very discreet base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and still almost reductive in nature, with a great core of fruit, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex and dancing finish. A beautiful bottle of Chardonnay at its apogee of maturity, but with years and years of life still ahead of it. 2013-2025+. **94+.**

**1988 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LR” (Sonoma County)**

I am not sure if it was our bottle, but the 1988 Cuvée LR seemed a tad more advanced than the Cuvée LD from the same vintage, and did not show quite the same level of complexity. The deep and mature nose offers up a gently honeyed mélange of baked peaches, almonds,

beautiful soil tones, a bit of butter and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a fine core, very good focus and impressive length and grip on the poised and classy finish. This is a lovely wine, and if it was not in the company of the stunning 1988 Cuvée LD bottling, I might have been even more excited about the quality of the LR, but it had tough company to keep on this particular evening in Livermore! 2013-2025. **90+?**

**1987 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée BL” (Potter Valley)**

At our tasting in Livermore, the 1987 Cuvée BL Chardonnay was fully mature and was probably one of the few Kalin white wines that seemed to have time in hand and would be best drunk up over the next several years. The deep and tertiary bouquet delivers scents of apricot, honey, walnuts, soil tones, a touch of oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and now starting to get just a tad chunky in personality, with good length and grip, but fairly gentle acids and moderate complexity. It is still a very tasty drink, but not quite in the same league as the 1988s from the Leightons. 2013-2018. **88.**

**1987 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée LV” (Sonoma County)**

The drought year of 1987 produced a very concentrated example of Cuvée LV, but to my palate, despite its slightly more powerful personality, this wine cannot quite match the seamless complexity of the best 1988 Chardonnays from Kalin that I have had the pleasure to taste in the last few years. The deep and mature nose offers up an intense blend of apricot, tangerine, a touch of passion fruit (one taster at our Kalin gathering here in New York commented that this wine smelt more and more like one of the Coche-Dury Meursault bottlings as it had a chance to blossom with air), nutty overtones, orange zest, a bit of new leather, salty soil tones and a whisper of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively complex, with still very good acids and focus, lovely mid-palate concentration and fine length and grip on the mature and assertive finish. This is a lovely bottle of fully mature Chardonnay, which, at age twenty-six, can dance rings around most ten year-old California Chardonnays, but, at least to my palate, it cannot quite keep pace with the beautiful 1988 Cuvée LD. 2013-2020+. **93.**

**1983 Kalin Cellars Chardonnay “Cuvée L” (Sonoma County)**

The 1983 Cuvée L (which would eventually become an LD bottling, once the plot in Long Vineyards down by the river begat its own individual bottling as LR) is a lovely wine, but one which shows a bit of botrytis on both the nose and palate and gives it a rather unique profile in the context of all these other classic Kalin Cellars Chardonnay bottlings. The tropical nose offers up scents of apricot, honeyed oranges, new leather, soil tones, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very bright (the touch of botrytis concentrating acids, as well as sugars), with a fine core, good focus and balance and a long, bright and bouncy finish. As I often find to be the case with Chardonnays with a touch of botrytis, the extra tang from the noble rot has come at the expense of more complexity at maturity. But, this is still a very good drink with plenty of life ahead of it, and folks who like a bit of botrytis in their Chardonnay more than I do might score this wine even higher than I do. 2013-2025. **88.**

***Pinot Noir***

Intuitively, I have always “known” that Kalin Cellars was one of the very greatest producers of Pinot Noir in California, but until our most recent tasting in Livermore, I did not have a whole lot of experience with fully mature examples of this varietal from the Leightons. Now I have a bit more, though I have little doubt that the notes below constitute no more than the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir, and for the rest of my adult life my antennae will be up and I will be studiously adding to my experience with the great, great Pinot

Noirs from Kalin Cellars. As I have written in other pieces on California classic wines, Sonoma County is where the finest examples of Pinot Noir in the state of California originate- or at least this has been my unequivocal impression up until this point (but I am still intrigued about the possibilities of Mendocino Pinot in the context of global warming)- and clearly Terry and Frances Leighton have been on the track of the finest Pinot *terroirs* in Sonoma since their very first vintage from Dave Demostene's Alexander Valley vineyard was released in 1975! There have been the occasional bottling of Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir from Santa Barbara county as well over the years (mostly in the very early days of the winery), but it is fair to say that Kalin Cellars has really been a Sonoma County Pinot Noir specialist from its very earliest days.

There have never been quite as many single vineyard "cuvées" produced of Pinot Noir at Kalin Cellars as has been the case with their Chardonnays, and the most Pinot bottlings produced in a single vintage has been three, which Terry Leighton recalls "occurred primarily in the vintages from the decade of the 1980s." As I have done with the Chardonnays, I have listed below the various iterations of Kalin Pinot Noir that have appeared over the years (and which I am familiar- again, keep in mind, given the Leightons' penchant for holding back wines until they are properly aged prior to releasing them, there may well be more Kalin Pinot Noir "presents" wrapped up under the Christmas tree than I am aware and we will just have to be patient and wait and see what is still to come from the winery in the years to come. I suppose, I could have just asked Terry and Frances Leighton about what bottlings of unreleased Pinot Noir they have in the cellars (not that they would have necessarily answered my queries ☺), but, in any event, I like the thought that there may well be a lot more waiting in the wings here from the Kalin world of Pinot Noir and that there remain peaks yet to climb and perhaps new *terroirs* to discover through the lens of Kalin Cellars. In any event, even if there are new cuvées still unreleased, it seems safe to say that the heart and soul of the fine, fine Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir program has been cool vineyard sources in Sonoma County, with Dave Demostene's Alexander Valley vineyard certainly at the very top of the list of great sites with which the Leightons have gleaned grapes over the years and produced world class wines. To my palate, my experiences with the Kalin Pinots places the "Cuvée DD" (formerly produced from thirty-five year-old vines on average and from a particularly fine clone of Pinot Noir that produces very small berries and delivers terrific skin to juice ratio) at the top of the Kalin food chain with this varietal and I am hard-pressed to think of any California Pinot Noirs that have eclipsed my experience with these bottlings. The vintages of Kalin Pinot "Cuvée DD" that I have been fortunate enough to cross paths with over the years have consistently dazzled me with their breed and complexity.

Like all of the Kalin wines, the various Pinot Noir bottlings here start out life young, properly structured and beautifully balanced, with much of the bottle aging now taken care of by the Leightons prior to release, but with the potential to age and evolve gracefully over many decades after they are let out from the winery's cellars to find their way in a cold, hard world. Typically, Kalin Pinots will be crushed and fermented in the old Redwood *caves* for three weeks, with three to four punch-downs per day done by hand, and the wine then pressed and racked off into barrels for its *elevage* of typically eighteen months or so, depending on the style of the vintage. All Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir cuvées are bottled without racking, fining or filtration. The vast, vast majority of Kalin Pinot Noirs are raised these days in fifty percent new oak, but there are occasional special bottlings (called the "Stealth Cuvées" on the winery's website), such as the brilliant 1994 Cuvée Billon, that are raised in one hundred percent new oak. It is a rare

vintage of Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir that is approachable before its tenth birthday, but not to worry, the Leightons typically keep back their Pinots until they have had (at the very least) a solid decade's worth of aging in the winery's cellars before they will even consider them ready for release. However, unlike the white wines here, even when a Kalin Pinot Noir bottling is released, it is still to my palate a fairly young wine and I heartily recommend that most of these wines be given another five to ten years of cellaring after release to really allow the wines to reach their true apogees of peak drinkability. Since the 1992 vintage, Pinot Noir is the only red wine still produced at Kalin Cellars, and this varietal is clearly one of the specialties of the Leightons and it is my distinct impression that no one does Pinot Noir better in the state of California than Kalin Cellars.

***Cuvée DD:*** *The “Cuvée DD” is named for vineyard owner Dave Demostene and the grapes hail from his ranch in Alexander Valley. This was the source for the oldest Pinot Noir vines with which Terry and Frances Leighton worked, from clones that were originally brought from Burgundy and produce particularly small, concentrated berries and which are known in Burgundy as “Pinot Fin”. The Demostene ranch Pinot vines originated from cuttings taken from Louis Martini’s Monte Rosso Vineyard. The soils in this vineyard are locally known as “Blue Clay”, which, according to Terry Leighton “is the same kind of marl found in Gevrey-Chambertin and Morey St. Denis.” The vineyard itself was primarily planted to Zinfandel, with only a small percentage dedicated to Pinot Noir, and these vines were thirty-five years of age when Silver Oak purchased the vineyard and started planting Cabernet here.*

***Cuvée JL:*** *The “Cuvée JL” bottling hails from the Dutton Ranch in the western end of the Russian River Valley, and the 1980 vintage was the only one produced by the Leightons from this portion of the Dutton Ranch vineyard. It was one of the original “Stealth Cuvées” in the Kalin portfolio.*

***Cuvée LS:*** *The “Cuvée LS” Pinot Noir hailed from a parcel of vines in Glen Ellen, which were planted on a gentle hillside with easterly exposition. Here, the morning sun gave gentle ripening which allowed good acidity to be maintained through to physiological ripeness. It was used by the Leightons for a small handful of vintages in the early 1980s.*

***Cuvée WD:*** *This is the home vineyard of Warren Dutton, owner of Dutton Ranch, and is located in the town of Graton. It is approximately one and a half acres and was planted to Pinot Noir in the early 1980s, when the Leightons produced their bottlings from this site. It is a hilltop vineyard, and it may well have been the only Pinot Noir vines planted at Dutton Ranch in this epoch. It was only produced at Kalin for a handful of vintages in the early 1980s.*

### **1997 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée DD” (Sonoma County)**

The 1997 “Cuvée DD” Pinot Noir is a superb young wine, offering up a deep and still quite youthful aromatic constellation of cherries, sweet cranberries, spiced meats, a touch of mint, a very complex base of dark soil tones, a bit of sandalwood and cloves and incipient notes of *sous bois*. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off great mid-palate depth, with beautiful complexity, tangy acids, moderate tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, perfectly balanced and very classy finish. At age sixteen, this is not a bad drink today, but a few more years of cellaring should be repaid with a silkier and even more complex glass of

superlative Pinot Noir. The wine will certainly continue to age beautifully for several decades to come! 2013-2045+. **93.**

**1994 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée Billon”**

The 1994 Cuvée Billon from Terry and Frances Leighton is one of the finest young California Pinot Noirs I have ever had the pleasure to taste. This is a special, two barrel selection of their 1994 “Cuvée DD” Pinot Noir that was raised in one hundred percent new Billon barrels and named in honor of the *tonnelier* Gaston Billon (who began his career in 1947, founded his eponymous barrel-making firm in 1960 with his son, and who passed away in 1994). The bouquet of the 1994 Cuvée Billon is very deep and flat out brilliant, as it soars from the glass in a blaze of dried cherries, orange zest, woodsmoke, a touch of cinnamon stick, grilled venison, *sous bois*, new wood and a beautifully complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very complex, with tangy acids, lovely mid-palate depth, excellent focus and outstanding length and grip on the bright and very soil-driven finish. Just a beautiful bottle in the making. 2011-2045+. **96.**

**1994 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée DD” (Sonoma County)**

This was the first time I had tasted the 1994 Cuvée DD” Pinot Noir, and as the Leightons had taken out two barrels of the production from this lot to create the special tribute bottling to Gaston Billon, I wondered how this might affect the style or quality of the “regular” 1994 DD. Naturally, not at all from my vantage point! The absolutely exceptional nose jumps from the glass in a mix of cherries, grilled meat, forest floor, a bit of graphite, woodsmoke, mint and a gentle base of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and classy, with moderate tannins, a beautiful core of pure fruit, superb soil inflection and outstanding length and grip on the tangy and youthful finish. This will be a great bottle of Pinot in due course, but I would try to give it at least another three to four years in the cellar to allow the wine to really blossom completely. 2016-2045+. **94+.**

**1990 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée DD” (Sonoma County)**

The 1990 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée DD” is a brilliant bottle that has not yet reached its apogee and should cruise along marvelously for many decades to come. The deep, complex and very classy nose soars from the glass in a blaze of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of venison, a youthful touch of tariness and a lovely framing of very classy (Billon?) new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and complex, with a rock solid core, impeccable focus and balance, nascent complexity, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip on the poised and very intensely flavored finish. This is a young and stunning bottle in the making! 2017-2040. **93+.**

**1984 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée DD” (Sonoma County)**

The 1984 Cuvée DD is still a relatively young bottle of Pinot Noir and further cellaring is certainly going to be rewarded. The deep, very complex and classy nose wafts from the glass in a mélange of dried cherries, red berries, woodsmoke, a touch of orange zest, fresh herb tones, forest floor, a bit of clove and a deft framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and beautifully focused, with excellent mid-palate depth, superb complexity and lovely grip and balance on the finely-grained and very long finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Pinot Noir that will continue to blossom and improve for decades to come! 2013-2040. **94.**

**1982 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée WD” (Sonoma County)**

The 1982 Kalin Cellars Cuvée WD is another fine bottle of Pinot Noir, but it is stylistically much more cut from what I would consider the typical “Sonoma” style of this grape, rather than the more “Burgundian” style of bottlings from the Demostene Ranch in Alexander



Valley. The deep and complex nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, herb tones, damp soil, tea-smoked duck, fallen leaves, a touch of cedar and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely acidity and very fine length and grip on the meltingly tannic and nicely focused finish. This is a fine bottle of fully mature Pinot, with a bit more of the “weediness” I often associate with this varietal in certain sections of Sonoma, but with excellent complexity and balance- not to mention, no shortage of life still ahead of it. 2013-2035. **90+**.

**1981 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée LS” (Sonoma County)**

The 1981 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée LS” is a lovely wine, which, while not quite at its absolute apogee of peak drinkability, it is nearly there and is a very fine glass for current consumption. The very complex bouquet offers up a classy mélange of red and black cherries, a touch of eucalyptus, woodsmoke, gentle notes of venison, fresh herbs, a whisper of tariness and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a lovely core, superb focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and a long, multi-dimensional finish. While this wine is almost its peak, it will be even better with another couple of year of bottle age to let its tannins fully fall away and should drink at a very refined plateau for a couple of decades. High class juice. 2016-2035. **91+**.

**1980 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Santa Barbara County”**

The 1980 Kalin Cellars “Santa Barbara County” Pinot Noir is the only one I have ever seen from this section of California produced by the Leightons. This was a very interesting source, as the owner here thought that more limestone would be good for his Pinot vines, and he actually added some to his vineyard a few years before this vintage. I am not sure how successful this “instant *terroir* booster” was- or even if such practices are deemed acceptable in the wine world of California- but, the wine at age thirty-three is still drinking very well. It is quite typical on both the nose and palate to what I associate with Santa Barbara Pinot, offering up a deep and black fruity nose of black cherries, a touch of tariness, a good base of dark soil, funky herb tones and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a distinct streak of *herbacité* running down the spine of the palate, a fine core of black fruit, very little remaining tannin and very good length and grip on the complex and well-balanced finish. I have a pretty strong stylistic preference for wines such as the Cuvée DD, but this is certainly a very well-made example of Santa Barbara Pinot Noir and has a good decade of tasty drinking still ahead of it. Given that this was only the Leightons’ fifth vintage and that the fruit did not hail from a prime Sonoma site, this wine has stood the test of time beautifully. 2013-2025. **90**.

**1980 Kalin Cellars Pinot Noir “Cuvée JL” (Sonoma County)**

The 1980 Cuvée JL Pinot Noir hails from the famed Dutton Ranch in western Sonoma. This is a stunning bottle of Pinot Noir that is now at its apogee of peak drinkability, but shows no signs of imminent decline and should cruise along at this superb level for a decade or two. The deep, complex and fairly black fruity nose offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, a gentle touch of *herbacité*, espresso, dried eucalyptus, dark soil tones and a delicate base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, a bit more of a broad-shouldered personality than many Kalin pinots, fine focus and excellent length and grip on the modestly tannic finish. This is an excellent wine that still has a bit of tannin to drop, and it may yet improve a bit with more bottle age, but it is an outstanding wine that is really a great joy to drink at the present time. 2013-2030+. **92+**.

### ***Cabernet Sauvignon***

Kalin Cellars has not produced a Cabernet Sauvignon bottling since the 1992 vintage, and the varietal was never a mainstay of their red wine lineup, even in the early days. This is unfortunate, for after tasting five vintages of Kalin Cabernet from the decade of the 1980s at our tasting here in New York in early February (happily, all but one from my own cellar), it is crystal clear to me that Kalin was one of the greatest producers of classically-styled Cabernet Sauvignon in all of California, and I rank the Kalin bottlings of this varietal right up there at my absolute summit of Cabernet producers alongside Heitz, Mayacamas, Ridge, Corison and Mount Eden. The wines since I first crossed paths with them in the late 1980s have always been pure, structured wines that were very long on potential and properly built for long-term cellaring. In my early days in the wine trade, I thought that they were very, very Bordeaux-like for California Cabernets in terms of structure out of the blocks, for back in the day, top Bordeaux usually required a minimum of twenty years bottle age to start to truly soften up and blossom, and this time-frame certainly seems appropriate for the Kalin Cellars Cabernets I recently tasted from the vintages of the 1980s. At our New York tasting, one of the participants pulled out their smart phone and downloaded Robert Parker's tasting notes on several of the vintages of Kalin Cabernets from this era (even the note on the sole vintage he liked- the 1986- starts out with something along the lines of "I never have liked Kalin's Cabernets..."), which I thought was a bit mean-spirited, given how stunning the wines were showing, how enraptured all the very seasoned tasters around the table were with the quality of these Cabernets, and the fact that Bob's scores seemed to lack a bit of relevance when viewed within the context of all the fireworks that were going off in the glasses on the table. I thought it would have been sufficient just to say that he did not ever seem to understand or appreciate these wines.

The winery has produced Cabernets from several vineyard sources over the years, including most recently a couple of vintages from the historic Cresta Blanca Vineyard in Livermore Valley, which was originally planted by Charles Wetmore in the 1880s from cuttings he brought back to the region from Bordeaux. The vineyard was wiped out during the political plague of Prohibition, but re-planted again by the younger brother of Charles Wetmore, Clarence, when Prohibition was finally repealed. Sadly, the Cresta Blanca "brand" was flipped to liquor companies in the 1960s and 1970s, with the vineyards falling into disrepair and the old cellars closed. Eventually, the vineyards and old cellars were purchased and restored by the Wente Family Estate in the early 1980s and the vineyards replanted. The Leightons' 1990 Livermore Cabernet Reserve from Kalin hails from these replanted vineyards, but I have not (yet) had the pleasure to taste it. Their 1982 Cabernet Sauvignon hailed from the Tepusquet Vineyard in Santa Maria in Santa Barbara County. This vineyard is in the "inland Mesa" area and was utilized for several vintages by Frances and Terry as the place of origin for one of their Cabernet bottlings. The winery has also used a couple of different sources for their Sonoma-based bottlings of Cabernet Sauvignon, with one being the Long Vineyard in Dry Creek Valley. The second site was also in the western end of Dry Creek Valley, planted on a very steep slope that stood 1500 feet above the valley, with a thirty to forty percent grade and a very thin, red topsoil of iron-infused clay, layered over a profound base of volcanic rock. As Terry Leighton recalls, "this was a radical hillside site, which took ten years to come into production after it was planted, yielded between one and two tons per acre and which at physiological maturity was twelve percent alcohol." The farmer eventually had to sell the property, so there were sadly only a bit more than a handful of Kalin Cabernets from this outstanding source, but

based on what I tasted from the decade of the 1980s from this vineyard, it had to be one of the greatest *Cabernet terroirs* in all of California.



One of the hallmarks of the great Kalin Cellars Cabernets is their being produced from ripe, rather than overripe grapes, and typically sugars here will be in the twenty-two Brix range when picked. Many contemporary winemakers in California (and particularly Napa) will tell you that it is simply not possible to make wine from this grape at 22 Brix, as it will be way too green, but the brilliant Kalin Cabernets belie this argument- at least for well-selected sites where the grapes can achieve a certain degree of physiological ripeness at this sugar level. Whether or not this is still possible in an era of climate change in Napa Valley is a matter of debate, but it is, of course, just disinformation to state that no one can make good Napa Cabernet today with potential alcohol levels under fifteen and a half or sixteen percent. One has to recognize that the high octane, “hedonistic” side of California Cabernet is made out of conscious choice, rather than forced by circumstance, and is produced either because the winemaker and/or proprietor really likes this kind of over the top jam juice or thinks that they can make more money crafting these kind of wines. Of course, with alcohol levels well under thirteen percent, classic Cabernets such as Kalin’s start out life with plenty of structure and are not going to win any beauty pageants when the wines are first released, but if one wants true, old school California Cabernet Sauvignon that is going to age and improve dramatically with bottle age, one really has to be on the lookout for wines that emphatically do not win any beauty pageants out of the blocks these

days! This lower octane from well-selected sites gives the wines very classic varietal profiles on both the nose and palate, sane alcohol levels of well under thirteen percent (all the Kalin Cabernets I tasted for this report are between 12 and 12.5 percent alcohol!), and are endowed with classic structures for long-term aging. The Kalin cabs generally spend three weeks in the old Redwood tanks, with twice a day punch-downs during initial fermentation, and then are racked off into barrels for their malolactic fermentations. They are racked after malo is complete and then returned to barrel for fully four years of aging prior to bottling without fining or filtration. Frances and Terry Leighton use more new oak for their Cabernets than for any of their other varietal bottlings (with the exception of a very few special cuvées of Chardonnay or Pinot Noir), with the Kalin Cabernets typically being raised in anywhere from eighty to one hundred percent new oak. These are some of the greatest and least well-known wines produced at Kalin Cellars and I cannot recommend them highly enough!

### **1990 Kalin Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve (Sonoma County)**

As I purchased the 1990 Kalin Sonoma Cabernet at auction, there is some possibility that the wine was not stored one hundred percent correctly. As I recall, the description of provenance was very positive and the fill and color were excellent, but when I cut the capsule to decant the wine, the top of the cork showed just a touch of old seepage. Therefore, it is possible that this very, very good wine would be even better from a totally pristine bottle! In any event, while the 1990 Sonoma cab did not have quite the same mid-palate intensity as the remainder of these gems from the decade of the 1980s, the wine was very impressively complex on both the nose and palate. The beautiful and very complex bouquet is a blend of black cherries, a touch of fruitcake, dried eucalyptus, complex soil tones, Cuban cigars, coffee and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very poised, with good, but not great mid-palate depth, excellent complexity and balance, modest tannins and a long, tangy finish of impressive grip and unquestioned breed. In fact, this is very St. Julien-like in profile- though perhaps I should more appropriately state that it is classic Sonoma Cabernet from a properly cool vineyard site! A lovely bottle, and if there are even better ones out there, I would love to try one! Oh yeah, I forgot- alcohol level is 12.5 percent on this wine. 2013-2035. **92.**

### **1989 Kalin Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve (Sonoma County)**

1989 was a forgotten year for California Cabernets, but the '89 Kalin from their superb Sonoma vineyard source is absolutely brilliant. This is a classic Kalin Cabernet in terms of ripeness, tipping the scales at a very civilized 12.5 percent alcohol and offering up a simply stunning bouquet of black cherries, cassis, Cuban tobacco smoke, dark soil tones, fresh herbs, incipient notes of chipotle peppers and a deft framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a rock solid core of fruit, great acids, outstanding focus and balance and still a fair bit of tannin perking up the extremely long, complex and superb finish. There is more vibrancy to both the flavors and aromatics, not to mention a bit more depth at the core than was demonstrated by the bottle of the 1990 above, which is probably indicative that the 1990 was not a perfect example. But, the 1989 on the other hand, is a pristine bottle of an absolutely brilliant and still quite young wine! 2015-2050. **94+.**

### **1987 Kalin Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve (Sonoma County)**

It is interesting that in the drought year of 1987, this bottling still came in at the accustomed level of 12.5 percent (assuming that the labels are accurate in this respect- not sure why I am doing so, given the fact that there is usually a little leeway in this regard on all labels?) and the wine is excellent. I remember well writing an article on the 1987 cabs based on a very

large tasting that a friend organized all the way back in 2002- he had been meticulous in collecting at the outset as many highly-rated examples of the vintage as he could find with an eye on holding this comprehensive tasting, and I was pretty surprised by how poorly so many examples of the vintage had evolved only fifteen years out from the vintage. Michael, my friend, you should have cellared some of this brilliant '87 Kalin Cellars Cabernet! The superb and utterly classic nose soars from the glass in a constellation of black cherries, cassis, dried eucalyptus, tobacco, superb, stony minerality, a lovely touch of weediness (which I find absolutely proper with Cabernets in this stage of development- in fact, if a wine does not display this characteristic, I often wonder what has been done to suppress this natural side of Cabernet Sauvignon!) and a gentle framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with superb focus and grip, still a touch of remaining tannin and a very, very long, suave and elegant finish. This is more along its evolutionary arc than either the 1989 or 1986, but it is right there and very nearly at the same quality level. A superb wine. 2013-2040. 94.

**1986 Kalin Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve (Sonoma County)**

When I told Terry Leighton which vintages of Cabernet we had put together for our New York tasting, he mentioned that the 1986 was likely to be the most special in the lineup. Oh, so right he was! This is a young, pure and utterly profound young bottle of Cabernet in the making, offering up magical bouquet of dark berries, cassis, a touch of menthol, cigar ash, dark, stony soil tones, a touch of tariness, incipient notes of Cuban tobacco smoke, herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still very young and primary, with a rock solid core of sappy fruit, stunning focus and detail, ripe, beautifully-integrated tannins and simply stunning length and grip on the endless and very intensely flavored finish. This is one of the finest young Cabernets I have ever had the pleasure to taste from California! Though it is certainly approachable at age twenty-seven, I would be inclined to not touch another bottle for at least another five years or so, as this is still a puppy and there is a lot more to come with further bottle age! 2018-2060+. 97.

**1982 Kalin Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve (Santa Barbara County)**

I do not generally think of Santa Barbara County as Cabernet country, but this 1982 from Kalin Cellars is outstanding (and may get me to re-think the potential for this variety in Santa Barbara). The wine tips the scales at an impressive twelve percent alcohol and offers up a deep, complex and nicely weedy nose of black cherries, a touch of mocha, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, herbal nuances and a touch of tariness. In many ways, this reminds me quite a bit of an old-fashioned, mature bottle of St. Émilien. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite plush on the attack, with a good core, modest remaining tannins and lovely length and grip on the wide open and complex finish. A fine, fine bottle that has been fully mature for several years already, but shows absolutely no signs of slowing down anytime soon. 2013-2035. 92.

***Zinfandel***

While Zinfandel, along with Pinot Noir, was one of the first two varietal wines produced by Frances and Terry Leighton at Kalin Cellars in the inaugural vintage of 1975, the couple did not produce Zinfandel for a great many vintages and 1982 was the last year for Kalin Zinfandels. There were both a Livermore Valley and a Sonoma bottling of Zinfandel over the seven vintages that this varietal was produced at Kalin Cellars, with the Sonoma bottling hailing from Dave Demostene's Dry Creek Valley vineyard, and the Livermore Valley bottling coming from a

parcel of old vines on the Ruby Hill Ranch prior to its destruction by Computerland to make their executive retreat. Other than the one example of the 1981 Livermore Valley bottling, this is a varietal that I had never crossed paths with from Kalin Cellars prior to our tasting with Terry Leighton in early January of this year, and I was quite disappointed that we ran out of steam at this dinner and did not get through the other four Zinfandel bottlings that Terry had prepared for our tasting. However, there will be a part two of this article, and Terry has promised that the old Zinfandels we did not get to in our last tasting are still on the table and I look forward to reporting on them in a follow-up feature. The Kalin Cellars Zinfandels were handled like all of the estate's other red wines, with fermentation in the old redwood tanks, followed by a gentle pressing, full malo and aging for about fifteen months in barrel prior to bottling without fining or filtration. The one primary difference for the Zinfandels was that their *elevage* was done in American oak, rather than French oak, of which forty percent was new wood in each vintage.

### **1981 Kalin Cellars Zinfandel (Livermore Valley)**

The 1981 Livermore Zinfandel bottling from Kalin was raised in forty percent new oak, and though I did not take note of its alcohol level, this is by no means a “monster truck” zinfandel, but a wine of grace, balance and harmony. At age thirty-two, the wine is drinking beautifully and shows no signs of imminent decline. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of black cherries, French roast, lovely spice tones, a touch of grilled meat and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, still a touch of tannin and a long, plump and generous finish. Obviously, this does not have the same breed and finesse as the Pinots from this era, but this is a lovely wine that will continue on for another fifteen to twenty years with no difficulties. Lovely old Zinfandel! 2013-2030. **89.**

### ***Dessert Wines***

*I only have a single note on any of the Kalin Cellars dessert wines fashioned over the years, and anticipate having more to say on this particular subject after Part Deux of the Kalin Cellars retrospective tastings later in the year. On our proposed lineup for the first tasting held in Livermore in January, there was also a 1979 Riesling on the list, but as I ran out of steam (it was after midnight after all and we had begun our tasting at 4:30 in the afternoon!), we did not get to that wine. Rather than write about the dessert wines at Kalin in this report- where I only have the single tasting note, I will defer this section's elaboration until I have tasted a few more Kalin dessert wines.*

### **1990 Kalin Cellars “Cuvée L d’Or”**

The 1990 Cuvée L d’Or from Kalin Cellars is a blend of late-harvested, botrytized Sémillon and Sauvignon Blanc from the great vineyards in the Potter and Livermore valleys that Terry and Frances Leighton have worked with for years. The blend on the 1990 is eighty percent Sémillon and twenty percent Sauvignon Blanc and the wine offers up a deep and mature nose of *crème brûlée*, apricot, oranges, new leather, a touch of tea leaves and a gentle base of almost salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and impressively fresh for its maturity, with lovely depth, good, well-integrated acids and an impressively long, musky finish. A lovely dessert wine that has drunk well since it was released, but continues to offer up a great deal of pleasure. 2011-2020. **90.**

## RECENTLY-TASTED WHITE BURGUNDY



Sadly, I do not drink a lot of white Burgundy these days, as premature oxidation has utterly ravaged my cellar and most of my pre-premoxed (would this just be “moxed”, if two negatives make a positive?) bottles are now long gone and I do not enjoy drinking white Burgundy on the young side- when its complexity is still years away from true development, so like many previous white Burgundy enthusiasts, I have been stuck waiting for a cure to the scourge of prematurely oxidizing dry white wines. I am starting to wonder at age fifty-two if I will ever live to see the day when the cause of premox is found and whether it will come in time for me to lay in a vintage of white Burgundy in the cellar and give it the requisite decade or more of bottle age it needs to really develop into the magical elixir that it can be with cellaring. It is starting to look like the pleasures of long-term cellaring of white Burgundy will be left for my children’s generation. Happily, I have been invited to a handful of tastings in the last couple of years which featured a fine array of mature white Burgundies (1993 vintage and back), and I still am often afforded the opportunity to taste young white Burgundies out of bottle while I am on the road tasting in the region or at events in other parts of the world, so I have been able to accrue a sizable number of tasting notes in the last couple of years on young wines that have not found their way previously into the newsletter and it is these notes that form the backbone of this feature.



As is the case with most white Burgundy pieces these days, what will not be represented well in the tasting notes (though there have been a few happy surprises of late!) below are a large number of recent examples of wines in the eight to ten year range- the old “sweet spot” where I would historically have started to really drink my white Burgundies out of my cellar. As most wine enthusiasts are already well aware, premature oxidation- whether it be with the white wines from Burgundy, Bordeaux, Alsace or the Loire Valley- starts to generally rear its ugly head around the six or seven year mark out from the vintage and often consume a majority of wines from the vintage by the time they have reached their tenth birthdays. While premox is most widely associated with the whites of Burgundy, I have certainly had my white Bordeaux collection equally devastated by premature oxidation, and no longer have any white Bordeaux in my cellar from any vintage younger than 1993. In the Loire, so far only Savennières has really been problematic in my cellar, and I have (thus far) still had good results aging Sancerre from Edmond Vatan and François Cotat, and my Vouvray and Montlouis collections have continued to age gracefully. Of course, with this latter category, there is a fair bit of residual sugar in many of the bottlings that I have cellared, and consequently, they were originally bottled with higher sulfur levels and it is certainly possible that one day they, too, will face issues of premature oxidation. German wines have also aged very well for me so far (again, mostly off-dry and noble sweet bottlings) and I am happy to report that I have not encountered any premoxed German wines as of yet.

In terms of where we are today with premature oxidation issues, I wish I could report that substantial progress has been made identifying a cause for this world-wide malady, but this is not the case. The causes of the problem remain an absolute mystery as far as I know, and though research continues on apace, it is a slow project (with the problem not showing itself for six or seven years out from bottling, the learning curve here is slow and painful) and we will just have to wait and see if the current round of research will bear more fruit than previous efforts. Just as I was finishing up this article on white Burgundy, I was emailed the most recent results of the second round of tastings of the 2005 white Burgundy vintage out in southern California that have been organized for several years now by Don Cornwell, who has also constructed the Premox Wiki on the web for folks to track their prematurely oxidized bottles of white Burgundy. The results of the first two large tastings (I believe the group does three for each vintage) showed the 2005s having the highest percentage of tainted bottles (either advanced or flat out oxidized) of any previous vintage, with twenty-five percent of their bottles not performing properly, so clearly the problem is not yet abating. As I have noted before, given that premox is a bottle by bottle phenomenon, one could perhaps repeat this same tasting with different bottles of the exact same wines and get different results, but in the aggregate, it seems readily clear that premox is still a part of our vinous lives at the present time. I have not bothered to include any notes on the premoxed bottles that I have crossed paths with in the last couple of years in the report that follows, as I generally do not even bother to take notes on these wines when I do taste them.

Of the notes that follow, I have listed the wines geographically from north to south, starting with Chablis and working down to Chassagne-Montrachet, St. Aubin and the wines from the Mâconnais. Within each geographical subset, the wines are listed first by vintage (from youngest to oldest), and then within each vintage grouping, they are listed in ascending order from *villages* to premier cru on up to grand cru (where applicable). Within each appellation grouping, similar premier or grand cru bottlings are listed together alphabetically (so all Bâtard-

Montrachet will be listed before all Bienvenues- Bâtard-Montrachet or all Chablis “Butteaux” examples prior to all notes on Chablis “Montée de Tonnerre” in a given vintage), and within the same vineyard designation, the wines are listed alphabetically by domaine name (so that the note on Domaine Brocard’s 2010 Butteaux appears prior to Domaine Raveneau’s 2010 Butteaux). For the sake of simplicity, I have listed all of the samples of Bâtard-Montrachet and le Montrachet that I tasted within the section on Puligny, even though several of them may have hailed from the Chassagne-Montrachet side of their respective vineyards. As this is a rather random piece (based on what happened to cross my path in the last couple of years), it really did not make sense to create an index for this article, and all of the notes will be in the database and searchable in any case within a couple of weeks! As has been my custom when writing about dry white wines from any region that has been affected adversely by issues of premature oxidation, the expected windows of peak drinkability that appear after the tasting notes are written as if premox does not exist, and are really only applicable for bottles that somehow manage to escape the pox.

I am deeply indebted to an long-time Burgundy-loving friend and subscriber, Chet Kern, for organizing and inviting me to a couple of deep, old white Burgundy tastings in the last couple of months here in New York, as his tastings served as an impetus to comb through my tasting books and see what other white Burgundies I had tasted in the last year or two. I have tried to only use notes that would still be useful in this article- for example, a note from late 2010 on a bottle of still sound (at the time) 1996 or 1997 premier cru is going to be of dubious interest today (and was not printed in the article), but a tasting note on a sound bottle of 1985 grand cru from that same time period is going to still be relevant if the wine seemed to have lots of life still in it when I tasted it a year or two ago)- for the goal here is not to fill up pages with out of date tasting notes, but rather, to provide useful information on bottles of white Burgundy that I have tasted in recent times and have not had opportunity to publish in previous articles. In the course of my research, I came across notes from a November 2009 Paulée in Beaune that included a number of old and stunning wines, and I have included notes on several of those bottles in this piece, if the notes are still likely to be accurate. These notes are indicated as hailing from that tasting in their descriptions. I have not written an in-depth report on white Burgundy since Issue Twenty-Two- now fully twenty issues ago- and this report is far overdue. But, I have so much material unpublished still in my archives that it is getting hard to keep up with it all and keep each issue somewhat close to manageable in length (not that I ever actually manage to do that!), so reports like this are very useful to get some of the backlog of notes published and embedded in the database for future reference. Many thanks to all the generous folks who kindly shared bottles of mature white Burgundy with me over the last couple of years, as my own cellar is rather thin in this category these days. I hope that this article, with its wide range of vintages from 2010s in bottle tasted this past November in Burgundy, all the way back to the amazing 1957 Ramonets from that 2009 Paulée proves to be useful and entertaining- for it was a lot of fun drinking those bottles over the course of the last few years! Let us hope that a cure for premox is just around the corner and we can all go back to cellaring white Burgundy for the long haul...

### ***Chablis***

#### **2010 Chablis AC- Domaine Raveneau**

The 2010 Chablis *villages* from Domaine Raveneau is a lovely example of the vintage, wafting from the glass in a wide open and classy mix of apple, pear, lemon oil, a touch of licorice and a complex base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and

vibrant, with a completely accessible personality, bright, zesty acids and lovely mineral drive on the long and classy finish. This is still made from quite young vines, but it is already a really lovely bottling and the future can only be brighter for this classy village wine. 2013-2020. **90.**

**2010 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard**

The 2010 Butteaux from Domaine Brocard was showing extremely well in November of 2012, offering up a refined and intense bouquet of apple, pear, hay, flinty soil tones, citrus peel and a nice touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with fine focus, brisk acids and lovely length and grip on the classy finish. This is an excellent example of Butteaux and a terrific value. 2016-2035. **92+.**

**2010 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Raveneau**

The 2010 Butteaux from Domaine Raveneau is an excellent wine that still would love to be left alone in the cellar for another four or five years to really start to develop its secondary layers of complexity. The youthful and classy bouquet is a blend of apple, lemon, a touch of tangerine, deep, rocky soil tones, spring flowers and incipient notes of both licorice and citrus oil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with a superb core, excellent focus and grip and a very long, young and well-balanced finish. A superb wine in the making. 2017-2040. **93+.**

**2010 Chablis “Montée de Tonnerre”- Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard**

Domaine Brocard’s 2010 Montée de Tonnerre is also lovely, but I have a very slight preference for their Butteaux in this vintage. The lovely nose is a bit less expressive aromatically than the Butteaux, but offers up a nice mix of apple, pear, lime peel, stony minerality, smoke, hay and an incipient notes of beeswax in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, bright acids and a long, focused and zesty finish. Another very good example. 2014-2035. **92.**

**2010 Chablis “Vaulorent”- Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard**

The 2010 Vaulorent from the Brocard family seems clearly to be the finest of their premier crus in this lovely vintage, as the wine jumps from the glass in a beautiful mélange of apple, lime, tart orange, a complex base of flinty soil tones, a touch of grassiness and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced and youthful finish. Given that Vaulorent is a tiny appendage to the grand cru slope in Chablis, I have to assume that this great *terroir* is going to become more famous as time goes by! 2015-2040. **93+.**

**2010 Chablis “les Preuses”- Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard**

The 2010 Preuses from Domaine Brocard is an excellent wine in the making, delivering a youthfully complex bouquet of apple, tangerine, sweet grapefruit, hay, chalky minerality, citrus peel and a very faint whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and quite vinous, with impressive complexity, lovely mid-palate concentration, racy acids and superb length and grip on the still fairly primary finish. This is a lovely example of this great grand cru, but I would not touch a bottle for at least another four years and really let it blossom with bottle age. 2017-2040+. **94.**

**2010 Chablis “les Clos”- Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard**

The 2010 les Clos from Domaine Brocard is also a very fine example of the vintage and the vineyard, but it does not show quite the same mid-palate depth as their superb 2010 les Preuses. The very fine nose offers up a combination of apple, pink grapefruit, a deep base of flinty soil, a touch of chicken stock and an overtly smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is

deep, youthful and full-bodied, with a very good core, snappy acids and very fine length and grip on the focused and still quite primary finish. Fine juice. 2018-2040+. **93.**

**2009 Chablis “Butteaux- la Minot”- Domaine Patrick Piuze**

The 2009 La Minot from Pat Piuze is a lovely wine for drinking right out of the blocks, as its ripe personality is beautifully framed by a superb base of *terroir*. The extroverted and complex nose offers up lovely purity in its blend of lemon, tangerine, beeswax, spring flowers and a beautifully complex base of deep and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite generous on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, lovely, framing acids that give the wine lift and focus and excellent grip on the long and wide open finish. There is absolutely no reason to defer gratification with this lovely bottle of Butteaux. 2012-2020. **92.**

**2009 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Raveneau**

The 2009 Butteaux from the Raveneau family is a beautiful wine that shows a bit more raciness than the '09 La Minot from Patrick Piuze (sampled on the same day). The deep, complex and very classy nose offers up scents of apple, lemon, grapefruit zest, a lovely smokiness and a very fine base of complex minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite open on the attack (in proper 2009 vintage fashion), with a fine core of fruit, lovely cut and mineral drive on the backend and excellent focus and nascent complexity on the long finish. This is a young wine in terms of its aromatic and flavor complexity, but also quite accessible structurally. Fine juice and a lovely result for the vintage. 2013-2030+. **92+.**

**2009 Chablis “Vaudésir”- Domaine Patrick Piuze**

The 2009 Vaudésir from Patrick Piuze is drinking beautifully in the easy-going style of this vintage in Chablis, offering up a complex bouquet of apple, tangerine, beeswax, acacia blossoms, a touch of fresh nutmeg and a lovely base of chalkiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely in full bloom, with a good core of fruit, fairly gentle, framing acids and lovely focus and balance on the succulent and very long finish. The 2009 Vaudésir from Pat Piuze will not make old bones, but for drinking over the next several years, this is a very tasty bottle. 2013-2018. **91.**

**2008 Chablis “Beauregard”- Pattes Loup (Thomas Pico)**

Thomas Pico has been on my list of *vignerons* to visit in Chablis one of these days (I actually made the attempt a few trips ago, but no one was around in the village on the holiday where he had been kind enough to consent to my visit, and I was unaware that Pattes Loup was not a domaine specifically and I was not able to find the address this day despite an hour driving around!) and this 2008 is a lovely bottle. The nose on the '08 Beauregard premier cru is deep and complex, offering up a fairly ripe blend of apple, orange, lovely flinty minerality and a gentle topnote of straw. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and possesses a fine core, with crisp acids, a broad-shouldered personality and fine length and grip on the backend. 2012-2020+. **90+.**

**2008 Chablis “Butteaux- la Minot”- Domaine Patrick Piuze**

The 2008 la Minot bottling of Butteaux from Patrick Piuze is a beautiful and racy example of the vintage, soaring from the glass in a vibrant blend of tart orange, grapefruit, flinty minerality, lemon zest and a lovely dollop of wet stones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with a rock solid core, superb cut and grip, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the still youthful and electric finish. This is a superb bottle in the making, and if premo was not an issue, I would not touch a bottle for a good decade. However, living in the

dark times that we do for dry white wines, I would not hesitate to open this wine now, as it is so beautifully balanced that is already a very good drink, despite its very real youth. 2012-2030+. **94.**

**2008 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Raveneau**

The 2008 Butteaux from the Raveneaus is absolutely stellar and a classic in the making. The deep, young and very pure nose soars from the glass in a youthful constellation of lemon, grapefruit, wet stone minerality, hints of the beeswax to come with further bottle age, lemon peel and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with brisk acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the very refined, racy and dancing finish. I love the combination here of the raciness of the vintage and the superb depth of the *terroir* of Butteaux that these old vines pull out of the soil every year. A great vintage for the consistently excellent Raveneau Butteaux! 2016-2040. **94.**

**2008 Chablis “Montée de Tonnerre”- Domaine Patrick Piuze**

The 2008 Chablis “Montée de Tonnerre” from Domaine Patrick Piuze is quite a bit more youthful in structure than the 2009 Vaudésir that was served alongside of it, offering up a nascently complex bouquet of pears, apples, lemon, paraffin, complex, chalky minerality and a lovely floral topnote redolent of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely complexity starting to emerge, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the racy and very classy finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Montée de Tonnerre! 2013-2030+. **94.**

**2008 Chablis “Montmains”- Pattes Loup (Thomas Pico)**

The 2008 Chablis “Montmains” from Pattes Loup is excellent, delivering a deep and complex nose of green apple, lime, wet stones, a touch of anise, citrus peel and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a lovely core of fruit, snappy acids and excellent length and grip on the young and classic finis. Fine, fine juice from Monsieur Pico. 2011-225. **92.**

**2008 Chablis “Côte de Bouguerots”- Domaine Patrick Piuze (served from magnum)**

Out of magnum, the 2008 Côte de Bouguerots is a very young and very, very promising wine. The deep, pure and stunningly complex bouquet delivers a great constellation of grapefruit, tart orange, brilliantly complex minerality, citrus peel, dried flowers and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and tightly-knit, with a great core of fruit in reserve, glorious transparency, snappy acids and laser-like focus on the very long, complex and scintillating finish. Great juice in the making. 2015-2040. **95+.**

**2007 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Raveneau**

Whether the 2007 or 2008 vintage will ultimately produce the more classic example of Butteaux *chez* Raveneau is going to be a delicious question to debate over the coming years, as both wines are superb. The 2008 probably has a bit more mid-palate volume to it and the 2007 even a bit more raciness and cut, so it will be interesting to follow the two wines and see which one ultimately is the more complete and interesting in its old age. The 2007 Butteaux offers up a vibrant nose of grapefruit, lemon , a touch of anise, stunning minerality and a floral topnote redolent of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and transparent, with a fine core, snappy acids and great length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. Fine juice that still needs a bit of time to fully blossom. 2015-2040. **93+.**

#### **2006 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Raveneau**

Monsieur Raveneau seemingly loves to open Butteaux for me after we have tasted through the most recent vintage out of barrel, and I have accrued a lovely clutch of notes on this fine premier cru *chez* Raveneau over the last couple of years. The 2006 is really a superb example of the vintage that is now wide open and drinking very well right now, offering up a complex nose of candied lemon, chalky minerality, beeswax, apple and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and succulent, with very forward personality coupled to a lovely underpinning minerality and framing acids that keep the wine vibrant in the mouth. The finish is very long and fully blossomed, with good bounce and complexity. Lovely juice for relatively near-term drinking. 2012-2020. **92.**

#### **2006 Chablis “Chapelots”- Domaine Raveneau**

The 2006 Chapelots from Domaine Raveneau is drinking beautifully and is another very light on its feet example of the vintage. The fresh and very stylish nose wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, lemon oil, chalky soil tones, spring flowers, vanillin oak and a nice touch of wet stones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and wide open, with a lovely core of fruit, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the long and classy finish. This seems to show a bit more new wood than the 2006 Butteaux, but it too is a lovely example of the vintage. 2012-2020. **91.**

#### **2004 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Raveneau**

The 2004 Butteaux from Domaine Raveneau has now entered into its plateau of peak drinkability at age eight, but shows no signs of any untoward aging on either the nose or palate. The excellent bouquet jumps from the glass in a combination of beeswax, apple, lemon oil, a touch of pear, acacia blossoms and a beautiful base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and zesty, with great purity and transparency, vibrant acidity, excellent grip and laser-like focus on the very long and classy finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Raveneau Butteaux at its apogee. 2013-2025+? **93.**

#### **2004 Chablis “les Preuses”- Domaine Vincent Dauvissat (served from half bottle)**

In half bottle, the 2004 les Preuses from Vincent Dauvissat was drinking beautifully when I last crossed paths with it early in 2012. The deep, pure and classy nose offers up scents of green apple, tangerine, beautifully complex, chalky soil tones, a touch of oyster shell, wet stones, vanillin oak, white flowers and a bit of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and blossoming beautifully, with a fine core, superb focus and grip and outstanding mineral drive on the backend. Out of half bottle, this wine was just stirring at the time and I have to imagine that it is really in a good place right now in full bottle as well. In the old days, I would never consider drinking this wine at this stage of its evolution, but in this day and age, why not? 2012-2025+. **94.**

#### **1996 Chablis “Vaillons”- Domaine Vincent Dauvissat**

The 1996 Vaillons from Monsieur Dauvissat was every bit as fresh and pure as the les Preuses, jumping from the glass in a beautiful mélange of apple, orange zest, beeswax, candied lemon peel, chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and racy, with a lovely core of fruit, superb complexity, bright, zesty acids and outstanding length and grip on the vibrant and very soil-driven finish. This lovely bottle came directly out of the very cold Dauvissat cellars and was every bit as magical as one would have

expected for all of the wines from the top producers in the 1996 white Burgundy vintage- what could have been! 2012-2025+. **92.**

**1996 Chablis “les Preuses”- Domaine Vincent Dauvissat**

I was very fortunate while in Burgundy this past November to cross paths with two perfect bottles of 1996 wines from Vincent Dauvissat- which really makes one lament just what was lost to premoxy in this remarkable vintage! The 1996 Preuses was absolutely stellar, soaring from the glass in a beautifully complex combination of candied lemon, green apple, beeswax, chalky minerality, orange zest, a gentle touch of *Chablisienne* straw, smoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very racy, with a spine of well-integrated and ripe acidity running through the middle of this wine that is absolutely extraordinary. The finish is very, very long, the wine is rock solid at the core and the complexity, cut and grip are stunning. Just a perfect bottle of '96 Dauvissat Preuses! 2012-2040. **96.**

**1992 Chablis “les Preuses”- Domaine René et Vincent Dauvissat (served from magnum)**

There was no indication that this magnum was not in pristine condition, but it had been sourced from a European auction a year or two before my friend served it at a big, old Burgundy dinner we both attended in Beaune this past November. The 1992 vintage was never one of my favorites in Chablis, as the wines seemed a bit forward and lacking in customary structure and mineral drive for long-term cellaring, and this magnum would seem to bear out those initial impressions way back when. The nose was already starting to slide a bit, offering up a tertiary mélange of pear, orange peel, a bit of geranium, nutskins, a touch of oyster shell and a lovely and complex base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and starting to show the first signs of oxidative nuances, with a fairly modest core of fruit (particularly for a Dauvissat les Preuses!), sound acids and just a touch of backend heat showing the ripeness of the vintage in Chablis in 1992. This is an okay glass of mature chardonnay, but it is a pretty far cry from a great glass of mature les Preuses! Not bad, but drink up (assuming this perfect looking magnum was pristine). 2012-2017. **85.**

**1988 Chablis “la Forest”- Domaine René et Vincent Dauvissat**

The 1988 vintage for white Burgundy is one of the finest for current consumption and I was delighted to have an opportunity to taste the '88 la Forest with Monsieur Dauvissat on one of my recent visits to the domaine. The bouquet is deep, pure and utterly beautiful, as it wafts from the glass in an *à point* blend of candied green fruit, paraffin, flinty soil tones, a touch of grassiness (so typical of this *terroir* in less than very ripe years), anise and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very, very pure, with superb complexity, a great core of fruit, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly mature and still vibrant finish. A lovely wine at its apogee and with years and years of life still ahead of it. 2011-2025. **92.**

**1987 Chablis “Vaillons”- Domaine René et Vincent Dauvissat**

This wine came as a total surprise when it was unveiled after tasting it blind, as I had no idea that the 1987 Chablis vintage had produced wines of this quality! The nose is deep, pure and beautifully mature, offering up scents of apple, pear, beeswax, wet stones, a dollop of green overtones and a touch of damp hay. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and classy, with lovely complexity and focus, fine cut and impressive length and grip on the pure and minerally finish. Who knew- other than, of course, Vincent Dauvissat, who took great pleasure in watching me cast about on both sides of the vintage and never once guess 1987! A superb wine and a total surprise. 2011-2020+. **90.**

### **1986 Chablis “Mont de Milieu”- Domaine Regnard et Fils**

I have not previously had any wines from Domaine Regnard et Fils, but this 1986 Mont de Milieu was really quite lovely and drinking very well indeed when I was served it in the spring of 2011. The complex and gently musky nose (from a touch of botrytis?) offers up a mature mélange of orange peel, coconut, a touch of pineapple, beeswax, a lovely base of soil tones and a touch of straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with lovely detail and fine length and grip on the still beautifully intact, mature finish. Good juice and still with plenty of life in it. 2011-2020+. **91.**

### **1986 Chablis “Valmur”- Domaine Raveneau**

The 1986 Valmur from Domaine Raveneau is quite marked by botrytis and, as a result, not particularly interesting to my palate in its advanced age. The topical nose offers up scents of pineapple, lemon, a touch of fennel seed, stony minerality and lemon peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, modestly complex and quite influenced by its (now less than) noble rot, with good acids and focus and a long, tropical and slightly hot finish. I have often felt that a bit of botrytis early on in a white Burgundy vintage's life adds a bit of complexity, but if one keeps the bottle in the cellar long enough, the botrytis eventually gets the upper hand and takes away from complexity in a big way. That is my distinct impression of the '86 Raveneau Valmur, which is now really a very simple wine by the magical standards of this cru *chez* Raveneau. 2011-2020+. **87.**

### **1985 Chablis “les Clos”- Domaine René et Vincent Dauvissat**

The 1985 Dauvissat les Clos is a brilliant bottle of mature Chablis that is still at its absolute apogee of peak drinkability. The deep and glorious nose wafts from the glass in a tertiary blend of beeswax, candied lemon peel, apple, brilliantly complex, flinty soil tones, anise, a touch of quince, chalk dust and a delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and still quite youthfully vibrant, with a superb core, stunning complexity and magical length and grip on the wide open, dancing finish. This is a brilliant bottle of mature les Clos that still had decades of life ahead of it. What a pity that premoxy will currently prevent some of the great recent vintages in Chablis to reach this same magical plateau of maturity! 2011-2035. **95.**

### **1979 Chablis “Blanchot”- Domaine Robert Vocoret**

The 1979 Blanchot from Robert Vocoret was still drinking quite well when I last tasted it in April of 2011, but it had reached a point in its evolution where it was losing a bit of its *Chablisienne* character and starting to become just a nice, old white Burgundy. The deep and still quite interesting nose offers up scents of fresh apricot, a touch of pineapple, honey, nuts and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still quite sound structurally, with good acids and focus, moderate grip and sneaky length on the well-balanced finish. I do not have a lot of experience with the wines from Domaine Vocoret in general, and virtually none from this era, so I am not sure if this wine had a lot more Chablis personality back in its earlier days. But, still not a bad drink and with some life still in it. 2011-2020+. **88.**





*The Château de Chambolle-Musigny- home to one of the Côte de Nuits' finest whites- Clos de la Maréchale Blanc.*

### ***Côte de Nuits White Wines***

#### **2010 Nuits St. Georges “Clos de la Maréchale” Blanc- Domaine J. F. Mugnier**

The 2010 Clos de la Maréchale Blanc is a lovely example of the vintage that is drinking beautifully from the bottle, offering up a stylish nose of apple, pear, a youthful touch of fruit-skin, white flowers, beautiful, almost salty soil tones and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very soil-driven, with lovely focus and nascent complexity, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the elegant finish. This will be lovely in another year or two, but I would love to give it a couple more years in bottle to really start to blossom. 2014-2030+? **92.**

#### **2009 Nuits St. Georges “Clos de la Maréchale” Blanc- Domaine J. F. Mugnier**

Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier's 2009 Clos de la Maréchale Blanc is a really lovely example of this ripe white Burgundy vintage and was showing beautifully at a tasting of the monopoles of Prémieux back in November of 2012. The wide open and still very pure nose delivers a blend of apple, tangerine, a touch of quince, chalky soil tones, white flowers, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with bright acids, lovely focus and a long, complex and very stylish finish. A most impressive 2009 white! 2013-2018+. **92.**

#### **2008 Nuits St. Georges “Clos de la Maréchale” Blanc- Domaine J. F. Mugnier**

The 2008 Clos de la Maréchale Blanc from Domaine Mugnier is a classic example of the wine, and it now seems to be nearly mature and closing in on its apogee. The very, very stylish

bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of white cherries, peach, apple, beeswax, lovely soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil inflection and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy backend. The finish closes with a nice touch of fruit skin and is quite vibrant structurally. This is a lovely vintage for the Clos de la Maréchale Blanc, and though it is probably still a tad on the young side today, I love the way it is currently drinking and would have no hesitation to start pulling corks on this wine in earnest today, but one more year of patience should be rewarded with a wine that is absolutely in full bloom! 2014-2024+. **93.**

**1992 Musigny Blanc- Domaine des Comtes de Vogüé**

The 1992 may well be the finest vintage of Comtes de Vogüé's Musigny Blanc that I have ever had the pleasure to taste. The deep, young and complex nose soars from the glass in a lovely constellation of buttered almonds, pears, chalky soil tones, a touch of honey, citrus peel and a lovely, discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with an excellent core of fruit, lovely complexity, crisp acids and a big, long, powerful and impeccably balanced finish. Fine juice with plenty of life still ahead of it! 2011-2025. **94.**

***Corton-Charlemagne***

**2006 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils**

Domaine Bize's Corton-Charlemagne is a lovely wine that carries the ripeness of the vintage very well indeed, for despite its fully fourteen percent alcohol (which I guess is actually pretty low for this vintage!), the wine shows no signs of heat or excessive ripeness. The deep and superb nose wafts from the glass in a classic combination of apple, pear, iodine, great minerality, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very racy for the vintage, with a rock solid core, lovely focus and impressive mineral drive on the very long and powerful finish. A superb 2006 Corton Charlie. 2011-2020. **94.**

**2005 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Henri Boillot**

The 2005 Corton-Charlemagne from Henri Boillot offers up lovely complexity on both the nose and palate, but also a surprising amount of backend heat that kept its score down a bit. The first class bouquet is a blend of apple, pear, almonds, a touch of pastry cream, chalky soil tones and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with lovely complexity and mid-palate concentration, crisp acids and grip and fine focus on the very long, but surprisingly, a slightly hot finish. This is good juice for current drinking, but with the alcohol already starting to show a bit on the backend, it is probably better to drink this wine sooner, rather than later. 2012-2015+? **89.**

**2005 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray**

The 2005 Bonneau du Martray Corton-Charlemagne is a lovely example of the vintage, but it was already beginning to open up completely when I last tried it in December of 2011 and it is probably a very good time to be drinking this wine. The deep, complex and very classy nose offers up scents of apple, a touch of passion fruit, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, iodine and a deft base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very classy, with a fine core, lovely framing acids and very good length and grip on the wide open and complex finish. Very fine juice for relatively near-term drinking, but this vintage is probably not structured to make old bones- even if premox was not always a shadow case over the future of any traditionally long-lived white Burgundy in this day and age. 2011-2018+? **92.**

### **1993 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Jadot (served from magnum)**

The 1993 vintage continues to be one of the years I look for (mostly in vain) at auction, as the wines continue to drink splendidly and show no signs of slowing down anytime soon. The 1993 Corton-Charlemagne from Maison Jadot is just stunning out of magnum and still a relatively young wine, jumping from the glass in a vibrant blend of pear, delicious apple, a touch of nutskin, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and a lovely base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with a rock solid core, bright and zesty acids, laser-like focus and superb length and grip on the pure and zesty finish. This wine is at its absolute apogee of peak drinkability right now, but I have little doubt that it has decades of more life in it! 2013-2040+. **93.**

### **1993 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Latour**

The 1993 Latour Corton-Charlemagne may well be the last great wine made by this estate from this vineyard- at least up through the present time- but, to be fair, I do not taste at Maison Latour every year and am a little out of the loop with what is going on here in regards to their Corton Charlie. In any event, this is a lovely example of the vintage and quite a bit younger than the 1992, as it offers up a deep and lovely nose of apple, iodine, lemon peel, a fine base of stony soil tones and toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and racy, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and balance and fine grip on the long and racy finish. If one were to nitpick (*moi?*), the new wood here does stick out just a touch on the backend and the wine would have been even finer with less new wood and less toast to the new oak that was used! But, given where this cuvée has gone since the 1993 vintage, it is hard not to look back very fondly on these days and cut the 1993 a little slack! 2011-2025. **92.**

### **1993 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Tollot-Beaut**

I used to love the Corton-Charlemagne from Domaine Tollot-Beaut and have lost track of what is going on at this domaine in the last several years. The few red wines that I have tasted since the current generation took over the reins of the estate have been a bit oakier and darker in fruit tone than the wines of their father (and I have liked them less as a result), but I do not know what is going on with their version of Corton Charlie. In any case, the 1993 is brilliant, offering up a deep and very vibrant nose of pear, apple, a hint of creosote, gentle floral tones, a dollop of *crème patissière* and a judicious framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and at its apogee of peak drinkability, with a lovely core, exceptional focus and balance and lovely grip on the long, crisp and beautifully delineated finish. A beautiful wine. 2012-2020+. **93.**

### **1992 Corton-Charlemagne- Clos Frantin (Albert Bichot)**

The 1992 Corton-Charlemagne from Clos Frantin is a fairly old-fashioned style of white Burgundy and was obviously bottled with plenty of SO<sub>2</sub> back in 1993, so that the wine has remained remarkably fresh as it has aged, but it also seems to have not really developed the same degree of complexity one might expect over the twenty years it has had in bottle. The nose is deep and youthful, offering up scents of apple, melon, a touch of creosote, a whiff of soil, lime zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, young and shows off good mid-palate depth, with sound acids and good length and grip on the fairly unevolved finish. Will this develop more complexity with further bottle age, or always remain a relatively un-complex example of Corton Charlie? It is not a bad drink *per se*, but one expects a bit more from a twenty-plus year-old grand cru. 2013-2025+. **89+?**

### **1992 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Dubreuil-Fontaine**

The 1992 Corton-Charlemagne from Domaine Dubreuil-Fontaine is a pretty wine that continues to drink well, but it is probably starting to slide a bit over the far side of its plateau of peak maturity and drinking up in the near-future is warranted. The complex and quite mature nose offers up scents of apple, a touch of passion fruit, lovely soil tones, incipient notes of corn meal, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and now quite soft, with a good, plump core still in evidence, but a gentle structure that is starting to waver and let a bit of the vintage's ripeness show up as uncovered alcohol on the finish. This is still a tasty bottle, but it does not show a whole lot of *terroir* these days and it would be best to plan on drinking this up over the next few years. 2013-2017. **87.**

### **1992 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Latour**

The 1992 Louis Latour Corton-Charlemagne is at a lovely stage of development and right where I have found most top example from this vintage to be in the last couple of years- fully mature and probably nearing the end of their plateau of peak maturity- but, also with sound structure and plenty of remaining freshness. This bottle got progressively fresher as it had some time in the glass (this was a hallmark of all the older Louis Latour Corton Charlie bottlings I have tried recently) and eventually showed lovely freshness for its mature state. The bouquet is a fine blend of baked pear and apple, chalky soil tones, a touch of pink grapefruit, creosote, orange peel and a fair bit of toasty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tertiary in its complexity, with a good core, enough framing acidity and good length and grip on the mature finish. This is getting to the point where the ripeness of the vintage is showing just a touch of backend heat- probably an indication that the structure is just starting to fray a bit- and is probably best drunk up in the next handful of years. 2013-2020. **89.**

### **1992 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Tollot-Beaut**

Like many 1992 white Burgundies, the '92 Tollot-Beaut Corton Charlie is starting to slide down the far side of its plateau and is not as interesting of a drink as it was a decade ago. The nose is now quite influenced by the ripeness of the vintage and its rather advanced age, offering up a tropical blend of pineapple, guava, honey, coffee, citrus peel and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and just a touch hot, with a bit of blurriness now creeping in and the finish not as long as it once was in the day. This had a beautiful period in the 1990s, but it has succumbed to the long reach of time and is now sinking gently into decline. Drink up. 2012-2016+? **85.**

### **1990 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Pierre Bitouzet**

The vast majority of 1990 white Burgundies I have had in the last year or two have begun to decline, with the best examples- such as this Corton-Charlemagne from Pierre Bitouzet- still very interesting to drink, but time is at hand for this vintage to be finished up in regular-sized formats. The deep-pitched and mature nose on the 1990 Bitouzet is still very fine, offering up scents of backed pears, a touch of pastry cream, almond skins, a lovely touch of nutmeg, orange zest, complex soil tones and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still *à point*, with a good core, sound structure and a long, focused and impressively complex finish. This remains a very impressively complex and classy example of mature Corton-Charlemagne, but the structure here is beginning to get rather fragile and I would not wait a whole lot longer to start consuming bottles of this wine. That said, drinking it now is highly, highly pleasurable! 2013-2018+? **93.**

### **1990 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Latour**

The Louis Latour Corton-Charlemagne is one of the fresher examples of the vintage that I have crossed paths with in the last couple of years and I very much enjoyed this bottle when I last tasted it. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a mature, but still vibrant combination of apple, a touch of honeycomb, superb stony soil tones, incipient notes of corn meal and a nice touch of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, fresh and impressively complex, with fine focus and structural integrity, a good core and lovely length and grip on the *à point* and classy finish. Given that so many 1990 white Burgundies have really started to slip in the last few years, I would not keep this wine around in the cellar too long, but at the present time, it remains a lovely example of the vintage and is drinking very well. 2011-2018+? **91.**

### **1989 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Jadot**

It is funny, but back when the two vintages were young, I would have never imagined that the 1989 white Burgundies would outlast the 1989s, but this is exactly what has happened! The 1989 Jadot Corton-Charlemagne probably had part of its malolactic fermentation blocked to preserve acidity and the wine has aged beautifully. It is a far lighter color than the 1990 Pierre Bitouzet that was served alongside of it and offers up an outstanding bouquet of pear, fresh pineapple, chalky soil tones, a touch of flintiness, citrus zest and a very stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and complex, with excellent mid-palate stuffing, crisp acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long, ripe, but fresh as a daisy finish. Lovely juice that shows no signs of the ripeness of the 1989 vintage and plenty of future life still ahead of it. 2013-2035+. **92.**

### **1986 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Latour**

The 1986 Louis Latour Corton-Charlemagne is a beautiful example of the vintage and shows virtually no signs of the botrytis that affects so many wines from this year. I do not know if the domaine selected out botrytized grapes in 1986, or their parcels on the hill of Corton were not as affected as other areas of the region, but there is only the very faintest tropical edge to this wine from noble rot. Like all of the mature Latour Corton Charlies, the 1986 improved dramatically with time in the glass and eventually yielded up a fine bouquet of apple, tangerine, a touch of almond skin, beautifully complex, chalky soil tones, a touch of orange zest and a judicious base of toasty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very pure for a 1986, with a lovely core of fruit, bright acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very long and *à point* finish. A lovely bottle with lots of life still ahead of it. 2013-2030. **93.**

### **1985 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Latour**

The 1985 Louis Latour Corton Charlie is even a tad finer than the 1986 it was paired up with at our tasting, wafting from the glass in a very refined aromatic mélange of pear, apple, fresh almonds, a touch of creosote, candied lemon peel, a superb base of stony soil tones and just a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, outstanding focus and balance and simply stunning length and grip on the crisp and very poised finish. This does not have a ton of acidity remaining, but it is one of those mature white Burgundies that is so impeccably balanced that it should continue to cruise along at its zenith for many, many more years to come. Interestingly, this wine still had stamped on the cork “Domaine Grancey” (which was not to be found on any of the wines from 1986 forward from Latour) and may indicate that this was all from Latour’s own vineyards back in the day. A beautiful wine. 2013-2030. **94.**

### **1985 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Georges Roumier**

The 1985 Corton-Charlemagne from Christophe Roumier is fully mature, but continues to drink very well and is not yet anywhere near the far side of its plateau of peak drinkability. The complex bouquet offers up scents of fresh apricot, pear, lovely, white soil tones, dried flowers, citrus peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and completely mature and tertiary, with sound acids, lovely purity and very good length and grip on the complex finish. This was one of Christophe's earliest vintages of Corton Charlie, and the wine has retained a broad-shouldered personality that does not quite have the same degree of elegance of more recent vintages of this wine, but the 1985 is still a very tasty bottle for current consumption. 2012-2018. **88.**

### **1982 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray**

The 1982 Bonneau du Martray Corton-Charlemagne is an excellent wine at its apogee of peak drinkability. The deep, complex and utterly classic nose wafts from the glass in a combo of apple, pear, butter, lemon chiffon, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, fresh and complex, with perfect maturity, lovely mid-palate depth and simply superb length and grip on the *à point*, but still very vibrant finish. A beautifully elegant and refined vintage for this beautiful wine. 2011-2025+. **94.**

### **1979 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Latour**

The 1979 Louis Latour Corton-Charlemagne proudly declares on the label that this wine is from the "Ancien Domaine des Comtes de Grancey", and this is the last vintage where I can recall this appendage appearing on the Latour label. The 1979s are still one of the reference point mature white Burgundy vintages for me and the Latour Corton-Charlemagne is absolutely brilliant. The deep, complex and still quite vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a classic blend of pear, apple, *crème patissière*, a touch of white chocolate, spring flowers, a stunningly complex base of chalky soil tones, hints of nutmeg, candied orange peel and a delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with great complexity and vibrancy, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the *à point* and wonderfully filigreed finish. The 1979 Louis Latour Corton-Charlemagne is actually younger in its evolution than either of the fine 1985 or 1986 versions and so beautifully balanced that it should continue to cruise along beautifully for many more years to come! 2013-2030+. **96.**

### ***Bourgogne and Côte de Beaune Blanc***

#### **2010 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Guy Roulot**

I love the way the Roulot Bourgogne Blanc starts to put on weight as it has a chance to settle into the bottle, and the 2010 was showing lovely character in November of 2012. The bouquet is a lovely blend of apple, lime, nutskins, complex minerality and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and racy, with a solid core, lovely detail and sneaky length and grip on the focused finish. A lovely example. 2013-2020. **88.**

#### **2010 Bourgogne "les Champlains" Blanc- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils**

The 2010 Champlains from Patrick Bize is a lovely wine that shows off the depth and soil signature of a wine far above its station! The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a complex combo of apple, pink grapefruit, "Bize wax", lemon oil, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and a gentle topnote of savory elements. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully complex, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. I use to think that Jean-François Coche made the greatest Bourgogne



Blanc, but I might have to switch my allegiance to Arnaud Ente and Patrick Bize these days! 2014-2030+. **90+**.

**2009 Côte de Beaune Blanc- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I really enjoy the Côte de Beaune Blanc bottling from Joseph Drouhin, as I find it one of the best white Burgundy values out there in the market today and a wine that I actually enjoy drinking in its relative youth. The 2009 is a lovely wine, offering up a very fresh and pure bouquet of apples, lemon custard, acacia blossoms, chalky soil tones and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, bright and succulent, with just a touch of the vintage's "heaviness" weighing down the backend, but with good framing acids to carry the wine for the near-term. This is a very tasty bottle for present consumption, but I would not let it go too long in the cellar, as it is a vintage made to be drunk young. 2013-2016. **88**.

**2002 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Guy Roulot**

This was a real eye-opener when Jean-Marc Roulot pulled this bottle out of the cellar for a blind tasting on this past visit, as I had this wine in my own cellar and drank it up far too early on in its evolution! The mature nose offers up a stylish combo of apple, tangerine, a touch of nuttiness, white flowers, pears and a whisper of iodine. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and complex, with sound framing acids, lovely focus and impressive complexity and grip on the long and succulent finish. Fine, fine juice for Bourgogne! 2012-2016+. **89**.





### ***Beaune and Savigny-lès-Beaune***

#### **2009 Beaune “Clos des Mouches” Blanc- Maison Joseph Drouhin (half bottle)**

The 2009 Clos des Mouches Blanc took a bit of time to blossom in the glass, as it started out life a bit blowsy and one-dimensional, but came around nicely with air. The nose eventually offers up a complex and quite ripe mélange of pear, apple, acacia blossoms, a touch of pastry cream, incipient notes of corn meal and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly fruit-driven for a young Clos des Mouches (which so often can show that lovely herbal streak in its youth), with a voluptuous core of fruit, sound framing acids, good focus and grip and a long, slightly heady finish. The balance here is very good, but one wonders if the ripeness here will eventually consume the wine, or will the wine consume the ripeness and more of the classic Clos des Mouches *terroir* will emerge and share equal billing with the plush fruit of the 2009 vintage? It is a very good 2009, but I have a pretty strong preference for the stylistic bent of the 2008 Clos des Mouches Blanc. 2012-2025+? **91**.

#### **2008 Beaune “Clos des Mouches” Blanc- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

In a perfect world, I would never consider opening a bottle of Clos des Mouches out of my cellar at age four, but given how things go these days, I figured this would be a lovely bottle to accompany bouillabaisse over the Christmas season. The wine is still young, but blossoming very well indeed and offers up a complex bouquet of pear, apple, a touch of honeycomb, orange zest, chalky soil tones, white flowers and a refined base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and opening nicely, with fine complexity and focus, a very good core of fruit, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the elegant and very soil-driven finish. An absolute classic vintage of Clos des Mouches Blanc. 2012-2025+. **93+**.

#### **2006 Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils**

2006 is far from my favorite recent white Burgundy vintage, but the '06 Savigny Blanc from Patrick Bize was drinking beautifully this past year, offering up a deep, complex and quite vibrant nose of apple, tangerine, salty soil tones, a touch of pastry cream and an exotic topnote of sweet, browned butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and impressively pure, with lovely focus and grip, bright acids and no signs of the strident overripeness that plagues so many 2006 whites. Good juice that seems poised to age gracefully for several more years. 2012-2020? **91**.

#### **2006 Beaune “les Aigrots” Blanc- Domaine Michel Lafarge**

The 2006 les Aigrots Blanc from Domaine Lafarge is a ripe and pretty typical example of a successful 2006 white Burgundy, with a touch of the tropics to its aromatic and flavor profile and just a whisper of backend heat. The nose is a blend of apple, tangerine, honeycomb, candied lemon peel and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite ripe, with a good core, very good acidity for the vintage and sneaky length and grip on the ripe finish that betrays just a touch of uncovered alcohol at the close. Not bad, but not a great vintage for this lovely bottling. 2012-2020. **87**.

#### **2005 Beaune “Clos des Mouches” Blanc- Domaine Yves Darviot**

I am deeply indebted to Terry Leighton of Kalin Cellars for both telling me about the wines of the now-retired Monsieur Darviot, and then handing off a bottle each of his 2005 rouge and blanc bottlings from the Clos des Mouches to sample. I tucked the red in the cellar, as I am not crazy enough to be opening 2005 reds right now (no matter how curious I might be!), but the

2005 white is an absolutely stellar bottle of wine, soaring from the glass in a deep and complex nose of pear, lemon, a marvelous base of salty soil tones, gentle herbal nuances (the calling card of young Clos des Mouches!), bee pollen and a touch of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very classy, with grand cru weight and complexity (another Clos des Mouches calling card), excellent acidity and superb focus and grip on the very long and youthful finish. Just a brilliant bottle of young white Burgundy! 2012-2035. **94+**.

**2004 Beaune “Clos des Mouches” Blanc- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

I have already had more than a few premoxed examples from the 2004 vintage, but this bottle of the Clos des Mouches was absolutely pristine and drinking splendidly. The deep, complex and *à point* nose delivers a lovely constellation of buttered pears, apples, orange peel, a touch of the Mouches herbal nuances, a beautiful base of soil and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and complex, with lovely mid-palate depth, fine focus and superb length and grip on the crisp and zesty finish. A beautiful bottle in full bloom. 2013-2020+. **93**.

**2004 Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc- Domaine Jean-Marc et Hugues Pavelot**

The 2004 Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc from Domaine Pavelot is a lovely wine that I have had the pleasure to drink on six or seven occasions over the last couple of years, and it shows no signs of imminent decline anytime soon. The deep and complex nose is a blend of apple, gentle herbal tones, citrus peel, wet stones, lime blossoms and just a touch of new oak in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and complex, with a good core, lovely focus and excellent length and grip on the vibrant finish. This is not the most complex white Burgundy in the world- it is a village wine after all- but it supplies plenty of depth and personality in its style. Fine juice. 2012-2020. **89**.

**2002 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Vergelesses” Blanc- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils**

Patrick Bize’s 2002 aux Vergelesses Blanc is drinking beautifully and offers up a lovely aromatic constellation of fresh pears, lemon, a gentle touch of honeycomb, beeswax (spelled Bize wax at this address ☺), a fine base of chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and complex, with a bright and bouncy personality, fine complexity and focus, very fine acidity and lovely length and grip on the pure and classy finish. The white wines from this commune have been underrated for decades, but with the advent of global warming, savvy white Burgundy lovers would be very well-served to start paying more attention to these beautiful and very fairly-priced beauties. 2011-2017. **91**.

**2000 Beaune “Clos des Mouches” Blanc- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

This was a very pleasant surprise, as at age eleven this bottle was as fresh, vibrant and stunning as one might have expected back in the days before premox ever reigned in white Burgundy land, and the wine was just coming into its marvelous plateau of peak drinkability. The fantastic nose soars from the glass in a classic combination of lemon oil, pears, chalky soil tones, orange blossoms, smoky overtones and a very stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and zesty, with superb complexity, excellent purity and mid-palate intensity, crisp acids and excellent grip and bounce on the very long and classic finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Clos des Mouches Blanc at its zenith. 2011-2025. **93**.

## **Meursault**

### **2010 Meursault “Tillets”- Domaine Guy Roulot (375 ml.)**

The 2010 Tillets from Domaine Roulot is a deep and utterly classic example of this lovely wine, soaring from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, hazelnuts, iodine, glorious minerality and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with a fine core of fruit, superb cut and grip, outstanding focus and a very, very long, well-balanced and zesty finish. The low yields of 2010 have really given the Roulot *lieux à dits* bottlings great intensity of flavor in this vintage! A beautiful wine! 2015-2035+. **93.**

### **2010 Meursault “Poruzots”- Domaine Guy Roulot**

The 2010 Roulot Poruzots is a lovely bottle in the making, but 2011 will be remembered as the vintage where this premier cru skyrocketed up in quality here with the addition of the new parcel of old vines! The bouquet is a deep and very elegant expression of its *terroir*, delivering scents of apple, pear, orange zest, almonds, a pretty base of soil, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite generous in its fruit composition on the attack, with some fashionably late-arriving minerality on the backend adding cut and grip on the long finish. Perhaps this more forward impression is just a stage the wine is going through and it will firm up a bit more with further bottle age, but right now, I have a very slight preference for the laser-like 2010 Tillets over the Poruzots *chez* Roulot. 2017-2035+. **92+.**

### **2008 Meursault “Tessons”- Domaine Guy Roulot**

I was a bit torn on whether or not to list the 2008 Roulot Tessons in the prematurely oxidized camp, as this bottle is clearly starting to show the first vestiges of premoxy in its softening grip and length on the backend. The nose is really wide open and lovely, soaring from the glass in a mélange of pear, apple, hazelnut, beautiful soil tones, almond blossoms and just a touch of vanillin oak. However, on the palate, this full-bodied wine is really in need of immediate attention (or at least this bottle!), with its bright acids starting to become “framing acids” and the finish starting to noticeably drop in grip. This is still a lovely drink for the immediate future, but this bottle is clearly showing the very first signs of premoxy. 2013-2015+? **90.**

### **2007 Meursault “les Chevaliers”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet**

I have been remiss in not consistently covering the wines from Monsieur Fichet, as every time I cross paths with a bottle, I am very impressed with both the style and the quality. The 2007 Chevaliers is a very fine wine, offering a complex bouquet of apple, passion fruit, a touch of iodine, superb, chalky minerality and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and racy, with superb focus, well-integrated acids, lovely mid-palate depth and very fine length and grip on the classy finish. A superb *lieu à dit* bottling of Meursault. 2012-2025. **92.**

### **2007 Meursault “Luchets”- Domaine Guy Roulot**

The 2007 Domaine Roulot Luchets is a lovely example of the vintage that is still in need of another year or two in the cellar to really allow its secondary layers of complexity to fully emerge, but it is a very tasty glass of wine in its youthful state. The very pretty nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, lime, chalky soil tones, spring flowers, almonds and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite racy in personality, with a good, solid core, lovely focus and cut, fine brightness and a long, well-balanced and still slightly youthful finish. Try to give this another year's worth of bottle age. 2014-2035. **92.**

### **2007 Meursault “Meix Chavaux”- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The 2007 Meix Chavaux from Gilles Lafouge is a beautiful bottle of wine that is very reminiscent of the same cru from Domaine Roulot. The deep, pure and vibrant bouquet offers up a superb combination of lemon, pink grapefruit, a great base of complex, chalky minerality, a touch of nuttiness and a topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and intensely flavored, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent focus and grip, racy acids and outstanding length and grip on the young and very pure finish. Gilles Lafouge is rightly known as one of the finest red wine makers on the insider’s short list of great value producers, but his white wines are every bit as stunning as his reds and equally superb values. Great juice! 2012-2025+. **92.**

### **2003 Meursault “Charmes”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 2003 Charmes from Louis Jadot was surprisingly tasty when I last crossed paths with it in November of 2012. This is far from my favorite vintage in Burgundy, but this wine is really not too bad, wafting from the glass in a pretty and quite fresh combination of apple, pear, marzipan, hazelnuts, chalky soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soft structurally, but also balanced and quite clearly Meursault “Charmes”, with surprisingly good length and grip on the bright and gentle finish. It is time to drink this wine up, but there is a fair bit of pleasure here today! 2012-2015. **85.**

### **2002 Meursault- Domaine Coche-Dury**

I am not sure which *lieu à dit* this bottling hails from, but my educated guess would be that this is also a bottling from Vireuils *Dessus*. The deep, complex and wide open nose offers up a lovely blend of apple, iodine, passion fruit, a touch of almond skin, chalky soil tones and plenty of toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a very long, ripe and classy finish. As this wine sat in the glass, it started to show just a touch of backend heat, but it is only a whisper and the wine is certainly not “hot” in any real sense of the term. But, given this bit of alcohol showing through, I would be inclined to drink this wine sooner, rather than later, just to catch it at this lovely arc. 2011-2020+? **92.**

### **2001 Meursault- Domaine Coche-Dury**

This particular bottling hailed from the domaine’s own parcel of vines in the *lieu à dit* of Vireuils (though it does not appear on the label). This was a very fresh and pure bottle, offering up a deep and classic bouquet of apple, tangerine, iodine, gentle nuttiness, lovely minerality and a fine base of toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very minerally in personality, with snappy acids, excellent focus and grip and a very long, pure and complex finish. Fine juice. 2011-2025+. **93.**

### **2000 Meursault “Tessons”- Domaine Guy Roulot**

Having sold my 2000 Guy Roulot wines back in the early days of premo (after my ‘96s started to collapse), I was very happy to have the good fortune to revisit one of the wines from this vintage that was in perfect shape! The deep, complex and very lovely nose offers up a superb combination of apple, passion fruit, pear, almonds, a beautifully complex base of minerality, almond blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure and stylish, with outstanding complexity, great freshness and bounce, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and quite soil-driven finish. This is a quintessentially elegant and transparent example of Meursault at its apogee! 2012-2018+. **92.**

### **1990 Meursault “Perrières”- Domaine Robert Ampeau**

I have had some lovely examples of Perrières over the years from Domaine Ampeau, but the 1990 is rather typical of its vintage today, and is getting a bit oxidative on the palate. The bouquet is a blend of apple, tangerine, chalky soil tones, citrus zest, beeswax and a gentle touch of nuttiness in the upper register. In the mouth the wine is full-bodied, deep and slightly oxidative on the attack, with solid depth and a bit of uncovered heat poking out on the crisp and moderately complex finish. Perhaps this was not the best vintage of white Burgundy to bury in the Ampeau cellars for as long as it was there prior to release, but given how the vintage looked out of the blocks, its fairly early demise is a bit of a surprise to all concerned. I should not that I last drank this wine a couple of years ago, when it still seemed young and a bit blocked by its sulfur, with more of a four-square personality than one expects from Perrières, so perhaps this most recent bottle was a bit more advanced (though both wines scored exactly the same for different reasons). This is not great shakes, but it is okay for drinking over the next several years. 2012-2025. **86.**

### **1989 Meursault “Perrières”- Domaine Coche-Dury**

The 1989 Coche Meursault “Perrières” is an absolutely brilliant wine at its peak of maturity. The deep and very complex nose wafts from the glass in a refined constellation of pink grapefruit, tangerine, a gentle touch of almond, iodine, brilliantly complex minerality and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with a still quite primary personality, a rock solid core, great focus and balance and simply stunning length and grip on the vibrant and nascently complex finish. This is a classic vintage of Coche Perrières and there is no rush to be drinking it now! One of the youngest 1989 white Burgundies I have tasted in quite a while! 2011-2030. **95.**

### **1986 Meursault “Charmes”- Domaine François Jobard**

The 1986 white Burgundies had a glorious youth, when the botrytis in the vintage seemed to just elevate the aromatics a touch and concentrate the acidities of so many of the wines, but as time has marched on, I have found that the noble rot element in the wines has gotten more and more obtrusive and I like the vintage less and less as a result. The '86 Jobard Charmes is really a pretty good example of the vintage in this advanced state of botrytis, as it continues to offer up a pretty lovely bouquet of apples, pears, hazelnuts, chalky minerality and a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is complex, deep and full-bodied, with a plump core of fruit and a fairly short finish that is beginning to lose both precision and grip. This is getting to the end of the line, but it has maintained its freshness quite well and has not descended into the fruit salad side of the botrytized 1986 vintage. Drink up. 2011-2015+? **87.**

### **1969 Meursault “Charmes”- Maison Leroy**

Man, this wine sucked! If this is really Charmes from 1969, then it has done a remarkable job of keeping both evolutionary complexity and any shred of Meursault character out of the equation. The boring nose is still quite adolescent from its huge blast of SO<sub>2</sub>, but eventually offers up notes of green fruit, beeswax, chalky soil, grassiness and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and amazingly bland and simple, with no Meursault signature, sound, framing acids and a modest, four-square finish. This tastes an awful lot to me like middle-aged Bourgogne Blanc from Leroy, and I do not know who might be the culprit here, but, in my opinion, this really does not seem even remotely related to 1969 Meursault “Charmes”. Given that we live in an age of so many fake wines from high profile producers such as Madame Leroy, it is pretty hard to believe that this is really a 1969 Charmes. 2012-2025+. **78.**



*Spring arriving in the vineyards of Puligny-Montrachet.*

### ***Puligny-Montrachet***

#### **2010 Puligny-Montrachet “Clos du Caillerets”- Domaine des Lambrays**

The 2010 Clos du Caillerets from Domaine des Lambrays is a beautiful bottle in the making, soaring from the glass in a focused blend of white peach, apple, orange zest, complex minerality, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with stunning focus and balance, beautiful, nascent complexity, snappy acids and outstanding grip on the very, very long and vibrant finish. In a perfect world, this flawless gem would last forty years in the bottle, but in our day and age (lived currently under the long shadow of premo), I might be tempted to start opening bottles of this brilliant wine in another couple of years, though it should have no trouble lasting! This wine is every bit as brilliant out of bottle as it was out of cask. 2015-2035+? **94+**.

#### **2009 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Louis Carillon**

I had a chance to taste the entire range of 2009s from Jacques Carillon recently, and was very impressed with how fresh and vibrant they have remained in this plump white Burgundy vintage. The 2009 Puligny AC offers up a very pretty nose of apple, beeswax, stony minerality, peach, a touch of smokiness and a very delicate touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and nicely balanced, with solid depth, nice framing acids and very good length and grip on the fairly open finish. This will be at its best early on in its life cycle. 2012-2025. **89+**.

### **2009 Puligny-Montrachet “Champ Canet”- Domaine Louis Carillon**

The 2009 Carillon Champ Canet is a very pretty wine on both the nose and palate, with the generosity of the vintage not taking any elegance away. The stylish and still quite primary bouquet offers up a blend of lemon, white peach, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and quite round on the attack, with plenty of mid-palate concentration, fine focus and a very long, primary and quite vibrant finish. This is likely to be a relatively fruit-driven example of Champ Canet over the course of its life, but I really like its shape and bounce in its youth. 2014-2035. **91+**.

### **2009 Puligny-Montrachet “Combettes”- Domaine Louis Carillon**

This was the last vintage of Combettes produced by the domaine before it was split by the two Carillon brothers, and it is a very pretty final Combettes to wear the Louis Carillon label. The stylish bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, just a touch of grapefruit zest, beeswax, chalk and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely focused, without quite the mid-palate depth as the Champ Canet (these are younger vines after all), but good cut, focus and nascent complexity on the long and classy finish. Good juice. 2013-2025+. **90+**.

### **2009 Puligny-Montrachet “Perrières”- Domaine Louis Carillon**

The 2009 Puligny-Montrachet “Perrières” from Domaine Louis Carillon reminds me quite a bit of the fine 1999 in its youth- a wine I drank quite a bit of early on in its evolution and enjoyed immensely. The 2009 is a very fine example of the vintage, delivering scents of apple, white peach, orange zest, powdered stone, vanillin oak and a touch of fresh nutmeg in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite accessible out of the blocks, with the acids serving more to frame the wine than to give it real cut. The finish is very long and nicely focused, with the complexity of the wine already emerging nicely on the backend and the wine drinking quite well in its youth. Good juice, but I would anticipate that this will be at its best over the first decade of its life. 2013-2025+. **92.**

### **2009 Puligny-Montrachet “Referts”- Domaine Louis Carillon**

The old vines in the Carillon parcel of Referts have really produced a lovely version in 2009, as the wine jumps from the glass in a primary combo of lemon zest, apple, peach, very complex minerality and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very racy for an '09, with a rock solid core, fine focus and grip and a very long, youthful finish that closes with an overt note of grapefruit. Fine wine in the making that I would give at least another year or two to allow its secondary layers to emerge. 2014-2035. **92+**.

### **2009 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Louis Carillon**

The 2009 Bienvenues from Monsieur Carillon is a brilliant example of the vintage and one of my favorite whites produced in this year. The deep, pure and utterly beautiful nose offers up a constellation of apple, pear, lemon oil, spring flowers, gloriously pure, chalky soil tones (I know, even though Bienvenues is almost pure clay!), a touch of beeswax, orange zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and properly reserved on the attack, with a great core, superb elegance and outstanding cut and grip on the focused, youthfully complex and very, very long finish. A great wine in the making. 2017-2040. **95+**.

### **2008 Puligny-Montrachet “Perrières”- Domaine Louis Carillon**

The 2008 Puligny-Montrachet “Perrières” from Domaine Louis Carillon is an absolutely stellar wine in the making, soaring from the glass in a youthful blend of apples, oranges, stony minerality, lemon zest, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-



bodied complex and rock solid at the core, with snappy acids, laser-like focus and superb length and grip on the young and oh, so promising finish. This is a classic young example of Perrières from the Carillon family, and it really deserves a couple more years to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2016-2040. **93+**.

**2008 Puligny-Montrachet “Referts”- Domaine Louis Carillon**

The 2008 Referts from Domaine Carillon is less overtly mineral in personality than the Perrières from this vintage, but it too is still a very young wine and in need of a bit more bottle age to start to show its full personality. The deep, young and very classy nose delivers a tightly-knit mix of apple, pear, a touch of tangerine, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, hints of the citrus zest to come and a lovely base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a great core of pure fruit, outstanding focus and balance, seamless, brisk acids and a lovely burst of minerality adding gravitas to the very long and stunning finish. A brilliant Referts in the making! 2017-2040. **94**.

**2002 Montrachet- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils**

Domaine Simon Bize et Fils only produced a bottling of le Montrachet in the single vintage of 2002, as this opportunity evaporated after this vintage. Patrick Bize kindly opened this superb bottle for me on one of my recent visits to the domaine and I was completely at a loss to guess the wine blind, as I had no idea prior to tasting this wine that there had ever been a Simon Bize version of Montrachet. The wine offers up a deep and classic nose of apple, pear, beeswax, a beautiful base of chalk and clay soil tones, a touch of butter and a lovely framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, lovely acids, excellent focus and balance and a very, very long, bright and classy finish. As one would expect from Patrick Bize, a simply superb example of Montrachet. 2011-2025. **94**.

**2001 Puligny-Montrachet “les Truffières”- Domaine Bernard Morey (magnum)**

2001 was a vintage that I liked very well out of the blocks, but the wines seemed likely to be at their best early on (not a really bad thing in an era of premox!), as they were pretty gently structured and mine were all drunk up fairly early on. Consequently, I was mildly surprised and very happy to see how nicely this magnum from Bernard Morey was drinking a few months ago, offering up a lovely bouquet of lemon zest, apple, lime oil, a touch of corn meal, complex soil tones and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very fresh for the vintage, with sound acids, lovely focus and very good length and grip on the finish. There is just a whisper of phenolic bitterness poking out at the tail end of the finish, but no signs of premox in this particular magnum, and all in all, this is a lovely drink for current consumption. 2012-2020. **91**.

**1999 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

The 1999 Bâtard-Montrachet from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti is holding up nicely, with no overt signs of premox, but it was harvested on the late side (as DRC’s went with their white wines) and I am not sure how efficacious of a strategy this was in the 1999 vintage. The very ripe nose offers up scents of honeycomb, orange peel, almonds, a lovely base of soil, a touch of anise and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very mature, with fairly soft acids and good focus and balance on the long and complex finish. There is a nice sense of lift on the backend that one would not expect from the almost late-harvest personality of the wine on both the nose and palate, and if premox stays away, this wine

will probably continue to age gracefully for another dozen years or so. It is a good wine, but not a great wine. 2012-2025. **88.**

**1997 Montrachet- Marquis de Laguiche (Maison Joseph Drouhin)**

Even though the 1997 vintage is right in the heart of the premox years, this particular bottle of the Drouhin Montrachet from the Laguiche parcels was showing utterly fresh and drinking very well indeed when sampled in the spring of 2012. The deep, pure and complex nose wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, toasted coconut, a touch of pineapple, buttery oak, chalky soil tones and a bit of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite fresh, with a lovely core of fruit, fine complexity, bright acids and a very long, open and *à point* finish. Fine juice and a total surprise that premox has not shown its unwanted visage here! 2012-2025. **91.**

**1994 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Leflaive**

In total contrast to the relatively disappointing 1993 Leflaive Pucelles (please see below), I did not have high expectations for the 1994 Bâtard from the domaine, but a friend who now runs a fine little wine bar in the center of Beaune told me that this wine was a great surprise and offered to bring a bottle by to share while I was staying in Beaune last summer. He was absolutely right, as the wine is fresh, complex and very classy, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, oranges, a touch of pineapple, honeycomb, salty soil tones and a delicate touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and beautifully focused, with excellent complexity, with good, but not great depth at the core, lovely balance, sound framing acids and impressive length and grip on the classy finish. I would never have expected a 1994 white Burgundy to be drinking so well at age seventeen! 2011-2017+? **93.**

**1993 Puligny-Montrachet “Folatières”- Domaine Etienne Sauzet**

The 1993 Folatières from Gérard Boudot has aged very gracefully and now offers up a fully *à point* bouquet of pear, sweet corn, a touch of mint leaf, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wide open, with still good framing acidity, lovely focus and good length and grip on the elegant and laid back finish. This will not last a whole lot longer, but it has retained a nice spine of acidity to keep it fresh and focused for the foreseeable future. A nice bottle at a very good place in its evolution. 2010-2018+. **91.**

**1993 Puligny-Montrachet “les Pucelles”- Domaine Leflaive**

I really had high expectations for this bottle, but it did not show particularly well and seemed to have some locked in reduction that kept the wine from really performing well. The very pretty nose is a blend of apple, pear, a touch of creosote (from the reduction?), chalky soil tones and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and a bit angular in personality, with good, but not great depth or length, and a bit of reductive “toastiness” poking out on the finish. This is okay, but I was expecting brilliance, based on the confluence of the vintage and the cuvée. 2011-2020. **87.**

**1993 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Etienne Sauzet**

The 1993 Bâtard-Montrachet from Domaine Etienne Sauzet is excellent, with both the nose and the palate now at their apogees, but with fine raciness and cut still giving the wine plenty of future. The deep and very classy bouquet delivers a blend of apple, pear, iodine, a great base of minerality (particularly for Bâtard- got to love those racy vintages!), smoke, incipient notes of corn meal and a judicious framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely chiseled, with a superb core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, bright acids

and lovely balance on the long, complex and zesty finish. This is really a lovely, fully mature bottle of Bâtard with plenty of life still in it. 2009-2025. **93+**.

**1993 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Ramonet**

I have a pretty strong preference for the 1993 wines from Domaine Ramonet over their 1992s, and the '93 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet is as classic in the making. The deep, pure and stunning nose soars from the glass in a vibrant combination of pear, lemon, a touch of sweet corn, faint hints of mint, spring flowers, a beautiful base of chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, fresh and focused, with a rock solid core of fruit, great cut and grip and a very long, complex and classy finish that closes with a lovely note of lemon zest. Fine juice with years of life ahead of it. 2012-2025+. **94**.

**1992 Puligny-Montrachet “Referts”- Domaine Etienne Sauzet**

The 1992 Referts from Domaine Sauzet is fully mature, but holding on nicely and shows no signs of imminent decline. The deep and complex nose offers up a tertiary mélange of apple, pear, plenty of nutty overtones, wheat toast, salty soil tones and just a whiff of summer truffle in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and classy, with good complexity, sound mid-palate depth and sneaky length and grip on the wide open and juicy finish. A lovely bottle of fully mature premier cru, but with still a few more years of vibrant drinking in it. 2010-2015+. **91**.

**1991 Montrachet- Marquis de Laguiche (Maison Joseph Drouhin)**

I have had a few very pleasant surprises with 1991 white Burgundies over the last year or two and the 1991 Laguiche Montrachet is another surprisingly good glass of wine at age twenty. The lovely nose offers up a mature blend of tangerine, pear, *crème patissière*, chalky and complex soil tones, orange peel and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still impressively fresh on the attack, with a solid core, lovely complexity and the first signs poking out on the backend that the wine is starting to get towards the back end of its plateau of maturity, as there is just a bit of uncovered heat. But the wine is still bright and has not yet begun to overtly fray in terms of balance, so I suspect that there are still several years of good drinking to be had here. Given how soft the 1991 whites were out of the blocks, these past few positive experiences with the vintage have been very pleasant surprises. 2011-2020. **87**.

**1990 Puligny-Montrachet “les Combettes”- Nicolas Potel**

According to the source of this bottle, this wine is a relatively recent release from Monsieur Potel, and I am guessing that he may have sourced it from the Ampeau cellars. I would have been happy to like it better, but it was not particularly good. The nose offers up an oddly “fishy” streak in its mélange of tangerine, sea urchin, salty soil tones, grapefruit peel and grassiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite lively for a 1990 white Burgundy (most of the wines from this vintage have been fading for a few years), but good depth and length, but a distinctly bitter note marring the backend. I am not in love with the balance of this wine either, and I would be happy not to cross paths with it again in the future, despite the fact that it is not in danger of fading anytime soon. Disappointing. 2012-2020+. **83**.

**1990 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Jean-Marc Boillot**

Jean-Marc Boillot’s style always struck me as a bit tropical and straightforward back in this era, and this is certainly in evidence in the 1990 Bâtard-Montrachet, which delivers a bouquet of apple, pineapple, peach stone, corn meal and buttery new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, fat and rather fruit-driven in personality, with still sound framing acids and a long, oily and powerful finish. This is a bit blowsy in style (I recall it being exactly the same when it

was released!), with the power of Bâtard-Montrachet, but not the seriousness of *terroir* of the best examples. It is still alive and kicking, but not a great wine. 2009-2020. **86.**

**1989 Montrachet- Domaine Amiot-Bonfils (served from magnum)**

It has never been my impression that Domaine Amiot-Bonfils made particularly long-lived white Burgundies, but this was never an estate that I followed with much vigilance and never cellared any of their wines, so I only have cursory knowledge of their aging capabilities. That said, this was not a bad drink, but hardly a great example of Montrachet, as the wine delivers a fully mature and cuspy nose of pear, orange, butterscotch, leesy tones, a nice touch of soil and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and reasonably complex, with a ripe personality, sound balance and focus and sneaky length and grip on the fully mature finish. This started out in the glass rather four-square and frayed structurally, but with a bit of aeration, it rallied pretty well and became a very serviceable drink. Now, would I have been happy with its showing, given what it sold for back in the day- probably not- but, this is still a fairly good bottle of mature white Burgundy that is not yet close to the end of the line. 2012-2020. **88.**

**1985 Montrachet- Marquis de Laguiche (Maison Joseph Drouhin)**

For a very long time, the 1985 Laguiche Montrachet had been one of my absolute favorite white Burgundies from this lovely vintage. The wine is now beginning to get to the end of its plateau of maturity and is starting to gaze over the edge and contemplate its descent, but it remains a lovely wine in its mature guise and still offers up plenty of pleasure on both the nose and palate. The fully mature bouquet offers up scents of fresh coconut, browned butter, baked pears, chalky soil tones, orange peel and a gentle hint of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and alive with complex and mature flavors. The finish is very long and beautifully balanced, and though the acids now are quite soft, there are no signs of any fraying anywhere on the long and very complex finish. This is a lovely and quite tertiary bottle of old Montrachet, but with every hair still in place and with a sense of style and grace that recalls its greatness at its true apogee- now fully fifteen years ago. 2011-2020. **90.**

**1983 Puligny-Montrachet “les Pucelles”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 1983 Drouhin Pucelles is a lovely old white Burgundy, with its balance and structural integrity still excellent as the wine closes in on its thirtieth birthday. The deep and mature nose offers up a complex combination of oranges, buttered almonds, baked apples, pretty, calcareous soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite mature, with a good core still, sound acids and just a touch of backend bitter orange peel poking out and showing the wine’s advanced age. This will continue to drink at this level for a handful of years to come, but it is probably time to start thinking about drinking it up in regular-sized formats. 2011-2016+. **89.**

**1982 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Leflaive**

The 1982 Bienvenues from Domaine Leflaive is drinking beautifully well at nearly age thirty and shows no signs of slowing down for many decades to come! The deep, pure and absolutely stunning nose offers up scents of peach, lemon curd, a touch of beeswax, gentle hints of iodine, a wonderfully complex base of chalky soil tones and orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and superbly complex, with lovely brightness and delineation, a fine core, still really lovely acidity and excellent focus and grip on the very long, refined and seamless finish. What a great example of the vintage! 2011-2030. **94.**

### **1979 Puligny-Montrachet “les Combettes”- Domaine Robert Ampeau**

As 1979 remains one of my favorite mature vintages of white Burgundy for current consumption, I was hoping for just a touch more from the '79 Ampeau Combettes. The wine is certainly still quite fresh (as are most of the old vintages that emerge from these cellars!), but has it lost a bit of its complexity due to its generous dose of sulfur at bottling? In any case, the bouquet offers up a potpourri of tart orange, a bit of grassiness, corn meal, dried flowers and *terres blanches*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and a bit broad-shouldered structurally, with adequate complexity and a good core, sound acids and a bit of backend heat poking through on the long finish. Just a touch ham-fisted for Combettes, IMO. 2012-2025. **89.**

### **1978 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Ramonet**

The 1978 Bâtard-Montrachet from Domaine Ramonet was once a very fine drink and I can recall bottles of this in the mid-1990s that were outstanding. However, those days are now fully in the rearview mirror and this wine is in decline. The nose is ripe and now seems slightly marked by botrytis, as it offers up scents of pineapple, a touch of marmalade, lovely soil tones, incipient notes of pumpkin and a touch of sweet corn. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and a bit hot, with sound structure still hanging on, but the flavors here now descending into a rather uninteresting and pedestrian hodgepodge of good white Burgundy well past its prime. Drink up. 2011-2015. **83.**

### **1971 Montrachet- Marquis de Laguiche (Maison Joseph Drouhin)**

The 1971 Laguiche Montrachet (last tasted at a Paulée in 2009) was getting to the far end of its plateau at the time that I crossed paths with it, but still retained plenty of interest. The pure and complex nose offers up a mature mélange of pear, almonds, butter, chalky soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and complex, but quite gently structured, with lovely balance keeping it going these days, as its acids are really pretty soft. But, the wine is still long and tasty and would still be good today out of bottle in this delicate style, and no doubt, outstanding out of magnum. 2009-2016+? **88.**

### **1969 Montrachet- Marquis de Laguiche (Maison Joseph Drouhin)**

In contrast to the 1971 Laguiche Montrachet, which is hanging on to the far side of the plateau and is probably only a few years away from sliding off the edge and into decline, the stunning 1969 is drinking brilliantly and shows no signs of slowing down any time soon. This was tasted at that same, memorable Paulée de Beaune in 2009, at which time, this wine was absolutely smoking! The brilliant bouquet offers up a complex and mature blend of pear, honeyed nuts, toasted coconut, oranges, elegant, chalky soil tones and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and absolutely *à point*, with glorious complexity, impeccable focus and balance, lovely grip and a very, very long and classy finish. This is a great bottle of Montrachet that will continue to dazzle for many years to come! 2009-2025. **95.**

### **1969 Montrachet- Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

The 1969 Montrachet from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti is a really lovely bottle of fully mature, but still vibrant grand cru white Burgundy. The deep and very classy bouquet offers up a refined blend of apple, pear, honey, delicate nutty tones, a touch of beeswax and a lovely base of complex soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and completely elegant in personality, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and a very long, complex and zesty finish. This is not quite as powerful as many of the older vintages of DRC Montrachet that I have tasted, and perhaps it will prove to be even longer-lived than some of the more exalted vintages from this era. A superb wine. 2009-2030+. **95.**

### **1957 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Ramonet**

The last Paulée de Beaune that I managed to make it to back in November of 2009 had a number of remarkable old white Burgundies on display, and this note on the '57 Ramonet Bâtard dates from that event. The nose is old and still very lovely, offering up scents of pumpkin, fresh apricot, honey, almonds, leather and a lovely, complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite poised and fresh for its age (fifty-two when it was served!), with a fine core, sound structure and focus and a very long, complex finish. Ironically, it did not have quite the cut and grip on the 1957 Ruchottes from Ramonet served alongside of it (please see below), despite its grand cru pedigree. That said, this was still a lovely old white Burgundy and if one were to cross paths with a well-stored bottle today, it would still be a fine drink. This is far more interesting and sound than the 1978 Ramonet Bâtard! 2009-2020+. **92.**



### ***Chassagne-Montrachet***

#### **2008 Chassagne-Montrachet “Vergers”- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2008 Vergers from Monsieur Niellon is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a deep and complex nose of apple, a touch of pineapple, lovely minerality, citrus blossoms and a stylish base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and complex, with good, but not great depth at the core (these are still pretty young vines), bright acids and very fine length and grip on the complex finish. Good juice that will drink well from an early age. 2012-2020+. **92.**

**1993 Chassagne-Montrachet “Caillerets”- Domaine Jean-Marc Morey (magnum)**

This note dates back to the end of 2009, but somehow I overlooked it in the last big feature on white Burgundy, so I have printed it here, as the wine should still be lovely out of magnum. The nose is deep, complex and nicely detailed, offering up scents of lemon, tart apple, a touch of leanness, lovely, chalky minerality, and a bit of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and still retains the great energy of the vintage, with a good core, bright acids and lovely cut and grip on the long and mineral finish. This is a lovely wine that was actually still a tad on the young side in 2009 out of magnum, but should be wide open today! 2009-2025. **92+**.

**1993 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeots”- Marquis de Laguiche (Joseph Drouhin)**

I had hoped that this wine would still be young and racy, but this particular bottle was a bit more mature than my expectations. I had sourced the bottle from auction, and though it looked great, it is possible that it was stored at a slightly warmer than ideal temperature somewhere along the way. In any case, this bottle offered up a complex and tertiary nose of apple, oranges, chalky soil tones, butter, hints of butterscotch and peach pit and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still retaining good acids, with fine focus and mid-palate concentration, quite mature flavors and good length on the gently fraying finish. There is not the same cut and grip one finds in most 1993 premier crus these days, but this may simply be a reflection of this particular bottle! 2012-2020. **88+?**

**1992 Chassagne-Montrachet “Ruchottes”- Domaine Ramonet**

The 1992 Ramonet Ruchottes is a good bottle that has now reached its apogee, but it seems a touch four-square in personality and not quite in the league with the Ruchottes produced here in the '93 or '90 vintages. The bouquet is a fairly complex and still youthful blend of apple, beeswax, peppermint, chalky soil tones, a touch of polenta and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and reasonably complex, with a slightly linear aspect, good mid-palate intensity, bright acids and good length and grip on the fresh, but surprisingly simple finish. A very good, but not a great wine and not really up to the level one usually expects from the Ruchottes bottling *chez* Ramonet. 2011-2030. **90**.

**1988 Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard**

This bottle was very generously given to me a year or so ago by Richard Fontaine, when I asked him how his 1988s were holding up! He replied that he had not drunk any for a long time and not to expect too much of this bottle, but having great love for this vintage of white Burgundy, I suspected that the wine was going to be superb and that Monsieur Fontaine was being a bit overly cautious about its potential! As it turned out, I had a chance to tuck this wine away in a cellar in Burgundy and share this gorgeous and *à point* bottle with the Mugneret family at a dinner and I was delighted that it showed magically. The stunning and fully mature nose soars from the glass in a constellation of lemon, salty soil tones, ripe apples, a touch of fresh pineapple, gentle notes of butter and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and at its absolute zenith, with a great core, beautiful complexity and outstanding length and grip on the pure, focused and utterly poised finish. I love good Criots, and this is an utterly superb example with plenty of life still ahead of it! 2012-2025+. **94**.



### **1983 Chassagne-Montrachet “Grands Ruchottes”- Domaine Paul Pillot (magnum)**

The 1983 Chassagne-Montrachet “Grands Ruchottes” from Domaine Paul Pillot is already getting pretty long in the tooth- even in magnum. The very mature bouquet offers up an amalgam of orange, tea leaves, coffee, a bit of soil and a topnote of honey. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and much more lively in the mouth than the deep-pitched nose suggested, with a good core, some nice framing acids and pretty good length and grip on the chunky and four-square finish. This was probably never a great wine, and while it has held on admirably over nearly thirty years, it is still not a particularly special glass of Chassagne. 2012-2020+. **85.**

### **1976 Chassagne-Montrachet “la Romanée”- Domaine Paul Pillot (magnum)**

This magnum of the 1976 la Romanée from Paul Pillot is actually more interesting than the mag of the 1983 Grands Ruchottes from the domaine that was served alongside of it at this particular tasting. The color is certainly amber (and darker than the 1983), but the wine is still fresh and sound in its tertiary personality, offering up a complex and mature bouquet of oranges, apricots, a touch of butterscotch, a bit of salted peanut and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite complex, with good framing acids still brightening up the palate, just a touch of alcohol now starting to poke out on the long and focused finish. This has a bit more breed than the 1983 Pillot Grands Ruchottes, and better balance for keeping as well. Not bad at all and really quite a pleasant surprise for a 1976! 2012-2025+. **87.**

### **1957 Chassagne-Montrachet “Ruchottes”- Domaine Ramonet**

This note also dates back to a Paulée at the end of 2009, but I had misplaced the note and it had never previously made it into one of these articles. The lovely, complex old nose offers up scents of pear, oranges, honey, polenta, leather, chalky soil tones and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still amazingly crisp and long, with a lovely signature of soil, with fine focus and balance and stunning freshness still for a wine of its age. Though my note is now a bit more than three years old, I have little doubt that if one were to cross paths with a well-stored bottle of the 1957 Ruchottes from Ramonet, it would still be an excellent old wine that has not yet begun its decline! 2009-2020+. **93.**

### ***St. Aubin***

#### **2007 St. Aubin “les Murgers Dent de Chien”- Domaine Hubert Lamy**

The 2007 Murgers from Domaine Lamy is really drinking splendidly, offering up a complex and very classy bouquet of apple, pear, lemon zest, a touch of iodine, gentle notes of *crème patissière*, lovely soil tones and a delicate base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and still quite racy, with a lovely core of fruit, blossoming complexity and fine focus and grip on the perfectly balanced and very classy finish. Just a beautiful bottle of premier cru white Burgundy entering its plateau of peak drinkability! 2012-2020. **91.**

### ***Mâconnais***

#### **2010 Mâcon La Roche Vineuse- Domaine Merlin**

I was sorry to see that the 2010 Mâcon La Roche Vineuse from Domaine Merlin was bottled under a plastic cork, as my experience with these closures is that they allow oxidation at a rather brisk pace and bottles sealed up under them must be consumed with rapidity. It is too bad, as this is a lovely wine that shows all signs of being able to last in bottle for several years under a more “friendly” closure, as it offers up a deep and classy nose of peach, pineapple, the Mâcon’s toasty soil tones and a touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep,

full-bodied and bright, and well-balanced, with sound acids and sneaky length and grip on the plump and crisp finish. This is a pretty ripe example of Mâcon in any case, and perhaps the closure will make no difference in the long run, as I imagine most bottles will be drunk up briskly, but why take the chance when an agglomerated natural cork is nearly identical in price and a much safer bet if someone want to tuck a few bottles away in the cellar? In any case, pretty good juice in its ripe and buxom style. 2013-2015? **87.**

**2010 Mâcon La Roche Vineuse “Vieilles Vignes” - Domaine Merlin**

The 2010 Mâcon La Roche Vineuse “Vieilles Vignes” bottling from Domaine Merlin is again a pretty ripe example of the vintage, tipping the scales at 13.5 percent alcohol and showing a bit of a tropical edge to its fruit component on both the nose and palate, or perhaps there is just a whisper of botrytis in this cuvée. In any event, the bouquet is deep and juicy, offering up scents of tangerine, peach, lovely soil tones, spring flowers and just a bit of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthful, with a good core of fruit, bright acids and very good focus on the long and ripe finish. There is just a bit of backend headiness here, but this wine should still age quite gracefully and will be even better with a year or two in the cellar to allow its secondary layers to unfold. This is made from lower yields than the straight Mâcon La Roche Vineuse bottling and sees a bit of barrel aging in older wood. 2014-2019. **88.**



*The Roche de Vergisson towering over the southern Mâcon, with the Roche de Solutré in the distance.*

### **2010 Mâcon La Roche Vineuse “les Cras”- Domaine Merlin**

The les Cras bottling from Domaine Merlin is produced from a southwesterly-facing vineyard and cropped at only thirty hectoliters per hectare (as opposed to sixty for the “regular” bottling) and is barrel-fermented and aged in a combination of thirty percent each new, one wine and two wine barrels (the final ten percent made up of four year-old wood). The 2010 les Cras shows quite a bit more mid-palate intensity than the above, and carries its wood effortlessly on both the nose and palate. The classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a combination of apple, pear, lovely, “toasty” soil tones, a touch of citrus oil, hints of almond and a stylish base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with lovely purity, a fine core, lovely framing acids and fine focus and grip on the nascently complex and quite ripe finish. This is a very high class bottle of Mâcon crafted in a more powerful style. 2014-2020+. **90+**.

### **2010 Pouilly-Fuissé “Clos des Quarts”- Domaine Merlin**

Interestingly, the Pouilly-Fuissé “Clos des Quarts” from Domaine Merlin is produced from slightly higher yields than their les Cras Mâcon bottling, with yields here 50 hectoliters per hectare and the wine is raised in a touch less new wood as well, with twenty-five percent of the barrels here respectively new, one, two and three years old. While it is not quite as rock solid at the core as the 2010 les Cras, the superior quality of the *terroir* here is evident in its very classy bouquet of apple, pear, a beautifully complex base of soil, apple blossoms, a touch of almond and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully delineated, with good intensity of flavor, lovely complexity, crisp acids and excellent focus and balance on the very long and dancing finish. There is not the same mid-palate concentration here as the les Cras, but the wine does not need it and is perhaps more elegant and compelling as a result of its slightly less intense style. This is really a lovely bottle of wine. 2013-2020+. **92**.

**THE SIX PERCENT CLUB**  
**SUPERB SPANISH CAVA DIRECT FROM THE GROWERS**



*The winery of Huguet de Can Feixes, one of the greatest Cava producers in the Six Percent Club.*

As I observed in the article on the region a couple of issues ago, beautiful Cataluña is the primary home to Spain's large sparkling wine industry, with Cava one of the most important Catalàn wines. Though the D.O. of Cava is not exclusively reserved for the sparkling wines produced in Cataluña proper and can be used elsewhere in Spain, the region is responsible for fully ninety-eight percent of all the sparkling wine made in the country- making Cava for all intents and purposes a Catalàn wine. In the previous article on Cataluña, I touched upon the fact that only six percent of the producers of Cava actually grow their own grapes and make their own wines, and it certainly seems that this is the dividing line between those who make excellent wines and those who do not, and it is from this "Six Percent Club" (as I have dubbed them) that one finds the outstanding wines that should define Cava for wine lovers in search of high-quality and complex sparkling wines of impressive breed and balance. The Cava market as a whole is currently dominated by a few giant producers, such as Freixenet and Codorníu, who generally emphasize low prices over high quality (though, we will see that Codorníu is making efforts to also produce a few small cuvées that aspire to top quality and perhaps one day will belong alongside those of the Six Percent Club), but the dominance of a huge share of the market by a

handful of very large houses with rather innocuous wines should not distract one from the reality that there are a fairly significant cadre of high-quality producers of Cava in Catalunya. Generally, top-end Cava is quite different from Champagne, with less of a toasty personality from its aging on the lees and less weightiness on the palate, due to the more ethereal nature of wines based on the traditional Cava grapes such as Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada. Several top Cava producers have planted the grapes of Champagne as well to augment these traditional grapes, so that one can certainly find extremely well-made Cava made with both chardonnay and pinot noir in their blends, and it is often (though not always) the case that the examples of Cava that include either chardonnay or pinot noir grapes in their *cépage* will be a bit weightier in style than those based on traditional Cava grapes and will often be a bit more stylistically akin to Champagne. From my summer of 2012 visit to Catalunya, it seemed that the trend here amongst many of the top producers was moving towards producing most wines based primarily on the “big three” traditional grapes: Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada (as well as the red wine grape of Trepat for Cava Rosés), and chardonnay and pinot noir taking on more of “supporting actor” roles these days in the world of the Six Percent Club.

Within the region of Catalunya, it is really only a handful of the sub-regions or D.O.s that produce the grapes that make Cava. By far the most important is the Penedès, where ninety-five percent of the grapes for Cava are grown, with small sections of the D.O.s of Alella, Conca de Barberà, Empordà, Tarragona and Costers del Segre also contributing grapes to the production of Cava in Catalunya. Within the Penedès, it is the small city of Sant Sadurní d’Anoia in the central area of the D.O. (northeast of Vilafranca del Penedès) that is the Cava capital of the world, and it is here and in the surrounding villages on the gently climbing hillsides that mount towards the mountains to the west that many of the top Cava-producing estates are based. While there are historical records in Catalunya that date back to the fourteenth century that mention the sparkle of local wines, it was not really until the latter half of the nineteenth century that Cava production first became commercially established in the region. It was Josep Raventós Fatjó and his son, Manuel Raventós Domènech, who first commercialized Cava in the late 1860s from their winery of Can Codorníu. This was a golden era of wine production and vineyard planting in the Penedès, as phylloxera to the north in France had led to wide-spread expansion of grape cultivation in this region, and the pent up thirst of their French neighbors led to fully thirty years of economic boom in the region, with the demand of red wine particularly high at this time. However, once the French vineyards began to be grafted over to American rootstocks to combat phylloxera and French vineyard production began to recover, demand to the north began to diminish, and by the turn of the century, the Penedès’ primary export market was drying up at the same time that phylloxera was beginning to arrive *en masse* and in its turn, now ravage the vineyards of this region. So the boom years were quite short-lived, and the creation of Cava by the Raventós family at the start of the golden age would begin to be even more important when vineyards were replanted in the Penedès on American rootstocks in the early twentieth century, with white varieties being planted to take advantage of the potential of Cava at a much higher level than had been the case in the second half of the nineteenth century.

By the 1920s, the vineyards of Catalunya in general and the Penedès in particular had fully recovered from phylloxera, and commercial Cava production topped the one million bottle mark for the first time- though this was just a drop in the bucket compared to today’s production figures of more than two hundred million bottles by the dawn of the new millennium. In this

early era for Cava, most of the sparkling wine produced here was consumed within Catalunya or in Madrid, and Cava was certainly not a big phenomenon beyond the borders of Catalunya. However, the growth of this wine would not be either strong and nor steady from the 1920s forward, as the Spanish Civil War devastated Catalunya and it was not until well into the Franco years that Cava production again began to expand. By 1972, production had recovered enough for the region to produce fifty million bottles of Cava. However, one should note that at this time, the vast majority of Cava being produced was a simple, everyday sparkling wine that was made in large batches by the handful of giant Cava producers, and while production numbers continued to climb (topping two hundred and thirty million bottles by the turn of the century), the growth of high quality Cava that is associated with the Six Percent Club is a much more recent phenomenon. It is my impression that high quality Cava really got its impetus from Agustí Torelló Mata (who is pictured below), who had established his family Cava house in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia in the 1950s, and was the primary architect behind the organization of the first trade association for Cava producers, the *Confradía del Cava* in 1979. If one were to choose a point of departure where Cava moved beyond simple sparkling wine into a vision of something grander, it would probably be the moment the producers' association was formed in 1979 by fourteen like-minded growers and winery owners. Señor Torelló Mata sought to purchase old vine parcels of traditional Cava grape varieties such as Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada during the formative years of his winery, and to champion these indigenous grapes (many of which had originally been planted right at the outset of recovery from phylloxera in the region) for high quality Cava production. Most of these vineyards are planted in the central section of Penedès, at altitudes of two hundred to three hundred meters above sea level, where they can take advantage of the cooling temperatures in the evenings, as well as cool breezes off of the ocean, to maintain the good acidity levels necessary for sparkling wine production.



Though I noted above that the formation of the *Confradía del Cava* in 1979, was a seminal moment in the creation of a grander vision of high quality by Cava producers, with Agustí Torelló Mata serving as the first president of the organization, I would be remiss if I did not discuss the fact that the current president of *Confradía del Cava* is Pere Bonet, who is the Marketing Director for Freixenet. While Freixenet was the driving force in opening up export markets for Cava around the globe in the late 1970s and 1980s, it is far removed from the exigencies of the Six Percent Club and would certainly not be described as an ardent supporter of the type of high quality Cava found in the cellars of the members of the Six Percent Club. The reality of the Cava market today is that between Freixenet and Codorníu, fully ninety-five percent of the production in Catalunya is controlled by one or the other of these two giant firms (Codorníu produces sixty percent as much Cava as Freixenet), and it is my impression that they have hardly been supporters of the type of innovations in the vineyards and in the cellars

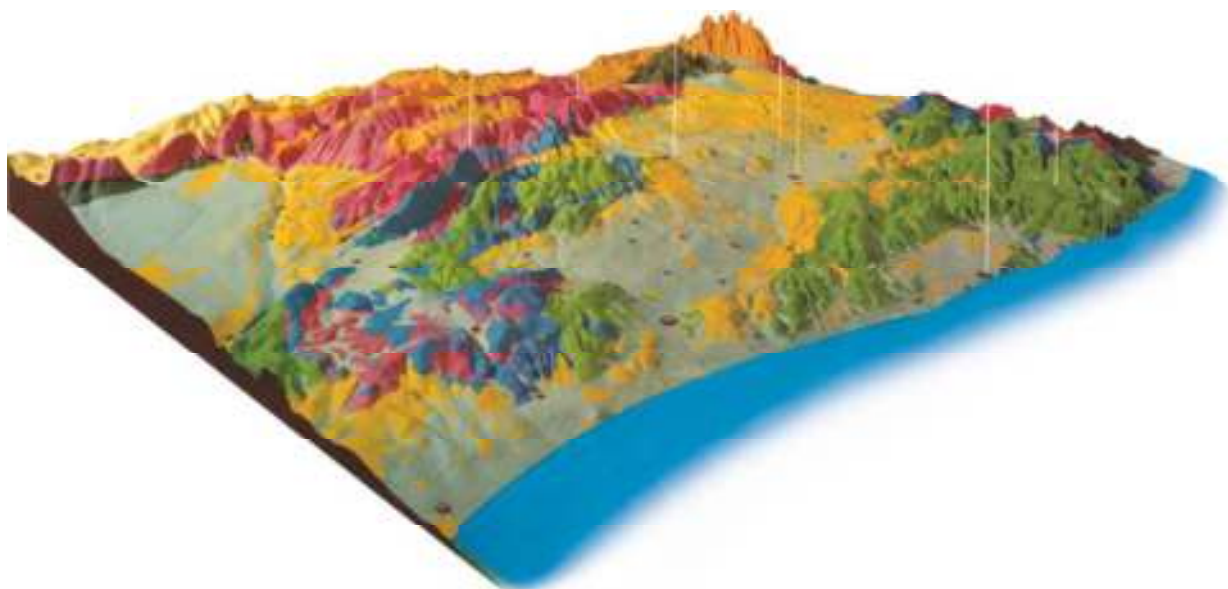


necessary to produce the highest quality Cava represented by the (primarily) small producers of the Six Percent Club. So one must keep in mind, that when I write of the superb quality of Cava produced by members of the Six Percent Club, we are still talking about a very, very tiny percentage of the entire Cava market.

One of the primary dividing lines between the top Cava of the Six Percent Club and other non-Champagne sparkling wines around the globe, such as Prosecco, is that all Cava must be individually fermented in the bottle to add the *mousse*, in the traditional method of Champagne known as *tirage*, rather than produced by the Charmat bulk process of pumping in CO2 into the giant stainless steel tanks of still wine. While some top Proseccos are made in this traditional method, most are not. All of the Cava produced by the Six Percent Club are made in this traditional method and tend to have far more refined bubbles as a result than all but the very finest examples of Prosecco and many other sparkling wines with which I am familiar. In addition, to officially receive the D.O. of Cava, sparkling wines must have their secondary fermentation take place in the bottle and be aged for a set number of months (at a minimum) to be labeled as Cava. Standard bottles of Cava, or *Jove*, must be aged on their fine lees for a minimum of nine months before they can be disgorged and released on the market, while Cava labeled as *Reserva* must rest *sur lies* for at least fifteen months. *Gran Reservas* must be aged a minimum of thirty months on their fine lees prior to disgorgement, and one finds with several of the top producers in the Six Percent Club, extended aging beyond the minimums required by D.O. regulations for each level is very common. One of the growing trends that I witnessed during my nearly two weeks stay in Cataluña was that a great, great many of the very best examples of Cava are Brut Nature in style, rather than Brut bottlings that have had a bit of *dosage*, and in contrast to my preferences in Champagne (where I generally tend to like wines at the Brut level with a touch of *dosage* over their Brut Nature or Brut Zero counterparts), when it comes to Cava, my palate often tends to prefer the Brut Nature level bottlings. This is not to say that there are not some exceptional Brut bottlings of Cava (as the notes below will attest), but the combination of the “big three” traditional grapes of Cava and the beautifully complex soil tones of Cataluña often seems to reach its apogee of expression at the Brut Nature level. The breakdowns for the maximum levels of residual sweetness allowable for each level added back after disgorgement for Cava are: Brut Nature- no additional *dosage*; Extra Brut- up to six grams per liter of residual sugar; Brut- up to fifteen grams per liter of residual sugar. In general, the producers of the Six Percent Club seem to favor very low levels of *dosage* for their Brut bottlings and Brut Nature is considered amongst most of these growers to be the finest level of expression to maximize complexity and elegance for connoisseurs of Cava.

As most Cava grapes are grown in the Penedès, it is useful to look at the geographical breakdown of this region, as certain areas are better-suited in terms of microclimate and soil type to the cultivation of different grape varieties that make up traditional, high-end Cava. I am greatly indebted to the Torelló family of the winery of Agustí Torelló Mata for explaining these different viticultural sub-regions of Penedès during my visit here in the summer of 2012 (and for providing this information also on their website, as I was still seriously in a fog of jet lag during the visit to the winery in July). Essentially, Penedès can be broken down into three distinct sub-regions that are defined by both their soil type and their unique microclimates, which are due to the different spines of mountains that define the region and filter the flow of cooler air in from the nearby Mediterranean Sea up into the mountain valleys. The first of these regions lies on the

eastern edge of Penedès and is adjacent to the ocean, but blocked from direct influence by the coastal mountain range here known as the **Garraf Massif** (and can be seen as the green mountainous area adjacent to the coast on the right in the schematic below). The second region is the **Penedès Depression** that lies between the Garraf Massif and the mountains to north and west (cream-colored on the map), and the third is the **Serralada Prelitoral** area that lies in the foothills of the mountain ranges that climb up to the west of the Penedès Depression (and are marked in the red, blue and orange below). All of these areas are relatively cooler areas by Penedès standards, being influenced to varying degrees by prevailing ocean winds and elevation.



The vineyard areas of the Garraf Massif lie primarily on the inland side of this coastal range at an altitude of no more than two hundred meters above sea level. The soils here are quite gravelly and calcareous, poor in nutrients and it is here, with the strong coastal influence that the Macabeo variety thrives. Macabeo is prized for its elegant sense of fruitiness that it brings to a Cava blend. The Penedès Depression area is Xarel-lo country, with its slightly higher vineyard altitudes ranging from two hundred to four hundred meters above sea level and the soils here richer than on the coast, with a blend of limestone and clay harkening back a bit to those of Burgundy. Cooler air from the nearby Mediterranean tends to filter into this basin each evening, helping to keep acidities healthy, despite its very real heat in the middle of the summer days (it was not particularly pleasurable to walk outside here to the vineyards in midday in July). The Xarel-lo grape is prized for the body and backbone that it brings to the Cava blend, and while it is not particularly characterful in terms of aromatic or flavor profiles (though providing a certain *je ne sais pas quoi* to the blends in terms of gently herbaceous or savory characteristics on both the nose and palate). There seems to be quite a bit of the region's Chardonnay also planted in the sub-region of the Penedès Depression, and it seems to thrive here (at least in the hands of the Six Percent Club). The Serralada Prelitoral is the highest elevated area of the Penedès, with altitudes ranging from four hundred to nine hundred meters above sea level, and the soils here are quite a bit more influenced by their surrounding mountains, with a predominance of slate, shale and sand. Here the Parellada and the Trepát grapes thrive, and Pinot Noir also does very well at these higher elevations and their decidedly cooler evening temperatures. Parellada is prized for its racy



backbone of acidity that it provides to Cava, as well as tropical fruit tones and perfumed floral nuances. One would expect that much of the beautiful notes of lime, orange and Catalàn *garrigue* that so many top Cavas show is directly attributable to the inclusion of Parellada in the blend. Trepát is the indigenous red grape that is making a strong comeback in the region (due primarily to the efforts of Agustí Torelló Mata and a few other like-minded traditionalists of the Six Percent Club) for use in Rosé Cavas and is generally even a touch more delicate than Pinot Noir in these *terroirs*.

Typically, the base wines for the top examples of Cava are fermented in stainless steel these days, though I have noted a growing number of cuvées influenced by some barrel-fermentation, and I expect that we will see more examples with some barrel-fermented wines included in the blends in the years to come. This trend is not too surprising, as a similar movement is also under way in the Champagne region in recent years. As is the case all over the wine world, not everyone is as adroit in handling wood during the winemaking process, and a few of the Cavas I tasted of this genre from the Six Percent Club did not show particularly sophisticated use of oak and might be better off with no new wood used in the equation or a very small percentage. But, I also tasted some truly excellent Cavas that included barrel-fermentation as part (or all) of the recipe and I would be remiss in saying that all the stainless steel fermented bottlings are superior to those that incorporate a bit of wood (new or slightly older) into their cellar regimens. But, in general, I seem to be far more fond of examples of Cava that are raised entirely in stainless steel, as this method seems to really enhance the inherent refined complexity of soil, spice, fruit and floral aspects of the best wines of the Six Percent Club. For, there are an awful lot of truly gorgeous, dancing and filigreed examples of Cava out there that are quite singular in the world of sparkling wine for their impressive lightness of step, and this almost ethereal aspect of a sizable percentage of the very finest Cava of the Six Percent Club is very quickly lost if the use of wood is not extremely skillful. I would love to see in the future Cava producers intent on trying some barrel fermentation for their base wines to experiment with used barrels, as five and six year-old barrels (or older) might prove to be far easier to integrate into the glorious aromatic and flavor delicacies of top Cava.

While a very, very small percentage of Cava produced by members of the Six Percent Club may go through malolactic fermentation, this is certainly the exception to the rule and it is not far from reality to say that nearly all top Cava does not go through malo. In fact, such a tiny, tiny percentage of top Cava goes through malo, that I did not even ask most producers whether or not a certain bottling had gone through malo, as I just assumed that the answer would be “no”. While machine harvesting is allowed and widely practiced for most Cava production, it would be safe to say that the majority of top producers in the Six Percent Club practice hand-harvesting of their grapes, and probably eighty percent of the producers I would list as part of this august institution do not use machine harvesting. For the remaining twenty percent who might utilize machine harvesting for some or all of their vineyards, it is reasonable to assume that every one of these members of the Six Percent Club would own their own machines (rather than hiring a firm from outside to bring in the machines and lay the vineyards to relative waste, which is my impression is often the result of hiring in machine harvesters) and very carefully oversee that the machines are set to handle their vineyards as gently as possible- with the height of the harvester set as precisely as possible to match the vines, harvesting taking place at the best time of day in terms of temperature and picking taking place at the dictates of optimum grape maturity, rather

than the busy schedule of the outside contractor. That said, I would not think it remiss to see all members of the Six Percent Club eventually embracing hand harvesting exclusively!

In my still relatively limited experience, there seem to be essentially two schools of Cava crafted by the artisans of the Six Percent Club these days. There are the very complex and impressively delicate-styled wines to which I just alluded, that beautifully weave together complex fruit, floral, soil and spice tones in a more medium-to-medium-full-bodied format, and which generally are not particularly influenced by yeast autolysis tones from their extended aging on their fine lees. I like to think of this as the very unique style of sparkling wine that is particular to top-quality Cava. There is another school of Cava that is a bit weightier and deeper in profile and is much more akin to Champagne generally. This school of Cava tends to be quite a bit more toasty from its lees contact and to have more body and power, and often will include either Chardonnay or Pinot Noir in some combination with traditional varietals in the blend (or even to be comprised solely from these two Champagne-inspired plantings in the vineyards of Cava country). I have no preference between the two schools of Cava, as I have had absolutely superb examples in both styles, but it is useful to have some idea of which style you are likely to get from a given producer, as they obviously are better-suited to quite different fare at the table or when served as an aperitif. But, in general terms, I would suggest that the best Cava of the Six Percent Club will usually be decidedly less “toasty” in style than a comparably fine bottle of Champagne, regardless of in which “Cava stylistic school” the wine belongs. I would also mention that the distinctions of style between the two “schools” of Cava also extends to Cava Rosé (or, more properly, Rosat), as some can be quite vinous in nature and fairly deep in both color and stylistic profile, while others can be very refined and dancing, with only a wisp of blush in terms of color and beautifully ethereal personalities.

While most of the producers who I would group in the Six Percent Club are small estates, such as Agustí Torelló Mata, Huguet de Can Feixes or Cava Cygnus, it is not necessarily a requirement to be one of the smallest Cava producers to belong to this club. I would certainly rank a fairly large producer such as Juvé Y Camps in amongst these elite Cava producers, and while this bodegas is far, far larger than most of the members in the Six Percent Club (and does not quite produce all of its own grapes, as it has to use long-term contracts for purchasing grapes to meet about twenty percent of its current volume needs), all of these top producers are distinct from the mainstream of the Cava industry by eschewing the massive bulk business and huge, amorphously-blended cuvées that constitute the big “brands” of Cava. Rather, they are content to focus on hand-crafting their own wines almost exclusively from their own personal vineyards. So, while it is not precisely accurate to say that all the members of the Six Percent Club make their own wine from grapes grown in their own vineyards, it is essentially correct and if one is wondering if Bodegas X is one of the top Cava producers, this criteria of whether or not the house makes wine from its own grapes will usually suffice to answer the question, with very, very few exceptions.

Of the notes that follow, I have grouped the wines by non-vintage and then vintage categories, with Rosés of each kind following their non-Rosé counterparts. As most of the Cava produced by members of the Six Percent Club is vintage-dated (or at least the samples that they sent to me were vintage-dated), there are not that many non-vintage examples written up. A few wines do not declare the vintage on the label, but have a sticker added with a designation such as

“2007 Gran Reserva” (as in the case of the lovely Joan Sardà Millenium Cava), and I have treated this as a vintage-dated Cava, even though it is not specifically printed on the label. I have not broken down the notes by Brut Nature or Brut bottling, but rather just grouped both categories together in each section, with the wines listed alphabetically by producer within each section, and as customary for me, with the vintages listed from younger to older. As one will see, the vast majority of the top quality Cava samples that I tasted for this article were Brut Nature, and this seems clearly to be the preferred level of *dosage* amongst members of the Six Percent Club for their best bottlings. There are two distinct blocks of Cava notes, as at the end of the new tasting notes generated from recently-sent samples, I have appended the tasting notes from the Cava examples that were tasted during my July 2012 trip to Catalunya and which were written up with full domaine profiles in Issue 41, reasoning that a few years down the road, those looking for specific notes on a particular Cava would probably open up this article first, rather than the general piece on the wines of Catalunya. As several of the producers I visited on that trip are amongst the very finest producers in the Six Percent Club, it seemed logical to include them here, but I have left out of this report the historical background information on each bodegas, which can be found by visiting the article in Issue 41 or by emailing me directly (for new subscribers who have not yet seen this article). However, there are several notes that were taken from individual bottles of Cava tasted on the July trip that did not appear in Issue 41, as they were not part of the estates that I visited on that occasion and I had saved those notes to appear (more properly) in this article on Cava and cutting back a bit on duplication of notes in the database. Readers will also find the tasting notes reprinted here from the lovely Cava bottlings from Bodegas Jaume Giró et Giró and their Can Festis label of Cava. These notes originally appeared in the article on The Spanish Artisan Wine Group in Issue Forty.

### ***Non-Vintage Cava***

#### **Bohigas Brut Reserva NV**

The Bohigas family estate is based in the village of Òdena, which lies about twenty kilometers to the northwest of the Cava capital of the world, Sant Sadurn d'Anoia. The family estate is based on an eight hundred year-old farm called Can Macià, whose cellars have been augmented in recent years with a new modern facility, but the ancient buildings are still the center of the estate. The family estate owns just over fifty hectares of vineyards, with most of them planted to fifty-plus year-old plantations of Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada, with a bit of chardonnay and pinot noir having been planted in the last decade. However, their Brut Reserva is comprised entirely of the “big three” traditional grapes and is aged for twenty-four months on the lees prior to disgorgement and is a very dry Brut, with only eight grams per liter of residual sugar. The current release is excellent, offering up a vibrant nose of apple, pear, lemon zest, a touch of Catalàn *garrigue*, fine minerality and a gentle dollop of warm bread. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite well-balanced, with fine *mousse*, crisp acids, very good mid-palate intensity and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is a weightier style of Cava that recalls Champagne a bit more in terms of its palate presence, but with classic Cava aromatics and flavors. Very good juice and a fine value. 2013-2018+. **90.**

#### **Castellroig Reserva Brut Nature NV**

I have only had a couple of wines from Castellroig, and their young winemaker Marcel Sabaté, and all of them have been outstanding. Castellroig's Reserva Brut Nature is comprised of a blend of roughly one third each of Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada and is aged for a minimum of twenty-four months on the lees prior to disgorgement. Catellroig is one of the boutique

producers in the Six Percent Club, and the estate produced just under 28,000 bottles of this non-vintage Reserva. The nose is young and quite stylish, cut in the classically delicate style of Cava and offering up scents of tart pear, a bit of green apple, plenty of Catalàn *garrigue* (mostly wild fennel and lavender), stony minerality, citrus peel, dried flowers and an incipient touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tight and intensely flavored, with a fine core, lovely focus and nascent complexity, frothy *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the snappy finish. This is a lovely wine that will only get better with a bit of bottle age. 2014-2020+. **90+**.

#### **Codorníu “Anna de Codorníu” Brut NV**

The Anna de Codorníu bottling from Penedès-based Cava giant, Codorníu, is their attempt to make a wine at the same level as the wines produced by members of the Six Percent Club. The current release is a blend of seventy percent chardonnay and thirty percent Parellada (according to the back label, though the website suggests that the thirty percent also included some Xarel-lo and Macabeo) and is produced exclusively from the house’s own vineyards. It is aged for a minimum of twelve months on the lees prior to disgorgement, and the chardonnay here is harvested at night to try and keep acidities as high as possible. There was no precise information as to the *dosage* for this bottling, as the technical sheet states 8-10 grams per liter of residual sugar (and my sample seemed to be at the top of this range), but the wine is balanced and well-made. The bouquet is a blend of apple, tart orange, a gentle touch of biscuits, Catalàn soil tones and a nice touch of dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and very well-balanced, with good, but not great mid-palate depth, fine bubbles and very good length on the open and vibrant finish. This is obviously not a small, artisan cuvée, but it is extremely well-made for its genre and one really has to salute Codorníu for making the effort to produce something beyond the level of the mass market. 2013-2018. **89**.

#### **Cava Cygnus “1+1= 3” Organic Reserva Brut Nature NV**

The Organic Reserva from Cava Cygnus is an excellent bottle replete with complexity and impressive elegance. The *cépage* is a blend of forty percent Parellada and thirty percent each Xarel-lo and Macabeo. The deep and vibrant nose wafts from the glass in a classy blend of lemon, grapefruit, stony minerality, a touch of quinine and a lovely dollop of Catalàn herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very stony in personality, with elegant *mousse*, brisk acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and utterly bone dry finish. This is fine juice that I would opt for giving a year or two in the cellar, to allow its youthful girdle of acidity to relax just a touch and allow the wine to really blossom on the palate. Fine, fine juice, but this is a touch more youthfully structured than the 2008 vintage version and will drink even better with a touch more bottle age. 2014-2020+. **91**.

#### **Joan Sardà Reserva Brut Nature NV**

The non-vintage Joan Sardà Reserva Brut Nature is comprised of a blend of the traditional “big three” of Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada and is aged for fifteen months on the fine lees prior to disgorgement. This is a classic, ethereal style of Cava, offering up a complex and stylishly high-toned nose of grapefruit, Catalàn *garrigue*, wild fennel, lovely soil tones, lime peel and a touch of smokiness. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, crisp and complex, with youthful *mousse*, crisp acids, good, but, not great depth at the core (this is only a Reserva after all) and lovely focus and grip on the long and dancing finish. This is a beautifully made wine in its easy-going style and could be drunk all night long with tapas in the proper, laid back manner of Cataluña. 2013-2016. **88**.



### **Sumarroca Grand Brut “Allier” NV**

The non-vintage bottling of Sumarroca Grand Brut “Allier” is a lovely wine that struggles just a bit under its veneer of wood. Aromatically, the influence of the wood (which I presume is new or only a year or two old) is quite gentle, but on the backend of the palate, it tends to dominate the other elements a bit more and keeps the score down a touch. The bouquet is a very stylish blend of lemon, tart apple, Catalàn herb tones (mostly lavender), lemon zest and gentle vanillin nuances from the wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite crisp, with a good core, elegant *mousse* and very good length and grip on the complex finish. If the wood here were more subtly integrated on the finish, this would be really a lovely wine, but in this particular bottling, the oak is just a touch too obtrusive to my palate on the backend. There is a truly great underlying wine here, so perhaps, just using older barrels would give this wine a wood component as inherently delicate as the other constituent components of the wine and really take this to the next level in quality. 2013-2018. **87+**.

### ***Non-Vintage Cava Rosé***

#### **Bohigas Cava Brut Rosat**

The Bohigas Cava Brut Rosat is made up of a blend of trepat and pinot noir and is aged from nine to twelve months on the lees prior to disgorgement and preparation for market. The color is quite a bright cherry red, which it derives from a few hours of skin contact during the initial fermentation, rather than by adding back a bit of red wine to the blend. The wine offers up

a lovely bouquet of pomegranate, orange peel, cherries, salty soil tones and rose petals. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a very vinous personality, crisp acids, a fine core, pinpoint bubbles and very good length and grip on the finish. This is not the most complex Rosat Cava that one is going to come across, but it offers up lovely personality and really works well at the table. This is a the kind of wine I want to drink in the heat of the summer in lieu of a red wine. 2013-2015. **87.**

#### **Cava Joan Sardà Brut Reserva Rosé**

The Cava Joan Sardà Brut Reserva Rosé is made up of a unique blend of Garnaxta and Monastrell and is aged for fully thirty-six months prior to release (the information on this bottling was unclear whether this is all on the lees, or on a combination of *sur lies* aging and additional bottle aging, but given the fact that it is bottled as a Reserva, I suspect that the thirty-six months is both *sur lies* and bottle aging). The color is a strikingly deep, red berry color and the nose is a lovely and complex mélange of blood orange, strawberries, lovely Catalàn spice tones, stony minerality, a touch of cinnamon stick and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite vinous, with elegant *mousse*, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the poised and complex finish. This is a bigger style of Rosé Cava that really is meant to accompany a meal, as it a bit weighty in style for an aperitif, but would be wonderful at the table over a long, midnight meal in the warm summer months. High class juice. 2013-2020. **91.**

#### ***Vintage-Dated Cava***

##### **2010 Albet i Noya Reserva Brut**

The 2010 Albet i Noya Reserva Brut NV is comprised of a blend of Xarel-lo and Macabeo (my technical sheet did not give the percentage breakdowns) and is aged for a minimum of eighteen months on the lees prior to disgorgement by hand. It is a Brut, but quite a dry Brut, with only six grams per liter of residual sugar. The 2010 offers up a lovely nose of lemon, grapefruit, salty soil tones, orange zest and a nice touch of Catalàn *garrigue* in the form of lavender and gently savory herb tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and very well-balanced, with good acids and focus, sound *mousse* and very good length and grip on the youthful finish. A fine example of Reserva Cava. 2013-2018+. **89.**

##### **2010 Vilarnau Reserva Brut Nature**

The 2010 Vilarnau Reserva Brut Nature is the new release of this bottling from this fine Cava producer is excellent. Like Juvé Y Camps, Vilarnau is not a small house and is currently the eight largest producer of Cava in Spain, with 2.4 million bottles sold annually, but much of the range is exemplary and the top wines here certainly merit inclusion in the Six Percent Club. The 2010 Brut Nature Reserva is made up of a blend of fifty-five percent Macabeo, thirty percent Parellada and fifteen percent Chardonnay and was aged for twenty months on the lees prior to disgorgement. The deep and very vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a classy blend of lemon, tart pear, lovely minerality, citrus peel, gentle floral notes and a bit of lavender in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and youthfully bright and snappy, with a lovely core, elegant *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the focused and well-balanced finish. The addition of Chardonnay here gives this wine a bit more of a full-bodied personality, and this lovely wine shows every sign of having the ability to age well for at least another decade, though it is drinking very well out of the blocks. While this is not a particularly “toasty” example, its weight and mineral drive make it a perfect introductory Cava for Champagne drinkers. 2013-2025. **90.**

### **2009 Raventós i Blanc “L’Hereu” Reserva Brut Nature**

The 2009 Raventós i Blanc “L’Hereu” Reserva Brut Nature is a lovely bottle of Cava that is made up of a blend of fifty percent Macabeo, thirty-five percent Xarel-lo and fifteen percent Parellada. The date of disgorgement is printed on the back label, but as I sampled this wine at a large tasting, I did not know this at the time and did not ask to see the date. In any event, the wine is excellent, offering up a refined and delicate nose of apple, grapefruit, salty minerality, a touch of bread dough and a lovely topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and beautifully balanced, with frothy *mousse*, a fine core and very good length and grip on the bouncy and ethereal finish. A lovely example of Cava. 2013-2020. **92+**.

### **2008 Cava Cygnus “1+ 3” Organic Brut Nature**

The 2008 Cava Cygnus “1+ 3” Organic Brut Nature is made up of a blend of forty percent Parellada, thirty percent Xarel-lo and thirty percent Macabeo and is aged on the fine lees for twelve months prior to disgorgement. The bouquet is a very vibrant and lovely blend of grapefruit, lime, complex minerality, a dollop of ocean breeze and a very delicate touch of Catalàn *garrigue* in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and intensely flavored, with fine filigree, frothy *mousse*, excellent focus and balance and a very long, pure and dancing finish. This is one of those delicately styled Cavas that I absolutely adore for their refinement and gorgeous detail. Superb wine. 2013-2020. **92**.

### **2008 Vilarnau Gran Reserva Brut Nature**

The 2008 Gran Reserva from Vilarnau is a slightly different blend from their Reserva bottling, as the *cépage* here is thirty-five percent each of Macabeo and Parellada, twenty-five percent Chardonnay and five percent Pinot Noir. The wine is aged for a minimum of thirty-six months on its fine lees prior to disgorgement. The 2008 Gran Reserva is the current release and I had a chance to taste this while visiting the winery in July, but was more than happy to have a chance to retaste it here in the US in January, as this very young wine is starting to blossom a bit and it is quite clear that I underrated it at the bodegas. The deep and very primary nose offers up scents of pink grapefruit, tart orange, complex, almost salty minerality, gentle Catalàn herbs, a touch of bread dough, a hint of the smokiness to come and a topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still very young, with a fine core and excellent focus, brisk acids, frothy *mousse* and superb mineral drive on the very long and nascently complex finish. This is going to be a very serious bottle of Cava, but it still needs several years in the cellar to really unwind. 21016-2030+. **91+**.

### **2007 Castellroig Gran Reserva Brut Nature**

The 2007 Castellroig Gran Reserva Brut Nature is a beautifully vibrant, delicate and floral wine that is still quite young, but has superb potential. The wine is comprised of a blend of old vine Macabeo and Xarel-lo, but I could not find the exact percentage breakdown of each varietal on the estate’s website and it was not included in my technical sheet on the wine. The ’07 Gran Reserva was aged for thirty-six months on the fine lees prior to disgorgement and offers up a young and ethereal bouquet of lemon, complex, saline minerality, a touch of Catalàn *garrigue*, orange blossoms and a gentle topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very tightly-knit, with excellent mid-palate intensity, brisk acids, frothy *mousse* and outstanding length and grip on the young and dancing finish. This is great young Cava, but it really deserves at least two or three more years in the cellar to really blossom and show all of its levels of complexity. 2015-2030+. **92+**.

### **2007 Cava Cygnus “1+1= 3” Especial Gran Reserva Brut Nature**

The 2007 Cava Cygnus “1+ 3” Especial Gran Reserva Brut Nature is an interesting blend of sixty percent Xarel-lo and forty percent pinot noir and is aged for thirty months on the lees prior to disgorgement. (Is this right- email winery or check website!) The bouquet is exceptional, offering up a deep and complex mélange of tangerine, green apple, a touch of warm bread, complex, salty soil tones, citrus zest, a touch of lavender and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is young, full-bodied and nicely focused, with a fine core of fruit, brisk acids, lovely, pinpoint bubbles and a very long, primary and intensely-flavored finish. This is still a fairly young wine and a bit bound up in its structure, so I would opt for giving it a year or two in the cellar to really blossom. Right now, the palate does not yet quite deliver all the complexity the nose promises, but once the acids relax a bit, this should come forward very nicely and the wine will be an even better drink. Stylistically, this is not quite as filigreed as the bodegas’ 2008 Organic bottling. Impressive potential. 2015-2025. **91+**.

### **2007 Jané Ventura Gran Reserva Brut Nature**

I had the pleasure to taste this excellent Cava at the superb restaurant of El Celler de Can Roca in July, where it very admirably stood up to the comparison with a bottle of the 2006 Kripta from Agustí Torelló Mata at the same meal. The 2007 Jané Ventura Gran Reserva Brut Nature is an excellent bottle of Cava, which is aged a minimum of thirty-six to forty-two months on the fine lees prior to disgorgement (this particular bottle was disgorged at the forty-two month point) and is hand-riddled. The wine is a blend of fifty-one percent Xarel-lo, twenty-nine percent Macabeo and twenty percent Parellada. The bouquet offers up a deep and very complex nose of lemon, bread fruit, a gentle touch of *fleur de sel*, beautiful soil tones, lemongrass, a touch of bread dough and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, delicate and offers up very refined *mousse*, with bright, well-integrated acids, excellent focus and grip and a very long, classy and dancing finish. A classic example of the ethereal side of Cava, this is still a young wine and should age beautifully. 2012-2022+. **92+**.

### **2007 Marrugat Gran Reserva Brut Nature (Bodegas Pinord)**

Marrugat is the Cava house for the fine Penedès estate of Bodegas Pinord, which is based in Vilafranca del Penedès. The 2007 Marrugat Gran Reserva Brut Nature is made up of a traditional blend of fifty percent Xarel-lo, thirty percent Macabeo and twenty percent Parellada. This is a fuller-bodied style of Cava that offers up more of a Champagne-styled palate impression, which marries beautifully with the traditional aromatic and flavor profile of the indigenous grapes used in the blend. The deep bouquet offers up scents of pomelo, tart orange, stony minerality, lovely Catalàn *garrigue* tones, gentle notes of *pain grillé* and a bit of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core, lovely *mousse*, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the focused and complex finish. This is not as filigreed as some top Cavas, but it provides plenty of depth and complexity and really works well with food. 2013-2018+. **91**.

### **2007 Marrugat “Rima 32” Reserva Brut Nature (Bodegas Pinord)**

The Rima 32 bottling is comprised of fifty percent each of chardonnay and pinot noir and was aged thirty months on the fine lees prior to disgorgement. The nose is bright and complex, offering up a citric blend of tart orange, lemon, salty soil tones, a bit of stoniness, a touch of bread dough and a topnote of grapefruit peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely balanced, with brisk acids, good focus, frothy *mousse* and very good length and grip on the youthful and bouncy finish. The backend closes with a nice note of slightly bitter citrus peel



that really works well with food. I very much like the balance here, and it seems that another year or two of bottle age will produce even more complexity. Good juice. 2014-2020+. **90+**.

**2007 Mas Bertran “La Balma” Reserva Brut Nature**

The 2007 La Balma Brut Nature Reserva from Mas Bertran is comprised of a blend of forty percent Macabeo, forty-five percent Xarel-lo and fifteen percent Parellada and is aged for twenty-four months on the fine lees prior to disgorgement. The bouquet is a lovely blend of tart apple, quince, wild fennel, stony minerality and a touch of jasmine in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, light and quite minerally in personality, with a good core, lovely complexity and length, but just a touch of coarseness to the *mousse* that keeps its score down a little. This is a very well-made wine that reminds me a bit of some examples of Grower Champagne in its impressively complex base wines, but with slightly larger bubbles that are not quite up to the standards of the very top division of the Six Percent Club. 2012-2017. **88**.



**2007 Joan Sardà Millenium Gran Reserva**

The sample bottle of the 2007 Joan Sardà Millenium Gran Reserva had been disgorged on December 5<sup>th</sup> of 2012 (there is a date stamped discreetly on the foil that covers the capsule) and is a blend of thirty percent Macabeo, thirty percent Xarel-lo and forty percent Parellada. This is a very refined and ethereal style of Cava, offering up a complex bouquet of tart orange and pear, wild fennel, lovely, salty minerality, white flowers and just a whisper of custard or cream in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, frothy and very light on its feet, with

lovely intensity of flavor, bright acids, fine focus and balance and a long, complex and dancing finish. A classic example of the more delicate style of Cava! 2013-2020. **92.**

**2007 Recarèdo Gran Reserva Brut Nature**

Recarèdo is another artisanal producer who I would love to visit on a future trip to Catalunya, but I had to content myself with this absolutely stellar bottle of the 2007 Brut Nature when I was here in July. The estate, which was founded in the 1920s, produces Cava almost entirely from old vines in its own vineyards in the Alt Penedès, with a small percentage of grapes purchased from seven small growers with whom the bodegas has worked with for many years. The estate's own vineyards have been farmed *biodynamically* for several years now. The sparkling wines here are all hand-riddled and hand-disgorged, after aging on natural cork stoppers, rather than crown tops in the winery's deep cellars in Sant Sadurní d'Anoia, and the domaine produces only Gran Reserva bottlings. The 2007 Brut Nature is comprised of a blend of fifty percent Xarel-lo, thirty-eight percent Macabeo and twelve percent Parellada, and the wine is absolutely stunning on both the nose and palate. The superb bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex blend of grapefruit, salty minerality, bread dough, gentle smokiness and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very complex, with frothy *mousse*, excellent focus and balance and a very long, soil-driven finish that closes with saline notes and a distinct touch of green olive. A beautiful bottle of Cava! 2012-2020+. **93+.**

**2006 Castell Sant Antoni “Gran Barrica” Gran Reserva Brut Nature**

I really liked the style of the Gran Barrica from Castell Sant Antoni, which may well be the most successful example of Cava I have tasted that has incorporated some barrel fermentation into the production of the still wines for this sparkler. The wine is comprised of a blend of the “big three” of Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada, along with Chardonnay, and only the Chardonnay is barrel-fermented for the blend. The wine is then aged *sur lies* for forty-two months prior to disgorgement. The use of the oak only for the Chardonnay allows the wine to stay very light on its feet and continue to really harness the glorious *terroir* elements found in great Cava. The deep and very refined bouquet offers up scents of tangerine, white peach, very aromatic notes of Catalàn *garrigue*, lovely minerality and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows virtually no oak influence to its flavor spectrum, with superb complexity and focus, very elegant *mousse*, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the poised and very well-balanced finish. A superb bottle of Cava and a blueprint for how to discreetly incorporate a bit of oak into the cellar regimen of the wine and not lose the *spirit* of Cava! 2013-2020+. **92+.**

**2005 Castell Sant Antoni Gran Reserva Brut Nature**

The Brut Nature Gran Reserva from Castell Sant Antoni is made up of a blend of the “big three” of Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada and is aged fully for sixty months on its fine lees prior to disgorgement. The nose on the 2005 is exceptional, wafting from the glass in a sophisticated mélange of tangerine, apple, Catalàn *garrigue*, beautiful, chalky, saline minerality, gentle smokiness and a lovely touch of brioche. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and dancing, with excellent mid-palate depth, great focus and refinement, elegant *mousse* and outstanding complexity on the very long and vibrant finish. This is one of those superb examples of Cava that seem to synthesize the more ethereal side of the wine with a more Champagne-like mid-palate concentration and more bread-like tones from extended aging on the lees. This is stunning juice! 2013-2025. **93+.**

#### **2004 Sumarroca “Núria Claverol” Brut**

The 2004 Sumarroca “Núria Claverol” Brut offers up a lovely and very filigreed nose of green apple, tart orange, complex, Catalàn *garrigue* tones, lovely minerality, a touch of citrus zest and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, delicate and intensely flavored, with a lovely core, fine focus and complexity, very frothy *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the classy and vibrant finish. This is a very beautiful bottle of Cava from the ethereal school, with great balance and superb backend grip and refinement. The wine is fully ready to drink and at its dancing apogee! 2013-2020. **93.**

#### **2002 Brut Nature Gran Reserva “109” de Loxarel**

This is an utterly unique and fascinating example of Cava, which is made up of ninety-five percent Xarel-lo and sold without disgorging, after one hundred and nine months of aging on its fine lees (hence the name of the cuvée). It is made in very limited quantities, with only fifteen hundred bottles of the 2002 vintage having been produced. The package is quite unique, with the bottle sold with the original cork it has been aged under for more than nine years, with no label and wrapped in a stylish wrapper that is tied around the neck with straw. The stunningly complex nose is deep and toasty, offering up lees-driven scents of warm biscuits, complex soil tones, portabella mushrooms, a touch of apple, vanilla bean, fresh almonds and a delicate topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex, with a superb core, brilliantly refined and vigorous *mousse*, crisp acids, excellent focus and balance and a very, very long and intensely flavored finish. This is a terrific Cava and I fear that I did not have a chance to fully appreciate all of its charms, as it would really have benefited from five or six months in my cellar to completely settle in from its trans-Atlantic voyage, as the fine lees are still in the bottle! Consequently, there was just a touch of mustiness here from the lees having been unsettled and I suspect that the wine would be even better if allowed time to recover after shipping. I would strongly recommend not drinking it soon after transit, and then standing it up in the cellar for at least a couple of weeks before planning to drink it, to allow the fine lees to descend to the bottom of the bottle, and then pouring it very gently. In terms of depth, complexity and purity, it is one of the very finest examples of Cava I have had the pleasure to taste, and there is a strong possibility I have underrated this wine! It remains a very young wine and has decades of life still ahead of it. Brilliant juice. 2013-2030+. **94+?**

#### ***Vintage-Dated Cava Rosé***

#### **2009 Raventós i Blanc “de Nit” Brut Nature Rosé**

The 2009 Raventós i Blanc “de Nit” Brut Nature Rosé was one of the most delicate and complex examples of Cava that I tasted on my trip to Catalunya in July of 2012. The *cépage* is a blend of the big three of Macabeo (more than half of the blend), Xarel-lo (thirty percent) and Parellada, with just a touch of Monastrell for color, which is the palest of salmon, with just a whisper of skin contact responsible for its faint blush. This bottling was disgorged in March of 2012, which would make it a well-aged Reserva according to my calculations, but the label does not state that this is a Reserva. The beautifully vibrant bouquet offers up scents of melon, white peach, complex, stony minerality, rose petals and a touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and frothy, with a fine core, superb focus and complexity, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the dancing and ethereal finish. This is an absolutely beautiful example of the very ethereal school of Cava. 2012-2018+. **92.**

## ***Cava Covered in Issue 41's Article on the Wines of Cataluña***

### ***Non-Vintage Cava***

#### **Cava Brut Reserva NV- Castillo Perelada**

The non-vintage Brut Reserva from Castillo Perelada is made up of a blend of the “Big Three” of Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada and the wine is aged for eighteen months prior to disgorgement. Castillo Perelada purchases their needs for their Cava program, but I am not sure if this is made from purchased grapes or if the estate buys juice and does the blending in house. In any event, this is a very good bottle of Cava, offering up a quite floral nose of tart orange, green apple, lovely minerality, lime zest and a musky floral topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and frothy, with bright acids, good focus and lovely length and grip. This is good juice that cannot quite scale the heights of the best examples from the “Six Percent Club”, but is very well-made and is a very good value. 2012-2017. **88.**

#### **Juvé y Camps “Sweet” Reserva NV**

The Juvé y Camps “Sweet” Reserva non-vintage bottling is designed to be served with dessert or for folks who are new to Cava and really need a bit of residual sweetness in their wines. The bottling is comprised of one-third each of Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada and is finished off with a *dosage* of 52 grams per liter! Nevertheless, the wine is really beautifully balanced and works splendidly at this sweetness level, offering up a bright and complex nose of pears, a touch of lavender, bread dough and a very nice base of almost salty minerality. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and tangy, with an excellent girdle of acidity to balance the sweetness, lovely mineral drive, elegant *mousse* and a very long, refined finish. I am not usually a fan of sweeter styled sparkling wines, as I often find that the residual sweetness clouds the focus of the wine on the palate, but this is emphatically not the case with this lovely wine! 2012-2018. **90.**

#### **Juvé y Camps Cinta Púrpura Brut Reserva NV**

Juvé y Camps’ Cinta Púrpura Brut Reserva bottling is a lighter-styled Cava that is also excellent. The blend is comprised of one third each of the “Big Three” of Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada and is aged for twenty-four months on the lees prior to disgorgement. As this is a Brut bottling, the *dosage* is just over eight grams per liter. The very pretty bouquet on the new release offers up a blend of fresh pear, mandarin orange, warm biscuits, lovely minerality and a topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and frothy, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine focus and a very long, well-balanced and dancing finish. This makes a lovely contrast to the more intense style of the Reserva de la Família bottling. 2012-2020. **90.**

#### **Vilarnau Brut NV**

Though the label does not say so, the current release of the non-vintage Vilarnau Brut is all fruit from the 2010 vintage. This is a blend of the Big Three of Xarel-lo, Macabeo and Parellada, but with the Xarel-lo playing a supporting role in the *mélange*. The *dosage* is ten grams per liter. The nose is straightforward and perfectly pleasant, offering up scents of green apple, lime peel, dusty soil tones and a touch of dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, frothy and easy-going, with nicely buffered acids and good focus, but a pretty short finish. Not bad. 2012-2016. **85.**

### ***Non-Vintage Cava Rosé***

#### **Cava Brut Rosé NV- Castillo Perelada**

The current release of Salvador Dali's house wine is really quite lovely. The *cépage* here is a blend of Trepát, Monastrell and Pinot Noir and the wine is aged twelve months on its lees prior to disgorgement and preparation for release into the market. The color is fairly dark cherry and the wine offers up a fine bouquet of strawberries, cherries, a touch of clove, blood orange and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with good balance, frothy *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice. 2012-2016. **89.**

#### **Cava "Cuvée Especial Rosado" Brut NV- Castillo Perelada**

The Cuvée Especial Rosado from Castillo Perelada is quite different from their Brut Rosé bottling, as this is made up of one hundred percent Trepát. This is a fairly dark-colored rosé Cava, offering up a fine and "winey" nose of cherries, cranberries, orange rind, rye toast and a gentle smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and complex, with elegant *mousse*, fine mid-palate depth and very good length and grip on the tangy finish. This is a rosé Cava that would be much more at home at the table, rather than served as an aperitif- which of course is what the wine above is made for! Good juice. 2012-2017. **89.**

#### **Juvé y Camps Brut Rosé NV**

The non-vintage Juvé y Camps Brut Rose is made up entirely of pinot noir, and this is one of those pinot-based Cavas that I wonder whether or not it might be more interesting with an indigenous grape included in the blend, such as Trepát. In any event, this is a fairly dark colored rosé, offering up a slightly Lambrusco-like nose of cherries, orange peel, smoke and rye. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit heavy-handed, with refined *mousse* and sound balance, but a rather short finish. This is okay, but it strikes me as the weakest link in the current lineup of Cavas from Juvé y Camps- could it be that the pinot noir for this bottling is planted in a section of the Penedès where it just gets too hot for the grape? 2012-2016. **83.**

### ***Vintage-Dated Cava Rosé***

#### **2010 Vilarnau Brut Rosé**

The 2010 Vilarnau Brut Rosé is a blend of ninety percent Trepát and ten percent Pinot Noir and does not undergo malolactic fermentation. The wine is a fairly deep salmon color and offers up a very pretty nose of cherries, cranberries, grapefruit, zest, rye toast and stony minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and frothy, with snappy acids, fine focus and a distinctive closing note of pink grapefruit on the long finish. This is quite good, but still on the young side and a year or two in the cellar should really let it blossom. 2013-2020. **87+.**

#### **2009 Agustí Torelló Mata Rosat Trepát Brut**

The 2009 Agustí Torelló Mata Rosat Trepát Brut is a superb bottle of sparkling Brut Rosé that really is at its best at the table. The wine is completely fermented in stainless steel tanks and aged two years on the lees, with a finishing *dosage* of six grams per liter. The deep and absolutely beautiful nose offers up a mélange of fresh apricot, wild strawberries, blood orange, dried roses, a lovely base of soil tones and a gentle topnote of cinnamon. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very light on its feet, with elegant *mousse*, fine focus and complexity and a long, crisp and classy finish. The grip here is excellent and the wine closes with a very stylish note of cherry stone that really brings out its ability to match with a wide array of cuisine. This is very high class juice. 2012-2020+. **92.**

### ***Vintage-Dated Cava***

#### **2009 Gran Juvé y Camps “Blanc de Noirs” Brut Reserva**

2008 was the first vintage where Blanc de Noirs was allowed officially for the DO of Cava, so this is only the second release of this fine bottling from Juvé y Camps. The color is very, very pale and shows almost no influence from the skins. The wine is made entirely from pinot noir, and my reservations about this grape in the Penedès vanish as I take the first sniff of the bouquet, as this wine is excellent! The dynamite nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of tart orange, apple, jasmine, bread dough, very complex, white soil tones and a gentle touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and very tightly-knit, with superb complexity, a lovely core, very refined *mousse* and a long, dancing and extremely elegant finish. This is an absolutely beautiful wine that really could use a year or two in the cellar to unwind and really start to show all of its potential! 2014-2030+. **93+**.



*The younger generation of the Juvé family, who now head the great Cava house of Juvé Y Camps.*

#### **2009 Vilarnau Brut Nature Reserva**

The 2009 Vilarnau Brut Nature Reserva is a blend of Parellada, Macabeo and Chardonnay finished with a *dosage* of three grams per liter- the upper limit allowed for a Brut Nature bottling in Cava. This is a very fresh and stony wine on both the nose and palate, offering up scents of green apple, lemon, stony minerality and orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and complex, with refined *mousse*, a nice base of soil, but again,

not quite the length and grip of the top examples of Cava. This is tasty in a more ethereal style, but it really could use a bit more backend length. 2012-2020. **87.**

#### **2008 Agustí Torelló Mata Brut Reserva**

The 2008 Brut Reserva from Agustí Torelló Mata is pretty serious juice for a workhorse bottling of Cava. The wine is a blend of the three top white varieties in the region (Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada) and is fermented entirely in stainless steel and aged two years *sur lies* prior to disgorgement. The 2008 offers up a lovely and quite elegant bouquet of green apple, bread dough, lemon peel, a nice base of soil and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and dancing on the palate, with a good core, very refined *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the focused and zesty finish. Lovely Cava. 2012-2018. **88+.**

#### **2008 Cava “Gran Claustro”- Castillo Perelada**

Though this is all made from purchased grapes, it is really quite good. The wine is a blend of Chardonnay, Parellada and Pinot Noir and is aged for twenty-four months on the lees prior to disgorgement. The nose is quite toasty in its blend of apple, bread dough, stony minerality, a touch of nuttiness and a nice, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly complex, with a youthful touch of austerity today, fairly elegant *mousse* and good length and grip on the focused finish. The dosage here is only 1.1 grams per liter, which makes this very dry out of the blocks and a touch more dosage might make for a bit more generosity at this early stage. But, all in all, not a bad drink at all. 2012-2018+. **89.**

#### **2008 Juvé y Camps “Millesimé” Brut Reserva**

The Juvé y Camps “Millesimé” Brut Reserva is made up entirely of chardonnay, and while it is a very well-made wine, at this early stage, the 2008 version does not seem to possess quite the same complexity on the palate as the other top Cava cuvées here, but perhaps it is just on the young side. The deep and intriguing nose offers up scents of pear, apple, lavender, chalky minerality, warm biscuits and lemon zest. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and light on its feet, with frothy *mousse*, good focus and balance, moderate complexity and very good length and grip on the finish. If more complexity will emerge on the palate with bottle age, then my score will seem unduly conservative- certainly the nose is already quite lovely. 2012-2020+. **89+.**

#### **2008 Juvé y Camps “Reserva de la Família” Brut Nature Gran Reserva**

The Reserva de la Família bottling from Juvé y Camps is the flagship wine of the house and one of the best values in the world of Cava with which I am familiar. The wine is aged thirty to thirty-six months on the lees and is comprised in 2008 of a blend of forty percent Xarel-lo, thirty percent Parellada, twenty percent Macabeo and ten percent Chardonnay. The *dosage* here is just a smidgeon over two grams per liter. This is a deep, classic and very serious example of Cava, offering up an outstanding and impressively complex nose of tart orange, bread fruit, stony minerality, bread dough, sea salts and a touch of lavender in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, elegant *mousse*, crisp acids and superb length and grip on the focused finish. This is a quite powerful style of Cava that is more along the lines of Champagne than some of the more delicate and dancing styles of Cava in Cataluña, but it is a very elegant and satisfying drink in its more *Champenois* personality. This will age beautifully. Superb juice and relatively available, as the estate generally produces between two and two and half million bottles of this outstanding cuvée each year. 2012-2030. **92.**

### **2008 Gran Juvé y Camps Brut Gran Reserva**

The Gran Juvé y Camps bottling is the top of the line Cava at this fine house and the 2008 vintage is simply stunning. The wine is comprised of a blend of twenty-five percent each of Xarel-lo, Macabeo, Parellada and Chardonnay and is aged on the lees for fully forty-two months prior to disgorgement. It is a Brut bottling with a *dosage* of 7.5 grams per liter and is made up of a selection of the very best cuvées in the cellar each year. The 2008 is outstanding, offering up a vibrant and complex and very refined bouquet of peach, bread dough, salty minerality, a touch of orange zest, and a nice topnote of Catalàn herb tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and extremely elegant, with a rock solid core, excellent focus, utterly refined *mousse*, ripe acids and exceptional length and grip on the classy finish. A great bottle of Cava that should age well for decades. 2012-2030. **93+**.

### **2008 Vilarnau “Albert de Vilarnau” Brut Nature Gran Reserva**

The 2008 Vilarnau “Albert de Vilarnau” Brut Nature Gran Reserva is a fifty-fifty blend of chardonnay and pinot noir and is really quite Champagne-like in its aromatic and flavor profiles. The wine is aged for thirty months on its lees prior to disgorgement and offers up a deep and classy nose of apple, pear, warm biscuits, chalky soil tones, a touch of Catalàn spice and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very well-balanced, with a lovely core, frothy *mousse* and very fine length and grip on the focused and classy finish. Fine juice. 2012-2017. **90+**.

### **2007 Agustí Torelló Mata Brut Nature Gran Reserva**

The 2007 Agustí Torelló Mata Brut Nature Gran Reserva is a superb wine, with its three plus years of aging on the lees producing a wine of great harmony and very refined, pinpoint bubbles. This is again a blend of the “Big Three” of Macabeo, Xarel-lo and Parellada, and the wine sees no *dosage*. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a blend of apple, fresh pear, tart orange, wheat toast, stony minerality and just a whisper of Chablis-like straw notes in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very refined on the palate, with lovely mineral drive, excellent focus and balance and a very long, crisp and complex finish. I would love to see this bottling with some extended bottle age, as all the constituent components seem to be in place for this wine to evolve very positively with cellaring. Lovely juice. 2012-2020. **91+**.

### **2007 Agustí Torelló Mata “Barrica” Brut Nature Gran Reserva**

The 2007 Barrica Brut Nature is made entirely from Macabeo, which the Torelló family feels is the white wine grape here that handles wood the best. Forty percent of the base wines are fermented in oak barrels for the Barrica bottling, with these wines spending six months in barrel prior to their being incorporated in the blend for the Barrica Brut Nature. The 2007 Barrica is a stunning bottle of Cava, offering up a deep and very bright nose of lemon, pear, straw, an impressively complex base of minerality, bread dough and the gentlest touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and zesty, with very elegant *mousse*, excellent focus and superb length and grip on the well-balanced and vibrant finish. This is just a superb bottle of Cava that shows only the faintest whisper of oak influence. Again, this seems emphatically like a wine that will age very, very well. 2012-2025. **93**.

### **2007 Gran Reserva Brut Nature- Huguet de Can Feixes**

The 2007 Gran Reserva Brut Nature is made up of a blend of sixty percent Parellada and twenty percent each of Macabeo and Pinot Noir. It probably has about one gram per liter of *dosage* in this vintage. The nose is deep, complex and really vibrant, jumping out of the glass in a very refined blend of grapefruit, bread dough, lovely, salty minerality, lemon peel and a very



gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with great focus and balance, elegant *mousse* and superb length and grip on the still quite youthful finish. This wine will age beautifully. 2012-2022+. **93.**

#### **2007 Gran Reserva Brut Classic- Huguet de Can Feixes**

At seven grams per liter of *dosage*, this is still quite a dry example of Brut, but after the great purity of the Brut Nature bottling from this same vintage, it is hard to not find this very judicious *dosage* detracts ever so slightly from the precision of the wine. But, this is just splitting hairs, as the 2007 Brut Classic is also a dynamite bottle of Cava, offering up a complex nose of tart orange, grapefruit, stony minerality, bread dough and again, a bit of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with very refined *mousse* and a very long and classy finish. I did not ask, but assume that the Brut Classic is a similar blend to the Brut Nature from this year and is just finished with a different *dosage*. Fine juice. 2012-2020. **91.**

#### **2007 Cava des Lettres Brut Nature Gran Reserva**

In contrast to the Albert de Vilarnau bottling, which relies on chardonnay and pinot noir, the Cave des Lettres bottling is comprised of the Big Three of Macabeo, Parellada and Xarel-lo. This is the finest wine that the house makes in my opinion, with a bit more classic Cava personality than the Albert de Vilarnau bottling. The 2007 is excellent, jumping from the glass in a fine and leesy blend of green apples, citrus, Catalàn spices, stony minerality, a touch of jasmine and a gentle dollop of bread dough from its extended aging on the lees. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite stony in personality, with a fine core, very elegant *mousse*, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2012-2025. **93.**

#### **2007 Vilarnau “Albert de Vilarnau” Barrica Brut Nature Gran Reserva**

The Barrica version of the Albert de Vilarnau is fifty percent barrel fermented (probably in pretty new barrels, based on the profile of the wine) and is made up of a blend of Macabeo, Parellada and Chardonnay. The wine is deep and complex on both the nose and palate, but also quite marked by its wood. The bouquet is a blend of apple, pear, toast, good minerality, a touch of smokiness and the aforementioned oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and well-balanced on the attack, with good length and grip, fine complexity, lovely *mousse*, but a bit of woodiness on the finish that seems completely out of place in a high quality Cava. Not an experiment I would continue if it were up to me. 2012-2016. **86.**

#### **2006 Kripta- Agustí Torelló Mata**

The 2006 vintage of Kripta, which is the current release on the market, is an utterly stunning bottle of Cava that is every bit as unique and compelling as any *Tête de Cuvée* Champagne. The wine is always a blend of the “Big Three” white wine grapes of Cava, which are fermented entirely in stainless steel and aged *sur lies* for five years prior to disgorgement. The absolutely stunning nose of the 2006 soars from the glass in a magical mélange of tart apples, lemon, a touch of fresh almonds, brioche, a strong vein of minerality that carries a distinct whiff of sea salt, citrus peel and a smoky topnote. It is clearly the most Champagne-like in aromatic profile of any of the superb Cavas from Agustí Torelló Mata. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and flawlessly balanced, with a fine core, great mineral drive, utterly refined *mousse*, superb acidity and outstanding length and grip on the complex and laser-like finish. The Kripta bottling from Agustí Torelló Mata is truly one of Spain’s greatest wines. In a perfect world, I would be inclined to give the 2006 Kripta a couple of years in the cellar to fully blossom and develop its secondary layers of complexity. It is a great wine. 2014-2035. **95+.**

### **2005 Gran Reserva Brut Nature- Huguet de Can Feixes (served from magnum)**

The 2005 Brut Nature was absolutely singing from magnum at the time of my visit in early July, offering up a blossoming bouquet of bread fruit, tart orange, very complex minerality, *fleur de sel*, citrus peel and plenty of bread dough. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and wide open, with outstanding mid-palate depth, crisp acids, pinpoint bubbles and lovely complexity on the suave and very, very classy finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Cava that argues very persuasively that a few years of bottle age for new releases of the Huguet de Can Feixes Brut Nature bottlings is highly rewarding! 2012-2025+. **93+**.

### **2005 Gran Juvé y Camps Brut Gran Reserva**

This particular bottle of the 2005 Gran Juvé y Camps Brut Gran Reserva had just been disgorged- after seventy-six months aging on the lees! In this vintage the *cépage* is forty percent Xarel-lo, thirty percent Macabeo, twenty-five percent Parellada and five percent Chardonnay. This is another truly excellent bottle of Cava, jumping from the glass in a classy blend of warm bread, apples, tart orange, *fleur de sel*, gentle smokiness and a lovely base of Catalàn soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and light on its feet, with a great core, refined *mousse* and excellent focus and grip on the very long and well-balanced finish. High class juice. 2012-2025. **92**.

### ***The Spanish Artisan Wine Group- Can Festis Cava (Jaume Giró et Giró)***

*While I will be doing a full-fledged feature on Cava in the next issue, I wanted to include notes here on The Spanish Artisan Wine Group's fine Catalan producer, Jaume Giró et Giró and their excellent label of Can Festis Cava. Like virtually all of the top producers I have tasted in recent months, Jaume Giró et Giró is part of the "Six Percent Club" who own their own vineyards and produce Cava solely from their own grapes. As I will elaborate on in my article on Cava, in my experience, this is one of the fundamental building blocks for producing truly world class Cava, and if one were to simply limit one's consumption of Cava to producers who grow their own grapes and make their own wines, one could steer clear of disappointingly bland examples and come to appreciate just how beautifully delicate and complex top flight Cava can be from members of this "Six Percent Club". Señor Giró produces three levels of Cava, all fermented in the bottle like Champagne, with the three levels neatly reflecting the Bronze, Silver and Gold medals of the Olympics. These are outstanding sparkling wines that are every bit as interesting as top examples of Champagne in the classic, dancing style of great Cava.*

### **Can Festis Cava "Bronze Label" Brut Nature- Jaume Giró et Giró**

The "Bronze Label" Cava from Can Festis is comprised of a blend of ten percent Chardonnay, twenty percent Macabeu, and thirty-five percent each of Xarel-lo and Parellada and is aged for twelve months on the lees prior to disgorgement. The wine is really a beautifully vibrant and racy glass of Cava, offering up a complex nose of lime zest, green apple, gentle notes of bread dough and a beautiful base of Catalan soil tones (similar to *garrigue*, only more floral in nature). On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and dancing, with a good core, frothy *mousse*, brisk acids and really lovely length and grip on the complex finish. This is an ideal *aperitif* Cava that is a perfect lead-in to tapas. 2012-2017+. **88**.

**Can Festis Cava “Silver Label” Brut Nature Reserva- Jaume Giró et Giró**

The “Silver Label” Reserva Cava from Can Festis is really a beautiful wine, having aged on its lees for eighteen months prior to disgorgement and preparation for labeling. It is a similar blend to the Bronze Label (ten percent chardonnay, twenty percent Macabeu, and thirty-five percent each of Xarel-lo and Parellada) and offers up a deeper and more complex nose and palate than the vibrant Bronze Label. The bouquet is a fine and classy blend of apple, tangerine, warm bread, lovely, complex soil tones, citrus peel and a touch of lavender in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rounder than the above, with a fine core of fruit, lovely complexity and focus, lovely, pinpoint bubbles, bright acids and superb length and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. This is lovely wine. 2012-2019+. **90.**

**Can Festis Cava “Gold Label” Brut Nature Grand Reserva- Jaume Giró et Giró**

The Gold Label from Can Festis is an identical blend to the other two fine bottlings from this lovely Cava specialist (ten percent chardonnay, twenty percent Macabeu, and thirty-five percent each of Xarel-lo and Parellada) and is aged fully thirty months on the lees prior to disgorgement. This is really a stunning bottle of Cava- light on its feet and very vibrant, but with superb complexity on both the nose and palate. The outstanding bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of tart orange, lime zest, warm bread, wonderful Catalan soil tones, lime blossoms, sea salts and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is very pure, complex and full-bodied, with a rock solid core of fruit, bright acids, very elegant *mousse*, superb focus and balance and a very long, classy and complex finish. Just a lovely, high class bottle of Cava! 2012-2020+. **93.**

## **ANOTHER PASS THROUGH THE 2011 BEAUJOLAIS VINTAGE (AND FRIENDS)**



I reported in-depth on the superb 2011 Beaujolais vintage back in Issue Forty-One, and will not go into the details of the vintage again only two issues later. Suffice to say that the 2011 vintage in Beaujolais is simply outstanding and really built for the cellar, with a great many of the wines showing a spine of tannin that is far from customary in this region (with the exception of the most structured crus of Morgon and Moulin-à-Vent), but also with great purity and nascent complexity. It is a rather unique vintage stylistically in my experience, but clearly outstanding in quality and it will be fascinating to see how these young and beautiful wines evolve with bottle age. For new subscribers who may have not seen the report on the vintage published in Issue Forty-One, just email me and I will send you a copy of the article for the relevant climactic background and fundamental style of the 2011s. As I noted in that piece, a great number of my favorite bottlings had not yet been released from 2011 at the time it was published, so I dutifully set about tasting as many wines as I could during my stay in Beaune for three weeks in November of 2012. As I could not squeeze a trip down to Beaujolais, I collected samples (principally from the superb growers represented by American importer Kermit Lynch- many thanks to his very helpful staff in Beaune for making these samples happen) to taste during my weekends, and also had the pleasure to taste with Gregory Barbet of Domaine des Billards in

Saint-Amour, who made the trek north to Beaune to show many of the new releases from the several properties his family owns in the region. I also had the chance to taste the entire range of the superb 2011 Beaujolais from Maison Joseph Drouhin and Château des Jacques while I was visiting, so I was awash with great Gamay every weekend during my trip.

As I noted in Issue Forty-One, the 2011 vintage in Beaujolais is exceptional in quality, but it is a fairly structured vintage and most of the top wines from this year are going to need some cellaring to really deliver on their very considerable promise. I very much like the 2011s in general and feel that this will be one of the great, reference point vintages for Beaujolais in the years to come, and it is a particularly fine vintage for those (like me) who are predisposed to age their wines from this region and drink them far out into their plateaus of maturity. As I discussed in depth a couple of issues ago, the 2011s are quite noteworthy for the amount of tannin in the wines, which seems to show a bit more prominently than is typical in a top Beaujolais vintage, the acids are also a bit on the lower side in 2011 and one notices the tannins here quite a bit. But, the depth of fruit in most of the wines I have tasted from this vintage is also exceptional, and the fruit is striking for its purity and intensity, so there is little worries that the wines will not have sufficient stuffing to await the softening up of their tannins. In fact, while most 2011s are not going to be particularly charming out of the blocks, due to their rather substantial tannins (in the context of Beaujolais, mind you, these wines are not tannic like 2010 Bordeaux!), they will be glorious wines with a bit of bottle age and should eventually vie with 2005 as one of the greatest recent vintages in the region. The wines have far greater purity to their fruit than the riper 2009s, and there are no signs of any *sur maturité* in any of the 2011s that I have crossed paths with thus far, so the future looks very bright for this vintage.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Gregory Barbet was very kind to drive north to Beaune during my Burgundy trip, so that I could taste his family's fine portfolio of Cru Beaujolais estates. I should note that in addition to the superb wines reported on below from the Barbet family, (who owns Domaine des Billards in Saint-Amour and the Château de Fleurie, as well as producing several bottlings of Moulin-à-Vent from Domaine Grand Moulin), I tasted a handful of new cuvées of Moulin-à-Vent that the family has aged in a percentage of new oak and which hail from various *lieux à dits* in the commune. I have not reported on these bottlings below (with the exception of one 2009), as the cuvées that I tasted in Beaune this past November were still very, very young and had not yet fully integrated their oak components into the base of the wines. There will be three distinct cuvées of Moulin-à-Vent produced in this style- which harkens back a bit to the style of the wines at Château des Jacques- a "Champ du Coeur" produced from fifty year-old vines, a "La Roche" bottling made from sixty year-old vines, and a "La Moulin" bottling from a parcel of their oldest vines that lie right below the windmill that gives the appellation its name. Given that the 2011s are one of the first vintages where these wines have been produced, I had no previous experience upon which to base my impressions of these young wines and it seemed completely inappropriate to publish notes on the wines now, when they are still in their "*enfants terribles*" stage and where I really have no idea in what direction they are going to go over the course of their *elevage*. I will look forward to re-tasting the 2011s again on my next visit to the region (or when the wines arrive here in New York) and see how they are progressing, as they certainly showed off some superb raw materials underneath the new wood, but, as I said, the oak had not yet fully integrated into the young wines.

### ***Beaujolais and Beaujolais-Villages***

#### **2011 Beaujolais- Dupeuble Père et Fils**

The straight Beaujolais bottling from Dupeuble Père et Fils may well be my favorite example produced from this appellation- and I do drink a ton of Dupeuble Beaujolais over the course of a year- and the 2011 vintage is going to be excellent. The very pure and classy nose wafts from the glass in a fine blend of cherries, sweet cranberries, lovely soil tones, fresh herbs, woodsmoke and a pungent topnote of violet. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and sappy at the core, with lovely focus and balance, just a touch of 2011's tannin and excellent length and grip on the bouncy finish. Just a lovely and very serious bottle of Beaujolais. 2013-2020. **90.**

#### **2011 Beaujolais “1512”- Dupeuble Père et Fils**

I had never previously tasted the “1512” cuvée from Dupeuble Père et Fils, which takes its name from when the family estate was first established in the region. I am not sure of the exact differences in this blend from the standard bottling, but the 2011 version of the “1512” is exceptional, offering up a very sappy bouquet of red and black cherries, pomegranate, fresh herb tones, a complex base of soil, violets and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and sappy at the core, with great backend soil drive (particularly for “straight” Beaujolais!), a touch of tannin and great length and grip on the focused finish. Just a beautiful bottle of wine and a stunning value. 2013-2020. **91.**

#### **2011 Beaujolais “De l’Été”- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

This is a relatively new bottling of Beaujolais from Maison Drouhin that I have not crossed paths with previously. The 2011 is lovely, offering up a deep and juicy nose of cherries, sweet cranberries, a touch of nuttiness, woodsmoke and a lovely base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, succulent and nicely tangy, with good mid-palate depth, little tannin and fine length and grip on the eminently quaffable finish. This is made to be drunk in its exuberant youth and is lovely in that style. 2013-2015. **87.**

#### **2011 Beaujolais-Villages- Maison Joseph Drouhin (375 ml.)**

The 2011 Beaujolais-Villages from Joseph Drouhin is a lovely example of the vintage. The nose is bright, sappy and quite classy, jumping from the glass in a blend of black cherries, pomegranate, woodsmoke, dark soil and a nice touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and bouncy, with a lovely core of fruit, fine balance and a long, wide open and juicy finish. Lovely and quite classic Beaujolais-Villages that shows none of the firmer side of the 2011 vintage. 2013-2018+. **89.**

#### **2011 Beaujolais-Villages- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 2011 Beaujolais-Villages from Louis Jadot is very good on both the nose and palate, with the lovely purity of the vintage tied to a bit of backend tannin that will carry the wine several years in the bottle. The nose offers up a deep blend of black cherries, a touch of cassis, vinesmoke, a nice base of soil and a bit of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, focused and still a bit tightly-knit, with solid depth, good balance and just a whisper of backend tannin on the finish. Good juice. 2013-2018. **87.**

### ***Saint-Amour***

#### **2011 Saint-Amour- Domaine des Billards (Héritiers Loron)**

As I have been writing for several years now, Domaine des Billards brilliant Saint-Amour is one of my absolute favorite crus in the entire region. This wine ages brilliantly in even the softest of years, so it should come as no surprise that the 2011 will be a great wine for the cellar,

with the superb structure of the vintage delivered with all of the great purity of plummy red fruit that makes this wine the Musigny of Beaujolais. The 2011 Billards offers up a young and absolutely stellar nose of red and black cherries, plums, a touch of raw cocoa, nutskins, a beautiful base of soil, woodsmoke and fresh thyme in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and young, with a rock solid core of fruit, ripe,, beautifully integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. This will need at least a couple of years in the cellar to really blossom and should prove as long-lived as the superb 1989 Domaine des Billards, which was still drinking beautifully a year ago! 2015-2040. **94.**

**2011 Saint-Amour “Clos des Billards” V.V.- Domaine des Billards (Héritiers Loron)**

The 2011 old vine bottling of Clos des Billards is more closed and primary than the regular bottling at the present time, but it too has outstanding potential. This wine is partially aged in older Burgundy barrels. The very pure and sappy nose offers up scents of black cherries, plums, dark chocolate, a beautiful base of soil, coffee bean, herbs and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very primary, with a deep and sappy core, very suave tannins, great focus and balance and a very long, youthful finish. This is a superb wine, but it will want a few years to fully integrate its touch of new oak and blossom into its secondary layers of complexity. Ultimately, it will probably outpace the regular bottling from Domaine des Billards, but I am not sure whether the touch of new wood that the Clos des Billards receives really adds that much to a great *terroir* such as this. Stylistically, it is certainly a bit different, and qualitatively, the wine is excellent, but it will be very interesting to see which wine I like better eight to ten years down the road. 2018-2040. **93-94.**

**2009 Saint-Amour “Clos des Billards” V.V.- Domaine des Billards (Héritiers Loron)**

I am not sure if the Clos des Billards was seeing some of the cuvée raised in older Burgundy barrels back in 2009, but I did not detect any impact from oak in the wine when I tasted it this past November in Beaune. The deep and ripe nose is excellent, offering up a complex constellation of black cherries, plums, chocolate, damp soil, herb tones and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, ripe, long and lovely, with a sappy core, quite low acids for this bottling, a succulent core and a very long, modestly tannic finish. This is a plush and opulent 2009 Cru Beaujolais that will not make old bones- particularly by the superb track record for aging of the Domaine des Billards wines- but, it is an excellent example of the 2009 vintage that is drinking very well today and offers up impressive purity and complexity. 2013-2020+. **91.**

**2011 Saint-Amour- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The Drouhin family makes absolutely delightful Saint-Amour and their 2011 is superb. The deep and classy nose wafts from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of orange peel, dark soil tones and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and shows off the concentration of the 2011 vintage in its rock solid core, with soft tannins, lovely focus and balance and a very long, pure and still quite primary finish. I tasted this in November of 2012 while in Beaune and I imagine it is already starting to blossom nicely in the ensuing few months, but I would be inclined to not start popping this wine in earnest until the latter half of 2013 or the start of next year, as it clearly has the inherent staying power of the 2011 vintage and will only improve with more bottle age. A lovely wine. 2013-2025+. **90+.**

## ***Moulin-à-Vent***

### **2011 Moulin-à-Vent- Domaine Grand Moulin (Xavier et Nicolas Barbet)**

The regular bottling of Moulin-à-Vent from Domaine Barbet was raised in ten percent new oak in 2011, with the remainder of the cuvée raised traditionally in old *foudres*. This is really an excellent example of the vintage, delivering a young and classy bouquet of cassis, dark berries, espresso, woodsmoke, dark minerality, fresh herb tones, incipient notes of game and just a whisper of cedar from its small percentage raised in Burgundy barrels. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite closed still, with excellent mid-palate depth, firm tannins and outstanding length and grip on the young and very classy finish. This will be a terrific bottle of Moulin-à-Vent and should prove to be quite long-lived, but it will need several years of cellaring to really blossom. 2017-2040. **92+**.

### **2011 Moulin-à-Vent “Laroche”- Château des Jacques**

The 2011 Laroche from Château des Jacques is a stunning young example of Moulin-à-Vent, with great purity and depth coupled to a sturdy and perfectly balanced structural chassis that suggests this wine will easily go fifty years in bottle! The superb bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex and primary blend of cassis, black cherries, currant leaf, a touch of coffee bean, dark soil, bonfires and a fine framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven, with a lovely core of pure fruit, a tightly-knit personality, excellent focus and a very long, very young finish. This is a stunning bottle in the making, but give it some time to unwind in the cellar. 2018-2050+. **94**.

### **2011 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos du Grand Carquelin”- Château des Jacques**

The 2011 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos du Grand Carquelin” from Château des Jacques is outstanding and should prove to be one of the longest-lived and finest of the wines from this vintage. The deep, pure and youthful nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of black cherries, sappy red berries, a very complex base of soil, a touch of coffee, juniper berry, gentle smoky overtones, fresh herbs and a stylish framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite tightly-knit, with ripe, well-integrated tannins, lovely focus and outstanding length and grip on the very well-balanced and transparent finish. This will take several years to really show all it has to offer, but the wait will be well worth it! 2018-2060. **94+**.

### **2011 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos de Rocheegrès”- Château des Jacques**

The 2011 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos de Rocheegrès” from Château des Jacques is another absolutely outstanding example of the vintage, offering up (not surprisingly) a young and structured personality that will ask for a bit of bottle age before it really blossoms. The deep and powerful nose offers up scents of dark berries, espresso, dark soil tones, a bit of charred wood, incipient notes of meatiness and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, ripe tannins and a long, primary and potentially sappy finish. This is not as structurally sturdy as the Laroche bottling, but it is still quite unformed and the real complexity here is still several years away. 2017-2040+. **92+**.

### **2011 Moulin-à-Vent- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2011 Moulin-à-Vent from Maison Joseph Drouhin is a lovely and very suave example of the vintage, with the inherent sturdiness of 2011 nicely buried in a refined personality, and it is only on the still very primary and chewy finish that one realizes just how young this wine really is. The deep and sappy bouquet offers up a classic mélange of cassis, dark berries, a touch of bonfire, espresso, deep, dark soil tones, currant leaf, incipient notes of gamebird, a bit of fresh nutmeg and a delicate touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, tight and rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and balance, a very soil-driven personality,



firm tannins and a long, tangy and very youthful finish. This will be a superb bottle, but it will need some time. 2016-2040. **92+**.

### **2010 Moulin-à-Vent- Domaine Grand Moulin (Xavier et Nicolas Barbet)**

The 2010 Moulin-à-Vent from Domaine Grand Moulin is a beautiful example of this very classic vintage, wafting from the glass in a very pure aromatic constellation of dark berries, black cherries, gamebird, a touch of bonfire, dark soil tones, fresh thyme and just a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core of fruit, superb focus and balance, moderate, ripe tannins and superb length and grip on the tangy and youthful finish. This is not as closed down as many of the 2010 crus I tasted in preparation for the article on Beaujolais in Issue Forty-One, but it still needs a few years to start to really blossom and deliver some secondary layers of complexity. An absolutely classic young bottle of Moulin-à-Vent. 2014-2030+. **92+**.



### **2009 Moulin-à-Vent “Champ de Coeur”- Domaine Grand Moulin (Famille Barbet)**

The 2009 Moulin-à-Vent “Champ de Coeur” from Domaine Grand Moulin is a very pretty example of the vintage that has integrated its new wood very nicely and is now drinking at its apogee. The complex and stylish nose offers up scents of cassis, black cherries, dark soil tones, coffee grounds and a bit of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and

quite complex, with the low acids of the vintage, a velvety core and very good length and grip on the moderately tannic finish. Like many of the 2008 crus, I would opt for drinking this up over the next several years, despite its touch of tannin, as my gut feeling is that the very ripe 2009 vintage is not going to make old bones, with a few notable exceptions (such as Château Thivin's fine Côte de Brouilly). 2012-2020. **89.**

**1985 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos des Rochegrès”- Château des Jacques (served from magnum)**

Out of magnum, the 1985 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos des Rochegrès” from Château des Jacques was showing beautifully at the dinner, offering up a complex and very vibrant nose of cherries, dried red berries, a touch of acorn, bonfire, fennel seed, a stony base of granite and dried oak leaves. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely *à point*, with a fine core of fruit, tangy, well-integrated acids, still a touch of tannin and outstanding length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Moulin-à-Vent that is drinking at its peak, but has decades of life still ahead of it! 2013-2035+. **93.**

**1929 Moulin-à-Vent “Carquelin”- Domaine Maurice Crozet**

The estate of Maurice Crozet eventually became Château des Jacques, which, as most readers already know, is the flagship Beaujolais estate today of Maison Louis Jadot. I had the great good fortune to taste this wine at an old Burgundy dinner in November of 2012, as New York's “Monsieur Burgundy”, Daniel Johnnes had sourced a few bottles in a cellar he bought a few years ago and brought one along to blind taste with us and check our palates at the end of the evening. No one guessed that this was not from the Côte d'Or! The fine old nose offers up a complex blend of dried red fruit, heather, venison, *sous bois* and a nice, autumnal touch of dried oak leaves and acorns. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tangy, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and complexity, lovely balance and impressive length and grip on the poised and classy finish. This outperformed several old bottles from far tonier Côte d'Or appellations on this particular evening, and is a glorious testament to just how well top vintages of Cru Beaujolais can age! This beautiful old bottle of Moulin-à-Vent is nowhere near the end of the line. 2012-2030. **93.**

***Fleurie***

**2011 Fleurie- Maison Joseph Drouhin (375 ml.)**

The 2011 Drouhin Fleurie is a fine and sappy example of the vintage that perfectly synthesizes the structure of the vintage and the early generosity of this cru. The nose is a lovely mélange of cherries, sweet cranberries, woodsmoke, a nice base of soil, fresh herb tones and a nice touch of cherry skin. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and soil-driven, with modest tannins, lovely focus and grip and a long, classy finish. Fine juice in a very suave, middleweight style. 2013-2020. **90.**

**2011 Fleurie- Château de Fleurie**

The 2011 Château de Fleurie had been bottled in September of 2012 and was absolutely singing when I tasted it in Beaune with Gregory Barbet in November. The wine is made with eighty percent carbonic maceration and is outstanding in this vintage, jumping from the glass in a beautiful aromatic blend of black cherries, a touch of cassis, dark chocolate, violets and incipient notes of gamebird. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nicely structured, with a great core of fruit, superb focus and balance and a very long, moderately tannic finish. This is a

classic 2011 Cru and needs a year in the cellar to really unwind and show off its secondary layers of complexity. A beautiful and very serious bottle of Fleurie in the making. 2014-2025+. **92+**.

### ***Régnié***

#### **2011 Régnié- Domaine Guy Breton**

The 2011 Régnié from Domaine Guy Breton is a very pretty wine that shows just a touch of volatility on both the nose and palate, and which kept its score down a tad. But, other than the touch of VA, there is a lot to like here, as the wine offers up scents of cherries, cranberries, woodsmoke, fresh herb tones, coffee and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and echoes the complexity of the nose, with very little tannin (particularly for a 2011 Cru!), tangy acids and a very long, juicy and classy finish. If one can overlook the touch of volatility here better than I did, then add three points to the score, as there is certainly a lot of complexity going off here on both the nose and palate. But, my pretty high tolerance for VA still found the degree in my particular bottle a bit distracting. 2013-2015+. **87**.

#### **2011 Régnié “Sans Soufre Ajouté”- Château de la Pierre**

The 2011 Régnié “Sans Soufre Ajouté” from Château de la Pierre is a new bottling from the Barbet family of Domaine des Billards fame, and is their first low sulfur bottling for the natural wine market. The 2011 version is excellent, but the 2009 that I also tasted (please see below) was already starting to get to the tail end of its plateau and was in need of drinking up over the very near-term. This is one of the problems I see with the low sulfur wines in general- most age very, very quickly, and for someone like me who always wants to cellar my wines for an extended period of time, these types of bottlings have very limited appeal- no matter how well-made they may be out of the blocks. But, in any event, the 2011 Régnié “Sans Soufre Ajouté” from Château de la Pierre is delicious right now, offering up a very refined nose of black cherries, plums, smoke, a lovely base of dark soil tones and a bit of coffee bean. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pure, with a sappy core of fruit, very gentle tannins and excellent length and grip on the wide open finish. This is lovely juice. 2013-2018? **90**.

#### **2011 Régnié “Grain et Granit”- Domaine Charly Thévenet**

The 2011 Régnié “Grain et Granit” from Charly Thévenet is a lovely example of both the vintage and this cru, wafting from the glass in a deep and sappy blend of black cherries, dark chocolate, woodsmoke, lovely minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a touch chewy with 2011’s tannins. The wine has a sappy core, lovely focus and balance and very good length and grip on the well-balanced and classy finish. Good juice. 2013-2020. **89+**.

#### **2009 Régnié “Sans Soufre Ajouté”- Château de la Pierre**

2009 is a very ripe vintage in Beaujolais, so it is understandable that many of the wines from this vintage are going to age faster than would be the case in more structured vintages such as 2005 or 2011. The 2009 Château de la Pierre is now ready for drinking up, as it offers a ripe and complex nose of plums, grilled venison, coffee, herb tones, dark soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, plush and complex, with very good balance, plump fruit in the mid-palate and still a bit of chewy tannins that probably will never get a chance to resolve on the long and ripe finish. It is my impression that this wine is going to start to get oxidative on both the nose and palate in the next year or two and it is time to drink it up, even though there remains just a touch of backend tannin. It is very tasty today, but, do not wait! 2013-2014. **88**.

## ***Morgon***

### **2011 Morgon “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Guy Breton**

The old vine bottle from Guy Breton hails from his parcel of eighty year old vines in Morgon. Monsieur Breton is one of the “Gang of Four” producers that are represented by US importer Kermit Lynch, with the mantra of all four domaines to make as natural wines as possible, with late harvesting and no use of sulfur during the vinification. This approach makes for quite opulent and pure wines, but in a vintage like 2011, which will age more on tannin than gamay’s customary acidity, the late harvesting and no sulfur regimen may make this wine a strong candidate for relatively early consumption. The bouquet is a touch marked by volatile acidity, but underneath is deep and complex, offering up scents of pomegranate, cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of raw cocoa and a very lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows quite gentle acidity, with a sappy core, lovely soil signature, very moderate tannins (particularly for a 2011 Morgon) and good length and grip on the slightly flat finish. This wine has lovely complexity, and with a bit of time in decanter is really superb to drink right now, but I would not bury it in the cellar. 2013-2016+? **90.**

### **2011 Morgon- Maison Joseph Drouhin**

The 2011 Morgon from Maison Drouhin is a beautiful example of the vintage, offering up a deep and sappy nose of black cherries, dark chocolate, woodsmoke, a nice touch of roasted nuttiness, a fine base of granite and a topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy at the core, with good acids, fine focus and really quite moderate tannins for the vintage on the long and classy finish. This is a fine bottle of Morgon and one 2011 that will not demande some extended cellaring before it is approachable. 2013-2025+. **92.**



*Jean Foillard in his parcel of old vines in the Côte du Py vineyard.*

### **2011 Morgon “Cuvée Corcelette”- Domaine Jean Foillard**

Jean Foillard makes terrific wines, with the majority of his Morgons raised in older, 225 liter Burgundy barrels. However, his Cuvée Corcelette, which is produced from eighty year-old

vines in Morgon that are planted in sandstone, rather than the more customary granite and schist of most of the Côte de Py, is raised in larger *foudres*, rather than Burgundy barrels. The 2011 is outstanding, offering up a deep, complex and lovely nose of sappy black cherries, pomegranate, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, a touch of gamebird, French roast and fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with a wide open personality, lovely mid-palate depth and fine length and grip on the gently chewy finish. I would give this a year in the cellar to allow the tannins to further fall away, but it is already a very good glass of Morgon with a bit of time in the decanter. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2020+. **92.**

**2011 Morgon “Côte du Py”- Domaine Jean Foillard**

The 2011 Côte du Py from Jean Foillard is a bit more reserved than the Cuvée Corcelette, but this will clearly be a stunning example of the vintage with a few years’ worth of bottle age. The very deep and youthful bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of black cherries, pomegranate, herb tones, a superb base of stony soil, a touch of balsam boughs, a bit of coffee grounds and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with lovely structure, a rock solid core, ripe tannins and outstanding grip and focus on the very long and pure finish. This is going to be a terrific bottle of Morgon, but I would give it at least a couple of years in the cellar to let the tannins soften up and the secondary layers here to start to emerge. 2015-2025+. **93.**

**2011 Morgon “Côte du Py”- Château des Jacques**

The 2011 Morgon “Côte du Py” from Château des Jacques is a young and excellent wine, with outstanding depth on both the nose and palate and a proper 2011 structure that will demand some time in the cellar prior to tackling a bottle. The deep and very pure bouquet offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, fresh herbs, cedar, French roast and a touch of youthful pepper. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and laser-like in its focus, with a sappy core, great transparency, sound acids and plenty of youthful tannins to carry the wine far into the future. This is so beautifully balanced that it is not a bad drink, even in its recalcitrant youth, but the real fireworks here are still several years out in the future. 2016-2040. **93.**

**2011 Morgon- Domaine Marcel Lapierre**

Marcel Lapierre passed away after the 2010 vintage, leaving behind an impressive legacy of great wines that transformed a region. His son, Mathieu Lapierre had worked alongside Marcel for a few years before his passing and the 2011 vintage, which is Mathieu’s first on his own, is very much cut from the same mold as the beautiful wines his father fashioned over the course of his career, and I cannot sense any change whatsoever in the superb quality and style these wines with the generational change at the helm. The 2011 Morgon is stunning, soaring from the glass in a vibrant and sappy blend of black cherries, pomegranate, a beautiful base of soil, nutskins, woodsmoke and fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very, very transparent, with a sappy core, moderate tannins and a very long, succulent and beautifully refined finish. There are not a lot of tannins on display here—rather a surprise for a 2011 Morgon— and this will be a very pure and delicious wine that drinks brilliantly right from the outset. 2013-2023. **93.**

**2011 Morgon “Cuvée Marcel Lapierre MMXI”- Domaine Marcel Lapierre**

The Cuvée Marcel Lapierre is made from a parcel of one hundred year-old vines and the 2011 version is outstanding. The exceptional bouquet delivers a very refined constellation of black cherries, dark chocolate, balsam bough, woodsmoke, a beautifully complex base of granitic soil tones and a topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex,

with a very classy personality, outstanding mid-palate concentration, suave, seamless tannins and superb length and grip on the velvety and succulent finish. This too, is quite forward for a 2011 Morgon, but is absolutely superb. Kudos to Mathieu Lapierre for a stunning inaugural vintage flying solo. 2013-2025. **93+**.

**2011 Morgon “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Jean-Paul Thévenet**

Jean-Paul Thévenet has been joined by his son, Charly, since 2008, and the wines at this outstanding Morgon estate (which have been simply outstanding for as long as I can remember) continue to dazzle with the father and son team now in place in the cellars and vineyards. Domaine Jean-Paul Thévenet is one of the “Gang of Four” in Morgon, and though he also harvests late and uses the absolute minimum of sulfur during vinification and élevage, I have often found his wines to be the most vibrant and ageworthy of these four naturalist Morgon estates. The 2011 Vieilles Vignes bottling is excellent, offering up a young and sappy bouquet of black cherries, dark berries, a touch of bonfire, a superb base of granitic soil, woodsmoke and a dollop of gamebird in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with lovey sappiness, ripe, well-measured tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and beautifully balanced finish. High class juice. 2013-2020+. **93+**.

**2010 Morgon “P’tit Max”- Domaine Guy Breton**

The P’tit Max bottling from Guy Breton is designed for early and uncritical quaffing and the 2010 fits that bill to a tee. The wine takes its name from the nickname that Guy Breton has been given by his friends- “Petit Max”. The bright and pretty nose of the 2010 jumps from the glass in a wide open blend of cherries, pomegranate, vinesmoke and fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and reasonably complex, with good, bouncy acidity, fine intensity of flavor and a long, well-balanced and nuanced finish. This is not grandiose Morgon for the cellar, but a juicy and forward wine for early and highly satisfying consumption. Good juice. 2013-2015. **88**.

***Brouilly***

**2011 Brouilly- Maison Joseph Drouhin (375 ml.)**

The Drouhin family’s 2011 Brouilly is quite classic on both the nose and the palate, with lovely purity and focus. The lovely bouquet delivers a mélange of red and black cherries, a touch of pomegranate, a fine base of soil, just a nip of juniper berry and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tightly-knit, with a fine kernel of sappy fruit in the mid-palate, good acids for the vintage, fine focus and just a touch of backend tannin that is the calling card of this fine vintage. This is eminently drinkable today, but a year of cellaring will allow the wine to fully blossom. 2014-2020. **90**.

**2009 Brouilly- Maison Joseph Drouhin (375 ml.)**

The 2009 Brouilly from Joseph Drouhin is a lovely wine for current consumption, as it shows off the ripeness of the vintage in layers of rather powerful fruit (particularly for a straight Brouilly) of a slightly baked character, but no overt signs of overripeness. The deep and expressive nose wafts from the glass in a mix of baked black cherries and cassis, a bit of roasted gamebird, bonfires, lovely soil tones that are just beginning to hint at autumnal shadings, a bit of nuttiness and dried herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plump with fruit, with a fine core, sound soil signature and a bit of chewy tannin that shows a slight green edge- probably from the sugars soaring so quickly at the end of the growing season. I would be inclined to drink this wine up over the relative near-term, as I suspect that the tannins are not going to move forward on the same tract as the fruit, and that slightly sturdy aspect to the tannins may become

less appealing as the plump fruit of the vintage starts to transition in a more mature direction. 2013-2016+?

### **2011 Brouilly- Château Thivin**

I love the straight Brouilly from Château Thivin and the 2011 is exceptional. The bright and very pure nose wafts from the glass in a combination of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of nutskin and a beautifully complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and sappy at the core, with a very primary personality, lovely focus and balance and a long, sappy and pure finish. There is not a lot of tannin here (this is Brouilly after all), but the wine is still quite young and unevolved and I would strongly advise tucking it away in the cellar for another six months to really let its secondary layers of complexity start to emerge. It is a beautiful bottle of Brouilly, with the depth of the 2011 vintage very much in evidence. 2013-2020+. **91.**

### ***Côte de Brouilly***

#### **2011 Côte de Brouilly- Domaine de la Voute des Crozes (Nicole Chanrion)**

Madame Chanrion's 2011 Côte de Brouilly is a beautiful wine in the making, but it was still quite closed when I tasted it in November and clearly in need of a year in the cellar to really blossom. The deep and primary bouquet offers up a nascently complex mix of sappy red and black cherries, a complex base of soil, woodsmoke, violets and a gentle touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and sappy at the core, with beautiful focus and bounce, a solid chassis of ripe tannin and outstanding balance on the very long and classy finish. With Madame Chanrion's 2010 Côte de Brouilly drinking so brilliantly today, it makes no sense to start pulling corks on this lovely vintage until the 2010s are exhausted from the market, as this wine has outstanding promise and to drink it now is to miss a lot of the complexity that will emerge once the structure has relaxed a bit. A lovely wine in the making. 2014-2025+. **92+.**

#### **2011 Côte de Brouilly- Château Thivin**

The 2011 Côte de Brouilly from Château Thivin is a superb example of the vintage in the making, but this is almost always a fairly structured wine out of the blocks, and in the sturdy vintage of 2011, this is clearly a wine that is going to demand a bit of cellaring prior to really blossoming. The deep and very youthful nose was so young as to still be just a tad reduced when I tried it in November, but eventually opened up to deliver scents of cassis, dark berries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, dark soil tones and a lovey topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and plenty tight, with fine mid-palate depth, a fair bit of tannin and excellent length and grip on the focused and very youthful finish. It is fascinating to compare the 2011 Côte de Brouilly from Château Thivin with that from Nicole Chanrion, as Madame's Chanrion's example is very sappy and primary and needs time to develop its secondary complexity, but is not structurally closed down, whereas the 2011 Château Thivin is already showing a lot of its aromatic and flavor nuances out of the blocks, but it is a very young wine in terms of structure and will need more time to blossom. They are both beautiful wines and I cannot think of two better wines to tuck away in the cellar by the case and follow from 2014 or 2015 forwards. Because the sample was still so young and a touch reductive, I have scored this wine within a range, but I would expect it to place up towards the upper end when it has had a chance to settle in with a bit of bottle age. 2015-2035. **92-94.**





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### Alphabetical Listing of Producers and Their Wines Covered in This Feature:

**Paul Bara-** Grand Cru “Brut Réserve” NV, Grande Rosé Brut NV, 2004 Brut Millésime, 2004 Spécial Club Brut Millésime, 2000 Cuvée Marie de France Brut Millésime, 2006 Spécial Club Brut Rosé.

**Barnaut-** Blanc de Noirs Brut NV.

**André Beaufort-** 1985 Brut Millésime (Grand Cru-Ambonnay).

**Bérèche et Fils-** “Les Beaux Regards” Chardonnay Brut Nature NV, “Brut Réserve” NV, 2004 Vieilles Vignes “Selectionnée” Brut.



**Billecart-Salmon-** Blanc de Blancs Brut NV, Brut Réserve NV, Brut Réserve NV (magnum), Brut Rosé NV, Brut Rosé NV, (magnum), 2004 Extra Brut Millésime.

**H. Blin-** 2004 Brut Millésime.

**Bochet-Lemoine-** 2007 Brut Millésime.

**Champagne Louis Casters-** Cuvée Supérieure Brut NV.

**Claude Cazals-** 2002 Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime.

**Chartogne-Taillet-** 2002 Brut Millésime.

**De l'Argentine-** Brut Tradition NV.

**Dom Riunart-** 1996 Blanc de Blancs Brut, 1993 Blanc de Blancs Brut (magnum), 1996 Brut Rosé, 1990 Brut Rosé.

**Pascal Douquet-** Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV (Premier Cru), Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Premier Cru), Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Grand Cru), Brut Rosé NV, 2002 Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime (Grand Cru), 1999 Brut Millésime (Grand Cru).

**Duc de Romet-** Prestige Blanc de Noirs Brut NV (René Geoffroy).

**Fallet-Dart-** Cuvée Réserve Brut NV.

**Godmé Père et Fils-** Extra Brut “Grand Cru” NV (Fall 2012 Release), Brut Rosé NV,

**Paul Goerg-** Blanc de Blancs Brut NV.

**Champagne Gosset-** Brut Excellence NV (Cellared August 2011).

**Marc Hébrart-** Cuvée de Réserve Brut NV, 2006 Spécial Club Brut Millésime.

**Charles Heidsieck-** “Brut Réserve” NV, “Rosé Réserve” Brut NV.

**Eric Isselée-** Cuvée des Grappes d'Or Blanc de Blancs Brut NV.

**Krug-** Grande Cuvée Brut NV (ID # 311032), Brut Rosé (ID # 311030), 2000 Vintage Brut, 1998 Vintage Brut, 1989 Collection Brut, 1982 Vintage Brut (magnum).

**Benoît Lahaye-** Brut Prestige Blanc de Noirs NV.

**Jacques Lassaigue-** “les Vignes de Montgueux” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV.

**Champagne J. Lasalle-** Premier Cru Brut Rosé NV, 2007 Cuvée Angeline” Premier Cru Brut, 2005 Brut Millésime Blanc de Blancs, 2004 Spécial Club Brut Millésime.

**Laurent-Perrier-** Brut Rosé NV.

**Lebrun Servenay-** 2007 “Exhilarante” Vieilles Vignes Brut Millésime.

**Moët et Chandon-** Brut Imperial NV, 2002 Vintage Brut, 2003 Dom Perignon, 2000 Dom Perignon Rosé.

**Bruno Paillard-** Blanc de Blancs “Réserve Privée” Brut NV, “Première Cuvée” Brut NV, Brut Rosé “Premier Cuvée” NV.

**Champagne Phillozot et Fils-** Numéro 3 Brut NV.

**Ployez-Jacquemart-** Brut NV, Extra Brut Rosé NV.

**Potel-Prieux-** Extra Brut NV, “Grande Réserve” Brut NV, Brut Rosé NV.

**Jérôme Prévost “La Closerie”-** 2010 “Les Beguines” Extra Brut, 2009 “Les Beguines” Extra Brut, 2008 “Les Beguines” Extra Brut, 2002 “Les Beguines” Extra Brut, 2009 “Fac-Similé” Extra Brut Rosé.

**Salon-** 1996 “Le Mesnil” Brut, 1995 “Le Mesnil” Brut, 1982 “Le Mesnil” Brut.

**Sanchez-Le Guédard-** Rosé de Saignée Brut Rosé NV.

**Daniel Savart et Fils-** 2008 Extra Brut Millésime.

**François Secondé-** Grand Cru Brut NV.

**Serveaux Fils-** Carte Noire Brut NV.

**Taittinger-** 1995 Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs Brut.

**Champagne Bernard Tormay-** Extra Brut NV.

**Val de Mer-** Crémant de Bourgogne “Non-Dosé” NV

**Veuve Clicquot-** 2004 Grande Dame Brut.

**Veuve Fourny et Fils-** Blanc de Blancs “Premier Cru” Brut Nature NV, Premier Cru” Extra Brut NV, Blanc de Blancs “Premier Cru” Brut NV, Grande Réserve “Premier Cru” Brut NV, Brut Rosé NV, 2006 Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime.

**Voirin-Jumel-** 2006 Brut Millésime.

**ANOTHER ROUND OF CHAMPAGNE AND SPARKLING WINE  
MORE SUPERB RELEASES FROM SMALL GROWERS AND GRAND MARQUES**



*The village of Le Mesnil-sur-Oger in the Côte des Blancs on a beautiful June morning.*

One of the clear things to emerge from this past summer's large project on Champagne was that one article a year is far from sufficient to properly cover this superb region, where things are changing quickly and dramatically for the better with each passing year. Champagne, in my opinion, is currently one of the most dynamic wine-producing regions in the world, and it would be foolish of me not to try and devote more space over the course of a year to the fine wines from this appellation. After publishing the Champagne piece back in Issue Forty, I took a little time off from tasting Champagne (but, not drinking it, as I find I tend to have a glass of Champagne at least four or five times a week these days, as there is nothing that refreshes the palate better after a long day of tasting), but planned to get started again on the region as part of my visit to France in November. As I was staying in Beaune for this trip, and the town has a number of fine shops that specialize in Champagne (are there the comparably fine bubbly shopping options available in other non-Champagne wine-producing regions in France I wonder?)- several of which are not readily available here in the states, not to mention that two of the most important importers of Grower Champagne into the United States- Becky Wasserman and Kermit Lynch- both have offices in Beaune, it seemed that tasting Champagne samples

would be a very worthy way to fill up my weekends when I was not down in the cellars working through the 2011 Burgundy vintage. So I organized samples for my three weeks in Beaune and had more than my work cut out for me during the weekends of this particular trip, as several of the *Champenois* producers were very generous in sending their full range of current releases to be tasted.

Once back in the US after the long trip, I attended a few Champagne tastings that included wines that I had not yet tasted in preparation for Issue Forty (as well as a couple of wines that had not shown up to my expectations over the summer and which I attributed to very recent disgorgements), and before I knew it, I had another full-blown feature on Champagne in the works for this issue. As readers will notice from my article on white Burgundy earlier in the new issue, I do not drink anywhere near as much aged white Burgundy or white Bordeaux as I used to prior to the plague of premature oxidation hitting my own personal cellar so hard, and the wine that has principally replaced these two regions in my own collection is Champagne, so I tend to drink and cellar for extended aging a lot more Champagne today than was the case a decade ago. Why I was not cellaring Champagne for long-term aging right from the outset is a mystery to me today, as I have a hard time understanding why this region's wines were not a regular part of my cellaring rotation back in the early days (other than the fact that I was much thirstier in my youth and it was probably a lot harder to keep my hands of bottles of Champagne in my cellar, once I had laid them in for aging!), but Champagne is now one of the most important sections of my collection and I am very happy to have the possibility now to go down in the cellar and pull out bottles of non-vintage bubbly that has been in my cellar for an additional six to eight years of bottle age. For, as I have written quite often in the past, it is not only the vintage-dated and most exalted bottles of Champagne that age very well, and it cannot be overstated just how beneficial more cellaring can be on the vast, vast majority of non-vintage Champagne. For if there is one readily apparent downside to the great blossoming of Grower Champagne in the market over the last decade or so, it is that more and more Champagne is finding its way onto the market that is really still too young for primetime drinking, and cellaring these wines- even for a year or two after release- has great benefits that are so readily apparent when one has had a chance to drink a few of these wines once they have blossomed with bottle age.

One of the great pleasures of this most recent article on Champagne was my introduction to the superb wines of Jérôme Prévost and his small domaine of La Closerie (initially, through the kindness of a subscriber, who arranged to have me sent samples, concluding quite correctly that the style of the wines would be right up my alley). Monsieur Prévost farms just a bit more than two hectares of old vines in the town of Gueux, located just to the west of the city of Reims. His primary vineyard, which is called Les Béguines, is planted entirely to old vine pinot meunier, with the vines planted principally in the late 1950s and now averaging nearly fifty years of age. The vines had originally belonged to Monsieur Prévost's grandmother, and he took over this parcel in 1987 and sold off his grapes to the Grandes Marques until the mid-1990s. In the interim, he began working with Anselme Selosse and eventually began to make his own wines in the 1998 vintage. Having worked at Champagne Jacques Selosse for several years, it is not surprising that Monsieur Prévost's wines are somewhat similarly styled, with low yields and meticulous viticultural practices leading to a wine of superb *terroir* and a very vinous style. The wines here are fermented in older Burgundy barrels and 600 liter *Demi-Muids*, aged for eighteen

months *sur lies* in the bottle prior to disgorgement, with no *dosage* and then given an additional couple of years in the cellar before they are released. There are now two bottlings produced at La Closerie, the “Les Béguines” bottling that is the original from the estate, and which was for its first several years all produced from old vine pinot meunier, but which now includes a very small percentage of chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot blanc that Monsieur Prévost has planted in an adjoining, two-tenths of a hectare parcel. There is now also a La Closerie Rosé produced, called Fac-Similé, which is made entirely from the old vine pinot meunier, and which has only been crafted for the last year or two- in fact, the 2008 that I tasted may well be the first vintage of the Prévost Rosé produced. All of the domaine’s wines are single vintage wines, though this does not appear on the front label, but is indicated by the code on the back label, with the last two digits of the code indicating the vintage year (such as *RM02* indicating the wine is from the 2002 vintage). I have listed all the La Closerie wines with their vintages in the tasting notes as if they were labeled as such on the front labels, as the code is easy enough to decipher and every wine produced by Monsieur Prévost is indeed a vintage-dated bottling. These are glorious wines that are clearly built for the cellar, and while they are certainly approachable out of the blocks, it strikes me as a mistake to open bottles of current releases of La Closerie until they have at least had a few years of bottle age to really start to blossom.

I also was very pleased for this article to have the opportunity to revisit the current releases of two of my favorite, small *Grandes Marques*, Charles Heidsieck and Bruno Paillard. Both of these houses make consistently excellent Champagne, and it has been my experience that both estates produce non-vintage bottlings that age superbly well and I was delighted to have a chance to re-taste their non-vintage bottlings that are presently in the market with an additional six months of bottle age. The wines from both houses were blossoming beautifully with a bit more bottle age, and while they remain still fairly young wines that will benefit from further cellaring, it was nice to see them relaxing structurally and really starting to drink very well. If I were to make a short list of the most under-appreciated of the *Grandes Marques*, these two excellent producers would probably join Gosset as my absolute favorites from this small camp of underrated houses. Both Charles Heidsieck and Bruno Paillard have also been leaders amongst the *Grandes Marques* in printing the date of disgorgement on the back labels of their various cuvées, which I am finding more and more valuable, as my cellar full of non-vintage bottlings continues to grow and I am not always as diligent as I should be in logging in the date that the wines have been put down in my cellar, and consequently, I am not always sure which box I should be pulling bottles out of for current consumption. I do hope that we will see more disclosure of disgorgement dates in the future, as it seems to me that we are now on the cusp of a more mature market (particularly for more quality-oriented *Grandes Marques* such as Bruno Paillard, Charles Heidsieck and their brethren) that fully recognizes that disgorgement date is very useful for estimating the age of the bottle in question and not simply an “expiration date”.

Another producer whose wines I had the chance to revisit in-depth for this article was the fine, Côte des Blancs-based Pascal Doquet, whose samples had not shown particularly well back when I wrote my last report on Champagne in Issue Forty. I had received the samples on one of the hottest days of the summer in New York at that time, and though I kept them in the air-conditioned backseat of my car for their transport back to Croton from the city, I wondered if they had been exposed to some of the brutal heat of that week prior to my taking possession of the bottles. In any event, I was happy to retaste several of the wines and find this group of

samples far more on form and many of the wines showing very well indeed. I have a gut feeling that Monsieur Doquet is right on the cusp of superstardom in the firmament of small growers in the region, but many of his wines were just a touch too marked by their oak components for my palate, with the wood taking away just a bit of precision from the stunningly fine underlying wines. It is my understanding that most of his bottlings these days are one-third barrel-fermented, and while I do not know how long this practice has been applied in the Doquet cellars, I cannot find the wood here adding much to the equation in terms of complexity in the wines, and it certainly impinges upon the purity of soil expression on the finish of many of these bottles. These are clearly some great bottles of Champagne buried under slightly untidy use of oak, and I would love to see Monsieur Doquet either abandon the wood for some of his bottlings, or use much older and more neutral barrels, as there is so much potential here that is not quite making it into the glass! Given that many of his bottling are produced from fruit from Mesnil-sur-Oger, why cover up this exquisite *terroir* with any wood at all?

### ***Sparkling Wines***

#### **Val de Mer Crémant de Bourgogne “Non-Dosé” NV**

The Val de Mer Crémant de Bourgogne “Non-Dosé” is a new project of Patrick Piuze, who is best-known for his great bottlings of Chablis. Patrick uses the Val de Mer label for several Chablis bottlings, in addition to a Sauvignon Saint-Bris and two Crémant de Bourgogne bottlings. This is his non-Rosé sparkler, and it is lovely, offering up a complex nose of apple, bread dough, citrus peel, a beautiful base of minerality and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and elegant, with very refined *mousse*, lovely focus and a long, crisp and perfectly balanced finish. One wonders if Patrick will ever think of expanding to a Champagne in the future, as Chablis is really not very far from the Côte des Bars, and clearly, he has a very fine touch with sparkling wine! Fine juice that should even improve with a year or two in the bottle. 2013-2020. **88+**.

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

#### **Bérèche Père et Fils “Les Beaux Regards” Chardonnay Brut Nature NV**

The Bérèche Père et Fils “Les Beaux Regards” bottling is a Blanc de Blancs, Brut Nature bottling that I crossed paths with in one of the top Beaune wine stores during my November trip. I have not seen this wine available yet in the US market (though it may be here and the importer simply did not send me a sample of this cuvée), and I was very, very impressed with the quality of this wine. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a vibrant blend of green apple, lime peel, stony minerality, bread dough and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with very elegant *mousse*, excellent complexity, laser-like focus and a very long, minerally-infused and snappy finish. This is a great bottle of Brut Nature. 2013-2025. **93**.

#### **Pascal Doquet Premier Cru Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV**

This particular bottling of Extra Brut Blanc de Blancs was disgorged by Monsieur Doquet in March of 2011, and is based primarily on fruit from the 2005 vintage. It is a bone-dry Extra Brut, with only 3.5 grams per liter of residual sugar, so it is really a wine for true lovers of the Extra Brut style. The bouquet shows just a whisper of reduction when first opened, but this quickly blows off to deliver an excellent nose of apple, citrus zest, stony minerality, wheat toast and a fair bit of oak influence in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and piercingly mineral, with a fien core of fruit, elegant *mousse*, fine focus and a very long,

bone-dry and briskly snappy finish. This is a very good wine that would be great with the oak out of the way (or far more subtle), as the wood just adds a bit of “fuzziness” to the delineation on the backend. But, that said, this is still a very good bottle of bubbly and for those who do not mind some overly oaky shadings in their Champagne, my score will certainly seem conservative. 2013-2020. **90.**

**Godmé Père et Fils Extra Brut “Grand Cru” NV (Fall 2012 Release)**

I am a huge fan of the Grand Cru Extra Brut bottling from Godmé Père et Fils, and back in Issue Forty I reported on this cuvée from a release in the fall of 2010. This particular bottle was a couple of years younger and consequently a bit more structured, but it too shows outstanding potential. The beautifully complex and youthful nose offers up a lovely aromatic constellation of apple, tart orange, citrus peel, bread dough, a touch of smokiness and an exquisite base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still very young, with a rock solid core, very elegant *mousse*, brisk acids and absolutely superb length and grip on the focused and very well-balanced finish. I would give this at least another year or two in the cellar to start to stir, as it is a bit buttoned up behind its girdle of acidity at the present time—though the potential is superb. 2014-2030+. **93.**

**Jacques Lassaigne “les Vignes de Montgueux” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut NV**

Champagne Jacques Lassaigne is located in the far southern end of the Champagne district, one hundred miles south of Reims and just outside of the ancient city of Troyes. The house is currently run by Emmanuel Lassaigne, Jacques’s son, and the wines are barrel fermented and go through complete malolactic fermentation. The *terroir* found in Montgueux is clay with a strong mix of limestone and the chardonnay grape does extremely well here, and nearly ninety-five percent of the vineyards in the village are planted to this variety. The current release is a lovely wine, offering up complex aromatic mélange of pear, delicious apples, chalky minerality, a touch of *crème patissière*, lemon zest and a dollop of spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and beautifully balanced, with a good core, elegant *mousse*, vibrant acids and very good length and grip on the wide open and dancing finish. A lovely bottle of Blanc de Blancs. 2013-2020. **90.**

**Potel-Prieux Extra Brut NV (Venteuil)**

I very much liked the bouquet on the non-vintage Potel-Prieux Extra Brut, but the wine is pretty short and simple on the palate. The bouquet is bright and bouncy, offering up notes of apple, lemon peel, bread dough and a nice base of salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and lacking in complexity, with modest mid-palate depth, crisp acids, modest *mousse* and a short, decidedly non-complex finish. There is just not much stuffing here, nor complexity, and it is really hard to get excited about this bottling. 2013-2018. **83.**

**Champagne Bernard Tormay Extra Brut NV (Bouzy)**

Champagne Bernard Tormay is based in Bouzy and the family estate owns fifty hectares of vineyards in grand cru and premier cru villages. There was no mention of grand cru anywhere on the label of this non-vintage Extra Brut, so I assume that the fruit for the bottling does not hail exclusively from Bouzy. Ironically, there is no mention of this particular bottling on the house’s website, so I do not know the *cépage* here or whether the wine goes through any malo. In any event, the wine showed just a touch of reduction when first opened, but this quickly blew off to reveal a deep and complex bouquet of apple, peach, a touch of candied fruit tones, warm bread, gentle smokiness and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and well-balanced, with good acids, very good length, elegant *mousse* and a very stony personality on the



bone-dry backend. This is an Extra Brut for purists, as there is no buffering sweetness to be found on the palate, but it is quite well made in its classic style. 2013-2020+. **91.**



#### **Veuve Fourny et Fils Blanc de Blancs “Premier Cru” Brut Nature NV (Vertus)**

I was not aware of this before, but most of the Veuve Fourny et Fils bottlings have a twenty-five percent portion of the base wines go through malolactic, while the remainder of the blend does not. This seems to give the wines a nice mid-palate roundness that works very well with the drier style of many of their bottlings. The new release of the Veuve Fourny et Fils Blanc de Blancs Brut Nature is excellent, jumping from the glass in a vibrant mix of grapefruit, lime peel, stony minerality, a touch of smoke, gentle grassiness and a dollop of bread dough. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a very good core of fruit, brisk acids, elegant *mousse* and outstanding focus and grip on the very long and classy finish. There is a touch of *Chablisienne* character to this wine on both the nose and palate that I find immensely appealing. Brut Nature seems to be a specialty of this house and the new release is simply a lovely bottle in the making. 2013-2025+. **91.**

#### **Veuve Fourny et Fils “Premier Cru” Extra Brut NV (Vertus)**

The Veuve Fourny et Fils Extra Brut is also made up of a blend of seventy-five percent non-malo base wines and twenty-five percent who did undergo malolactic fermentation, and the wine is outstanding. The deep and complex nose offers up scents of green apple, tart orange, stony minerality, citrus peel, a touch of warm bread and a bit of smokiness in the upper register.



On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very bright and racy, with a fine core, excellent focus and balance, refined *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the pure and classy finish. Just a lovely bottle, with the low fat and racy personality of Extra Brut bringing out the beautiful, chalky minerality of Vertus. 2013-2025+. **91+**.

### ***Non-Vintage Blanc de Blancs Brut***

#### **Billecart-Salmon Blanc de Blancs Brut NV**

The non-vintage Blanc de Blancs is not a large production item for Billecart-Salmon, and one does not cross paths with it regularly. The current release is all 2007 vintage and was aged nearly five years on the lees prior to disgorgement. Billecart produces their Blanc de Blancs bottlings from fruit sourced in only three villages in the Côte des Blancs- Chouilly, Mesnil-sur-Oger and Cramant. The new release offers up a deep and lovely aromatic blend of pear, apple, stony minerality, bread dough, a hint of the pastry cream to come with bottle age and orange zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very elegant, with a lovely core of fruit, refined *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced, youthful and classy finish. This is a very fine bottle of Blanc de Blancs that will only improve as it blossoms a bit more structurally with further bottle age. 2013-2025+. **92+**.

#### **Pascal Doquet Premier Cru Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Vertus)**

The premier cru bottling of Brut NV from Pascal Doquet is sourced from several different villages in the Côte des Blancs, and this current release was disgorged in February of 2011, so it has had plenty of additional bottle age between *dégorgement* and release into the market. This particular cuvée is comprised of a blend of fifty-seven percent 2005 fruit, thirty-two percent 2004 fruit and eleven percent from 2002, so this is a fine blend of older wines for a current release of non-vintage Brut (and speaks to the seriousness of Monsieur Doquet's approach). I do not know if this wine has a bit older oak used for its one-third barrel-fermentation than the grand cru bottlings from Monsieur Doquet, but this was my favorite of the wines I tasted from the domaine, due to its slightly less obtrusive wood influence. The deep, complex and classy nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, chalky minerality, warm biscuits, a gentle touch of smoke and a bit of toastiness from its wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and snappy, with a fine core, brisk acids, lovely complexity, frothy *mousse* and very good length and grip. As was my experience with all of the Doquet wines, there is just a touch of backend precision sacrificed here to the wood. 2013-2023. **91**.

#### **Pascal Doquet Grand Cru "Mesnil-sur-Oger" Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Vertus)**

Though Pascal Doquet is based in Vertus, he does produce a fair number of grand cru bottlings from Mesnil-sur-Oger, including this non-vintage Brut cuvée. The current release of the Grand Cru bottling from Pascal Doquet was disgorged in October of 2011, with the fruit all hailing from the village of Mesnil-sur-Oger. This seems a bit more marked by its oak than the Premier Cru bottling, but underneath is a lovely wine that delivers a complex bouquet of apple, pear, oak toastiness, complex, chalky minerality, citrus peel and gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex on the attack, with a rock solid core, pinpoint bubbles, brisk acids and very fine length and grip on the slightly blurry finish. The oak here just gets in the way of what is an absolutely stellar wine underneath, and I do not know if it is the age of the barrels used, the origin of the wood or what have you, but this is a great wine that is just crying to get out from under its wood influence and revel in its considerable soil complexity. It is not a bad wine, but it is a bit muddled on the backend and a bit too toasty on the nose from the barrel-fermentation. 2013-2020. **88**.

### **Paul Georg Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Premier Cru- Vertus)**

I had not tasted any bottles from Paul Georg in many, many years, but I once knew the wines quite well and I was quite pleased to cross paths with their Blanc de Blancs at a tasting in New York. The nose is quite lovely, offering up a complex and classy blend of apple, tart orange, bread dough, chalky minerality and a nice touch of lemon zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a good core, lovely *mousse* and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is not particularly complex, but it does offer up very elegant, pinpoint bubbles and a charming personality. With a bit more complexity, it would be outstanding, rather than very good. 2013-2020+. **88+**.

### **Eric Isselée “Cuvée des Grappes d’Or” Blanc de Blancs Brut NV (Cramant)**

Perhaps my bottle of this wine was off, but it did not show well in my tastings and really stood out for its odd, “cheap perfume” component on the nose and a really questionable balance on the palate. The nose is a strange blend of candied lemon and lime, the aforementioned “really cheap perfume” component, bread dough and chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is fullish and strangely balanced, with way too much *dosage*, frothy *mousse*, poorly-integrated acids and that strange perfume component closing out the relatively short finish. Is this really the wine? ???

### **Bruno Paillard Blanc de Blancs “Réserve Privée” Brut NV (Disgorged July 2011)**

Bruno Paillard’s non-vintage Blanc de Blancs “Réserve Privée” is a beautiful young wine that needs a handful of years in the cellar to fully blossom, but will be an absolutely stunning wine when it has loosened up a bit. This is another sample that I was happy to see again in preparation for this article, as it has opened up quite a bit since the summer and I clearly misjudged its outstanding potential. The deep, pure and youthfully complex nose jumps from the glass in a vibrant combination of apple, tart pears, lime zest, chalky minerality, bread dough and an exotic topnote of vinesmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully snappy, with a beautiful core of fruit, impeccable balance, very elegant *mousse*, laser-like focus and simply stunning length and grip. The Paillard non-vintage Blanc de Blancs is one of the very finest examples of its genre made in Champagne and I would love to do a vertical tasting of this cuvée one day and track how beautifully it blossoms with bottle age. Very high class juice! 2016-2035+. **93+**.

### **Veuve Fourny et Fils Blanc de Blancs “Premier Cru” Brut NV (Vertus)**

This is exactly the same wine as the Brut Nature Blanc de Blancs bottling from Veuve Fourny et Fils, but with a very minimal *dosage* added of around six grams per liter (remember Brut can range all the way up to fifteen grams per liter of residual sugar, so this is still a very dry bottle of bubbly and really is an Extra Brut, though the label simply states that it is a Brut). It is funny, given how small the *dosage* really is in this wine, that I find that it has not yet really integrated this into the wine (perhaps it was recently disgorged before I tasted it in November in Beaune), and the wine needs a bit of time to settle back into perfect harmony. The complex nose offers up scents of apple, pink grapefruit, chalky minerality, fresh-baked bread and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and racy, with a fine core, elegant *mousse*, and very fine length and grip on the focused and still quite primary finish. This is fine juice, but I would give it a year in the cellar to fully integrate its *dosage* and start to sing with the same precision on the palate as the Brut Nature version. 2014-2025+. **90**.

### ***Non-Vintage Brut***

#### **Paul Bara Grand Cru “Brut Réserve” NV**

I have consistently enjoyed the wines I have tasted in the past from Paul Bara, which I have always found classic examples of Bouzy. The wine is a blend of eighty percent pinot noir and twenty percent chardonnay. The new release of their Brut Réserve is quite young, but also excellent, offering up a classic bouquet of apple, a touch of grapefruit, a very elegant expression of minerality, bread dough, citrus peel and smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and young, with fine mid-palate intensity, snappy acids, very elegant *mousse* and very impressive focus and grip on the very long finish. I would give this a year or two more in the cellar to really start to blossom, but it will be outstanding once it has had a chance to really open up and relax a bit structurally. 2014-2030. **90.**

#### **Edmond Barnaut Blanc de Noirs Grand Cru Brut NV (Bouzy)**

This is the same bottling I reviewed in Issue Forty, but it has blossomed beautifully over the last six months and I clearly underrated it a touch over the summer. The deep, young and very lovely nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, musky floral tones, tart orange, a beautifully complex base of soil and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully complex, with lovely mid-palate depth, very refined *mousse*, brisk acids and a very long, focused, quite dry and tightly-knit finish. This really could use another year of bottle age to fully blossom, but it is coming out of its shell very nicely and I certainly did not give it enough credit for its superb potential in the last article on Champagne! Lovely juice. 2014-2030. **92.**

#### **Bérêche Père et Fils “Brut Réserve” NV (Disgorged June 2012)**

I have had a bit of bottle variation with this bottling from Bérêche Père et Fils, with a bottle I drank in Beaune in November totally out of sorts and showing a fair bit of sweetness on the backend from its *dosage*. I have also spoken with friends who have bought cases of the Brut Réserve here in the US and they have reported a fair bit of bottle variation for this wine as well. Sadly, I did not take note of the date of disgorgement on the bottle tasted in Beaune, but this particular bottle of the Bérêche Père et Fils “Brut Réserve” tasted back here in New York in January (and disgorged in June of 2012) was every bit as stunning as the example I reported on in Issue Forty. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a mix of apple, tart pear, stony minerality, orange zest and brioche. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very soil-driven in personality, with brisk acids, lovely focus and grip, elegant *mousse* and a long and classy finish. This is a lovely bottle today and will be even better with a couple of years more bottle age. I hope the bottle variation that I and others have seen with this wine is simply a function of the wine being drunk a bit too soon after its disgorgement and not indicative of inconsistency with the cuvée. 2013-2030. **92+.**

#### **Billecart-Salmon “Brut Réserve” NV**

The new release of the Billecart-Salmon non-vintage Brut Réserve, which I encountered at the great Champagne tasting at Crush Wines and Spirits here in New York in December, is comprised mostly of fruit from the 2008 vintage and the vast majority of the blend is one third each of chardonnay, pinot meunier and pinot noir, with none of the base wines going through malolactic fermentation for this bottling. The bouquet is deep and quite lovely, offering up scents of apple, tart orange, a lovely base of complex soil tones, warm bread and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and snappy, with a fine core, absolutely exquisite balance and focus, very refined *mousse* and excellent grip on the very long and classy

finish. This is a lovely bottle of Brut NV that will only get better with a bit of bottle age. 2013-2025+. **91+**.

**Billecart-Salmon “Brut Réserve” NV (served from magnum)**

This magnum is the same cuvée as the regular-sized bottle above (2008 base wine with thirty percent of the blend comprised of wines from 2006 and 2007), but for some reason, it was showing even a bit more youthful generosity in the mid-palate out of the larger format. This is a quite as dry styled Brut bottling, with a *dosage* of 7 grams per liter of residual sugar, and will age extremely well. The classy nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, a touch of tangerine, complex minerality, bread dough and a nice dollop of smokiness up high. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a bit more early stuffing showing at the core, the same brisk acids, frothy *mousse* and a very long finish of excellent focus and grip. I love the Billecart non-vintage Brut and am very pleased to see it more readily available here in New York that used to be the case. As the slight difference in score might indicate, Champagne always tastes better out of magnum! Fine juice. 2013-2030. **92**.



**Billecart-Salmon “Sous Bois” Brut NV**

The relatively new cuvée of “Sous Bois” from Billecart-Salmon is made up entirely of base wines which were barrel-fermented, though happily in seven or eight year-old barrels, so the oak influence in the wine is impressively discreet. Like the house’s Brut Réserve, the *cépage* here is essentially a one-third each split of chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier. The very lovely bouquet shows only the subtlest hint of its oak origins, as it wafts from the glass in a classy mélange of apple, orange peel, a touch of hazelnut, bread dough, lovely minerality and a touch of smokiness from the pinot meunier in the blend. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core, classy *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the crisp and complex finish. The barrel-fermentation here seems to give the wine a bit more of an open personality out of the blocks that the Brut Réserve, and perhaps just a touch more weightiness, but kudos to Billecart

for not letting the wood get out of hand and dominate the wine in any way. Classy juice. 2013-2025. **92+**.

**Champagne Louis Casters “Cuvée Supérieure” Brut NV (Damery)**

This was my first tasting of a wine from Champagne Louis Casters in Damery, which is located just northwest of Épernay. The small house dates back to the end of the nineteenth century, when it was established by the eponymous Louis Casters, but the family only began to

sell some of its wine off under its own label a couple of generations down the road in 1921. The house's Cuvée Supérieure bottling is comprised of one hundred percent pinot meunier, and the current release is quite tasty in a fairly straightforward style. The bouquet is a blend of apple, peach, musky floral tones, brioche and a fairly discreet base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with gentle, pinpoint bubbles, sound acids and good length and grip on the tasty, but not particularly complex finish. I very much like this wine's balance and its constituent components, and though it is not the most complex Champagne out there, it does deliver a lot of pleasure in its style. 2013-2020. **87+**.

**De l'Argentine Brut Tradition NV (Vandières)**

The De l'Argentine label was created by the cooperative in Vandières in 1974, though the co-op dates back a few decades earlier, having been founded in 1956. The one hundred and thirty-two members exploit one hundred and eighty hectares of vines in the Vallée de la Marne. The co-op's Brut Tradition is a very good bottle of bubbly, with a *cépages* of eighty percent pinot meunier, fifteen percent pinot noir and five percent chardonnay. The current release is really very fine, wafting from the glass in a classy bouquet of white peach, warm biscuits, lovely soil tones and the complex and gentle floral nuances of pinot meunier. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and beautifully light on its feet, with very good mid-palate depth, refined *mousse*, crisp acids and absolutely beautiful balance and focus on the elegant and vibrant finish. This is an excellent bottle of bubbly and a terrific value! Just a great aperitif Champagne. 2013-2025. **91+**.

**Duc de Romet "Prestige" Blanc de Noirs Brut NV (René Geoffroy)**

The Duc de Romet label is a négociant bottling from René Geoffroy, which he produces from the vineyards of grower friends in the village of Vandières in the Vallée de la Marne. It is comprised of a blend of seventy-five percent pinot meunier and twenty-five percent pinot noir. The nose on the current release is quite bright and stylish, offering up scents of apple, a touch of quince, stony minerality, bread dough and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite young, with frothy *mousse*, good focus and balance and lovely mineral drive on the snappy backend. This needs a year or two in the cellar to start to relax a bit structurally, but it is a very well-made wine and has lovely constituent components. 2014-2025+. **90+**.

**Fallet-Dart "Cuvée Réserve" Brut NV**

Fallet-Dart is a small house based in Épernay, and their Cuvée Réserve is made up of a blend of sixty percent pinot meunier, twenty-five percent chardonnay and fifteen percent pinot noir. The wine is not bad, but a bit coarse on the palate and not particularly complex on the nose. The bouquet is a mélange of apple, tangerine, a bit of bread dough and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and a touch four-square, with frothy *mousse*, good focus and grip and nice length on the less than totally refined finish. This is good, serviceable bubbly that would do on a desert island, but in a wide world awash in Champagne of great individual character, this is just lacking a bit of complexity and polish for my palate. 2013-2025. **86**.

**Gosset Brut Excellence NV (cellared since August 2011)**

I like to report on odd bottles of non-vintage Brut that I tuck away in my cellar for a few years, so this is a bottle of Gosset's Brut Excellence that I laid down about eighteen months ago to see how it would develop. The wine has blossomed beautifully and now offers up a wide open and classy bouquet of apple, wheat toast, superb minerality, a touch of almond, orange peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, very elegant *mousse*, a completely wide open personality and a very long, crisp and

focused finish. This is really starting to drink well, but it remains nicely structured and still has plenty of life ahead of it. 2013-2025. **90.**

**Marc Hébrart “Cuvée de Réserve” Brut NV (Premier Cru- Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

After not previously tasting any wines from this grower in Mareuil-sur-Aÿ, I was fortunate to cross paths with two different bottlings of Monsieur Hébrart’s wines in preparation for this article. The domaine has been run since 1997 by Jean-Paul Hébrart, who took over from his father Marc. The estate is comprised of fourteen hectares of vines, scattered over six different villages. The current release of the Cuvée de Réserve is made up of a blend of eighty-one percent pinot noir and nineteen percent chardonnay and was disgorged in December of 2009. The nose is lovely, delivering a fine mix of green apples, pears, white flowers, chalky soil tones and bread dough. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very elegant, with frothy *mousse*, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the nicely focused finish. The *dosage* here seems ever so slightly generous to my palate, so there is a touch of backend sweetness that is not seamlessly integrated into the base of the wine, but this is still a lovely bottle. 2013-2025. **90.**

**Charles Heidsieck “Brut Réserve” NV**

The current release of the Charles Heidsieck non-vintage “Brut Réserve” was a bit young when I last sampled it in August of last year, and I was able to taste it again this past February and was very happy to see it blossoming beautifully and showing at a higher level of quality than was the case when it first arrived in the market. According to the back label, his particular bottling was laid in the cellar in 2008 and disgorged in 2012. As my note back in Issue 40 suggested, it was possible that I was underrating the wine a bit, as it was pretty tight and probably in the market a bit younger than is customary with this fine house, as the estate had just launched a sleek new package for both the Brut Réserve and the Brut Rosé Réserve that past summer. In any event, this wine has blossomed beautifully in the last six months and now offers up a deep and classic aromatic constellation of apple, a touch of tangerine, complex minerality, warm bread, a nice touch of nuttiness and gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with excellent mid-palate depth, very elegant *mousse*, superb focus and complexity and a very long, refined and snappy finish. This was very tight out of the blocks and a bit youthfully austere on the backend, but that stage is now in the past and this is clearly a current release of Charles Heidsieck Brut Réserve that is every bit at the same high level of quality as I expect from this outstanding house. Sorry to have been so conservative with the score six months ago! 2013-2030+. **92+.**

**Krug Grande Cuvée Brut NV (ID # 311032)**

As I had the pleasure to taste this current release of the Krug Grande Cuvée at an annual event called Krug House that the domaine hosts each fall around the US, I was very happy to be able to have quite a bit of information about this particular bottling readily available as I happily sipped the wine. It was disgorged in the fall of 2011, is primarily based on the 2004 vintage, contains fully a dozen different years in the blend- with the oldest wines included in this particular rendition of Grande Cuvée dating back to the 1990 vintage. The bouquet of this young and very promising Krug Grande Cuvée wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, tangerine, a touch of nutmeg, complex minerality, rye toast, orange peel and incipient notes of smokiness and nutskin. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and exquisitely balanced, with great mid-palate depth, ripe and snappy acids, laser-like focus, elegant *mousse* and outstanding length and grip on the very refined and still quite youthful finish. While this release of the Krug Grande Cuvée is already quite enjoyable, I have a strong preference for aging my bottles of this wine and

would be inclined to not touch this bottle until at least four or five years have passed, as it is likely to last another thirty-five to forty years! 2013-2050. **94+**.

**Benoit Lahaye “Brut Prestige” Blanc de Noirs NV**

This was the first wine that I had tasted from Benoit Lahaye, and the house’s non-vintage “Brut Prestige” Blanc de Noirs is really not a bad example, with good length, balance and grip, but just a slightly four-square personality that keeps its score down a touch. The bouquet is a very pleasant blend of apple, wheat toast, a touch of nuttiness, tart orange and lovely minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a good core, frothy *mousse*, sound complexity and a sound grip on the long and slightly sturdy finish. This is not the most stylish bottle of Blanc de Noirs, but it does deliver good depth and personality. Not bad at all. 2013-2023. **88+**.

**Moët et Chandon Brut Imperial NV**

It has been many years since I last tasted the non-vintage Moët et Chandon Brut Imperial, but I have heard that the wine has really changed a bit stylistically recently and I was happy to cross paths with this bottling at a tasting in December here in New York. The nose is deep and fairly fresh, offering up a blend of apple, wheat toast, leesy tones, nice underlying minerality and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and crisp, with solid mid-palate depth, reasonably refined *mousse* and pretty good length and grip on the finish. This is not the most complex glass of Champagne, but the old days, when this wine was so buried under yeasty, almost cardboardy notes seem to be long gone and this is really not a bad drink at all. 2013-2025. **87**.

**Bruno Paillard “Première Cuvée” Brut NV**

The current release of Bruno Paillard’s non-vintage “Première Cuvée” Brut was disgorged in September of 2011 and is now really drinking beautifully. The wine has seen an additional six months of bottle age since I last tasted it in preparation for Issue Forty, and it is now simply singing in the glass. The deep and very classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a sophisticated combination of apple, tangerine, brioche, complex soil tones, a touch of fresh almond, orange peel and incipient smokiness. On the palate the wine has really relaxed structurally since the summer of 2012, with its full-bodied format now really open and focused. The wine is rock solid at the core, beautifully balanced and shows off very elegant *mousse*, with lovely balance, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex finish. I anticipated that this wine would take a bit longer to really blossom, but six months of bottle age really seems to have done the trick and I would not hesitate to be opening this very classy wine anytime over the coming dozen years. This is great juice and one of the superb sleepers to be found in the world of Champagne! 2013-2030. **92+**.

**Champagne Phillozot et Fils “Numéro 3” Brut NV (Reuil)**

Champagne Phillozot et Fils is located in the village of Reuil in the Vallée de la Marne, a bit further to the northwest of Épernay than villages such as Damery and Cumières. This was my first taste of a wine from Phillozot et Fils, which apparently was quite the rage for bargain bubbly in London over this past Christmas season (at least according to what I could find about the estate on the web- the domaine’s own website is under renovation at the present time). In any event, this wine is okay, offering up a pretty nose of apple, spring flowers, bread dough and a touch of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full and well-balanced, with sound *mousse*, gentle acids and a bit of its *dosage* sticking out and sweetening up a fairly short finish. Solid bubbly for a low price, but, not the kind of stuff I want to drink with any regularity. 2013-2020. **85**.

### **Ployez-Jacquemart Brut NV (Ludes- Montagne de Reims)**

I was very much struck by how this bottling of Ployez-Jacquemart non-vintage Brut has evolved over the last six months, for it was used as one of the main pours at a large and varied Champagne tasting I attended here in New York in January, so it was possible to taste this wine alongside several other non-vintage bottlings over the course of the evening. In comparison to many of the other bubbly poured at this event, the Ployez-Jacquemart was showing an almost exotic flair on both the nose and palate that was very enticing. The superb bouquet is a blend of apple, white peach, a touch of acacia blossom, stony minerality, orange zest and a very musky floral overtone. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still quite youthfully brisk, with a great core of fruit, very elegant *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the focused, complex and bone-dry finish. While this is still labeled as a straight Brut, it was quite a bit drier than many of the other wines we sampled on this evening and I would guess that this is moving down towards a *dosage* level closer to Extra Brut these days. A lovely showing of a wine with personality to burn. 2013-2030. **92.**

### **Potel-Prieux “Grande Réserve” Brut NV (Venteuil)**

Potel-Prieux is located in the Vallée de la Marne in the village of Venteuil. Their Grande Réserve bottling is a blend of one third each of chardonnay, pinot noir and pinot meunier. The current release is quite a lovely bottle, offering up a deep and toasty bouquet of orange, apple, warm bread, lovely minerality and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite young, with fine mid-palate intensity, brisk acids, tiny, pinpoint bubbles and excellent focus and grip on the long and still quite primary finish. This is a fine bottle of grower bubbly, but I would strongly suggest tucking it away in the cellar for at least a year or two to allow it to relax a bit structurally and really start to come into its own! 2014-2025+. **90+.**

### **François Secondé “Grand Cru” Brut NV (Sillery)**

François Secondé is based in the village of Sillery, which lies just to the southeast of the suburbs of Reims. The house’s non-vintage Brut is comprised of a blend of one-third chardonnay and two-thirds pinot noir and the wine undergoes full malolactic fermentation. The current release is quite lovely, offering up a deep and complex nose of apple, pear, bread dough, chalky soil tones and a youthful topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely complex, with elegant *mousse*, crisp acids and impressive length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This was my first experience with any wine from François Secondé, but I was quite impressed and hope to taste more of the family’s wines in the near-future. Good juice. 2013-2020+. **90.**

### **Serveaux Fils “Carte Noire” Brut NV**

The new release of the non-vintage Serveaux Fils “Carte Noire” Brut, which I sampled in Beaune in November, took a while to settle in after it was opened and I assume had been disgorged fairly recently. However, with a bit of air, the touch of perfume in the wine blew off and the bouquet was quite fine, offering up scents of apple, orange zest, crushed violets, bread dough, stony minerality and a nice, vibrant topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and very minerally in personality, with a lovely core, elegant *mousse* and very good cut and grip on the very long and still slightly reductive finish. I would give this very promising wine at least another year or two in the cellar to really blossom, as it is still very young, but should prove to be excellent with a bit of bottle age. 2014-2030. **89+.**



### **Veuve Fourny et Fils Grande Réserve “Premier Cru” Brut NV (Vertus)**

This particular bottling of Veuve Fourny Grande Réserve Brut was disgorged in February of 2010 and carried a code on the label of 10051. It is a terrific bottle of Brut from a house that I usually associate with drier-styled bubbly, and interestingly, this cuvée contains twenty percent pinot noir (rather a rarity in the Côte des Blancs!) to go along with eighty percent chardonnay. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a complex and vibrant blend of tart apple, pink grapefruit, stony minerality, warm bread and a delicate, exotic topnote of dried lavender. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a great vein of stony minerality driving the wine, a superb core, lovely focus and balance, frothy *mouse* and very fine length and grip on the classy finish. This is still a young wine and shows just a whisper of its *dosage* on the backend at the present time, but this should fully integrate into the wine with another year or two of bottle age. Fine juice. 2013-2025+. **90+**.

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

#### **Paul Bara “Grande Rosé” Brut NV (Grand Cru- Bouzy)**

The non-vintage Paul Bara “Grande Rosé” is comprised of a blend of eighty percent pinot noir and twenty percent chardonnay. Interestingly, the chardonnay does not go through malolactic fermentation, but the pinot noir does. All of the Bara Rosés are made from a combination of skin contact and the addition of some still red wine. In the past, I have always really loved this bottling, but the new release (which I tasted in Beaune in November) was very young and showing some distinct backend bitterness that I have never found in this bottling previously. Perhaps it was just very young. The nose is certainly lovely and quite classic in its aromatic constellation of cherries, blood orange, rye bread, smoke, citrus peel and a lovely base of soil tones. However, on the palate, this very young wine is still a bit cranky. It is full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with refined *mousse*, crisp acids and very good focus, but the aforementioned bitterness on the finish currently dominating the backend. There is good length and grip here, so hopefully all this needs is time. But, given the fact that it was aged three years on the lees prior to disgorgement and release, I was expecting a more giving structure! 2015-2025+? **87-90?**

#### **Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé NV**

I also had the pleasure to taste the new release of the Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé NV at the Crush tasting in December here in New York, and then subsequently at a Billecart tasting in February. This wine is a blend of fifty percent chardonnay, thirty percent pinot noir and twenty percent pinot meunier and was aged for fully four years on the fine lees prior to disgorgement and preparation for release. Unlike the house’s straight non-vintage Brut bottling, some of the base wines for the Brut Rosé go through malo. The bouquet on the current release is outstanding, wafting from the glass in a mélange of cherries, orange peel, woodsmoke, warm bread and a lovely base of complex minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very refined on the attack, with a lovely core, frothy *mousse*, bright acids and outstanding focus, length and grip on the very elegant and complete finish. Fine, fine juice. 2013-2020+. **92+**.

#### **Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé NV (served from magnum)**

The Billecart-Salmon Brut Rosé served out of magnum seemed to have just a touch more bottle age to it than the regular-sized bottle that I tasted in December, and I imagine that this is the previous year’s release of the wine, as magnums of Champagne tend to move a bit slower through the pipeline here in New York. I very much like the elegance of this bottling, which probably owes a debt to the fifty percent chardonnay in the blend. Out of magnum, the wine is

drinking splendidly, offering up a complex and vibrant bouquet of melon, tangerine, wheat toast, lovely minerality, rose petals and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very refined, with a lovely core, elegant *mousse*, crisp acids and a very long, focused and complex finish. I really wish Billecart would join several other serious *Grandes Marques* in putting dates of disgorgement on the back label, so that one could better gauge when to start popping corks on their lovely non-vintage bottlings. 2013-2025. **93.**

**Pascal Doquet Premier Cru Brut Rosé NV (Cote des Blancs)**

The current release of the non-vintage Brut Rosé from Pascal Doquet is comprised of a blend of sixty-eight percent chardonnay and thirty-two percent pinot noir and was disgorged in September of 2012. Like all of the Doquet wines that I tasted for this report, there is a lovely vibrancy to the fruit component in this wine and really lovely mineral signature on both the nose and palate, but it is marked a bit by its wood component. The deep and complex nose offers up scents of cherry, tangerine, rye toast, chalky minerality, orange peel and a bit of smoky wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely, snappy acids, fine mineral drive on the backend, lovely *mousse* and a bit of wood floating like a storm-cloud around the edges of the vibrant synthesis of fruit and soil on the backend of the palate. The whole wine just gets dulled down a bit from the wood, and it was not part of the equation, this wine would be brilliant, instead of just very good. As it is, the wood take away a bit of the cleanliness on the backend. There are stunning raw materials here begging to get out from under the wood. 2013-2018. **88.**

**Godmé Père et Fils Brut Rosé NV (Grand Cru- Verzenay)**

The new release of the non-vintage Godmé Père et Fils Brut Rosé is outstanding on both the nose and palate. The vibrant bouquet wafts from the glass in a very classy combination of tart strawberries, orange zest, rye toast, smoke, beautiful, chalky soil tones and a distinct topnote of dried roses. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and complex, with an excellent core, bright acids, quite moderate *dosage*, lovely focus and grip, elegant *mousse* and a very long, poised and youthful finish. I have had great success aging the non-vintage Godmé Père et Fils Brut Rosé in my own cellar, and I would be strongly inclined to tuck the new release away for a few years bottle age to really let it blossom. It is an excellent wine that will only deliver ever further pleasure with a bit of cellaring. 2014-2030. **92.**

**Charles Heidsieck “Rosé Réserve” Brut NV**

I was very happy that I dropped a note to Charles Heidsieck’s US importers to see if I could retaste the current releases of their non-vintage Brut and Brut Rosé Réserve, as I hypothesized from the way the wines were showing this past summer that they had been fairly recently disgorged and were not totally on form. This clearly proved to be the case, and the same wines six months on are absolutely singing and right back at the superb level I am accustomed to from this great Grand Marques. The Brut Rosé Réserve offers up a deep and absolutely stunning nose, with a blend of cherries, blood orange, wheat toast, lovely, complex minerality and orange zest wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with an excellent core, superb focus and grip, very refined *mousse* and exceptional breed on the very long and classic finish. Great juice. 2013-2025+. **94.**

**Krug Brut Rosé NV (ID # 311030)**

This bottle of Krug Rosé was disgorged in the fall of 2011 and is based primarily on wines from the 2005 vintage. It was absolutely singing a year after its *degorgement*, when I had the chance to drink it at an event here in New York. It is a very pale salmon color, as are all Krug Rosés, and offers up a very young and stunning bouquet of melon, orange peel, rye toast, chalky

minerality, incipient notes of almond paste, cherry blossoms and subtle smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly refined, with very elegant, dancing *mousse*, beautifully-integrated acids, great breed and complexity and magical length and grip on the seamless and utterly seductive finish. This is a very young bottle of Rosé that is only going to get better with further bottle age, but it is already pretty hard to resist and is a pure joy to drink in its youthful state of sophisticated exuberance. 2013-2035+. **96.**

**Champagne J. Lasalle Premier Cru Brut Rosé NV (Chigny-les-Roses)**

On the handful of occasions that I have been fortunate enough to drink the Lasalle Brut Rosé, I have always been struck by what a lovely and superbly elegant example it is, with its delicate salmon color and utterly refined personality. The current release is comprised of a blend of seventy percent pinot noir (six percent of which is still red wine for color) and fifteen percent each chardonnay and pinot meunier. The bouquet is outstanding, jumping from the glass in a blend of tangerine, white cherries, stony minerality, orange peel, bread dough and a gentle, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and tightly-knit, with a lovely core, frothy *mousse*, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and perfectly balanced finish. While the wine is perfectly lovely to drink today, I had such good results aging this wine a few years in my cellar that I would strongly suggest tucking this glorious wine away for a handful of years and really let it blossom. Just a classic! 2014-2025+. **92+.**



### **Laurent-Perrier Brut Rosé NV**

I am not sure how I missed tasting this wine for the last report on Champagne, but availed myself of a glass of this during my first week in Beaune tasting the 2011 Burgundies. This is one of the very finest non-vintage Rosés produced in Champagne these days and its price has climbed rather alarmingly over the last few years to reflect this fact. Nevertheless, there is little not to commend this wine in terms of quality, as the current release offers up a deep and very classy bouquet of blood orange, strawberry, chalky soil tones, bread dough, citrus peel and a lovely, gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and well-balanced, with a fine core, very elegant *mousse*, crisp acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and complex finish. Exemplary Brut Rosé. 2013-2020+. **93.**

### **Bruno Paillard “Première Cuvée” Brut Rosé NV (Disgorged March 2011)**

I am not sure if the wines from Bruno Paillard were really this tight this past summer, or if my palate was on sabbatical, but all of the bottlings that I have revisited from Issue Forty have shown decidedly finer with six months of additional bottle age and this is another wine that I woefully underrated when I first tasted it right out of the blocks! The blend is comprised of eighty-five percent pinot noir and fifteen percent chardonnay, with just a dollop of still red wine added to the blend to give the wine its distinctively delicate copper hue. Today, this young wine is absolutely stunning, soaring from the glass in a beautiful blend of wild strawberries, tangerine, warm bread, a very complex base of chalky soil tones, citrus peel and a beautiful topnote of rose petal. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and dancing, with a great core of fruit, very refined, almost filigreed *mousse*, crisp acids and brilliant focus and balance on the very long and refined finish. Just a brilliant bottle of Brut Rosé, the current release from Bruno Paillard is really starting to drink well, but it remains a young wine and will only improve with further bottle age. A stunning wine! 2013-2030. **94.**

### **Ployez-Jacquemart Extra Brut Rosé NV**

I believe that this bottle of the Ployez family’s non-vintage Extra Brut Rosé is the same as I reviewed in the Issue Forty, and six months of bottle age has done this beautiful wine absolutely no harm! The beautiful nose delivers in a vibrant combination of white cherries, blood orange, wheat toast, gentle smokiness, chalky minerality, a nice touch of cinnamon and a topnote of dried roses. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly refined, with a lovely core of fruit, outstanding focus and balance, refined *mousse*, great complexity and a very long, crisp and supremely elegant finish. I loved this wine six months ago and the passing half year have simply made this wine more wide open and even more pleasurable to drink. This has to be one of the great steals for Rosé Champagne in the market today! 2013-2025. **93.**

### **Potel-Prieux Brut Rosé NV (Venteuil)**

The current release of the non-vintage Potel-Prieux Brut Rosé was a touch reduced when first opened (one of my friends tasting it with me thought it smelled of canned tuna fish!), but this blew off quite briskly to reveal a pretty solid bottle of bubbly. The color is a very pale salmon, and the nose offers up a complex blend of dried cherries, rye toast, a touch of white pepper, a nice base of soil, smoke and a touch of cinnamon in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and frothy, with a good core, fine focus and a finish that is just a bit short, but impressively complex. This is not a great bottle of Brut Rosé, but it is not bad once the initial bit of reductive funkiness blows off and is quite tasty at the table. 2013-2020. **88.**

### **Sanchez-Le Guédard “Rosé de Saignée” Brut Rosé NV (Cumières)**

The Sanchez-Le Guédard “Rosé de Saignée” is made entirely from pinot noir grapes, with an extended skin contact accounting for its beautiful, deep, cherry red hue. I am not sure if

the wine goes through malo or any other aspects of its *élevage*, as the house's website is almost entirely video-based (and quite entertaining) and not as informative as one might hope. In any event, the wine is quite good, offering up a deep and spicy nose of cherries, blood orange, a touch of cinnamon, a fine base of soil and a touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and fairly gentle in its *mousse*, with sound acids, good focus and pretty good length on the finish. I would love to see a bit more grip and a bit more energy to the *mousse*, but there is quite a lot of personality in the glass. This is a Brut Rosé that will need drinking up over the relative near-term and is certainly best with food, rather than as an aperitif, but it is a pretty tasty bottle of bubbly. 2013-2017. **88.**

**Veuve Fourny et Fils Brut Rosé NV (Premier Cru-Vertus)**

The non-vintage Veuve Fourny et Fils Brut Rosé is comprised of a blend of eighty percent chardonnay and twenty percent pinot noir, with the color produced by adding back still pinot noir to the blend. The new release is really lovely, offering up a very deep and complex nose of white cherries, tart orange, woodsmoke, wheat toast and a complex base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and absolutely rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and balance, frothy *mousse*, beautifully-integrated acidity and excellent length and grip on the dancing and very classy finish. A very high class bottle of Brut Rosé. 2013-2025. **91+.**

***Vintage-Dated Extra Brut***

**2010 Jérôme Prévost La Closserie "Les Béguines" Extra Brut (LC10)**

Not surprisingly, the 2010 Les Béguines from Jérôme Prévost is a very young wine, but it has absolutely stunning promise. The deep, pure and youthfully vibrant nose delivers a fine mix of pear, discreet tangerine, a bit of white cherry, a superb base of chalky minerality, fresh-baked bread, delicate smokiness, citrus peel and the gentle floral tones of pinot meunier. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a racy spine of acidity, outstanding focus and balance, superbly elegant *mousse* and a very long, soil-driven and youthfully refined finish. This is a great vintage of Les Béguines and I cannot wait to drink this at the same point in its evolution as where the 2002 vintage is today! A great wine that should really be cellared at least for a handful of years and really let its secondary layers rise to the top. It is going to be a fascinating comparison between the 2009 and 2010 vintages of Les Béguines over the coming couple of decades! 2015-2035. **94.**

**2009 Jérôme Prévost La Closserie "Les Béguines" Extra Brut (LC09)**

I have not kept careful note of the relative potential of the 2009 and 2008 vintages in Champagne, but based on these two superb bottlings from Jérôme Prévost, it seems that the 2009 vintage may well have just a touch more potential. The young and utterly superb bouquet jumps from the glass in a fine mix of ripe pears and peaches, toasted hazelnuts, brioche, a very complex base of soil tones, orange peel and a nice topnote of rye seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off a great core of fruit, with laser-like focus, brisk acids, tiny, pinpoint bubbles and stunning length and grip on the very, very promising finish. As is the case with the 2008, the 2009 Les Béguines is a superb bottle of Champagne that is already a good drink, but which is clearly going to be even better some extended cellaring. 2015-2035. **94.**

**2008 Jérôme Prévost La Closserie "Les Béguines" Extra Brut (LC08)**

The 2008 Jérôme Prévost La Closserie "Les Béguines" Extra Brut is a beautiful bottle in the making, but this is a young wine that is going to really blossom if it is given a few years of time in the cellar. The deep, nascently complex bouquet is a blend of apple, tart orange, bread

dough, absolutely superb minerality and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with typical Prévost delicate *mousse*, bright, zesty acids and outstanding length and grip on the young and beautifully focused finish. This is a very tasty and snappy young bottle of bubbly, but the real fireworks here on the palate are only going to emerge with a few years of bottle age! 2015-2030. **93.**

**2008 Daniel Savart et Fils Extra Brut Millésime (Premier Cru- Écueil)**

The 2008 Daniel Savart et Fils Extra Brut is comprised of a blend of sixty percent pinot noir and forty percent chardonnay and was disgorged in September of 2012. I should note that the label just states Champagne Savart, and only the fine print contains the name of the Daniel Savart et Fils. The nose on the 2008 Extra Brut is quite good, offering up a precise and stony blend of tart apple, lemon, stony minerality, a touch of quinine, gentle notes of warm bread and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very focused, with a good core, pinpoint bubbles, brisk acids and very good length and grip on the well-balanced, bone dry and quite soil-driven finish. This is an Extra Brut for purists, as it is really quite dry, but it has excellent balance and complexity. Good juice. 2013-2020+. **91+.**

**2004 Billecart-Salmon Extra Brut Millésime**

This was the first time I had tried a vintage-dated Extra Brut from Billecart-Salmon and I was quite impressed. The '04 is a blend of seventy percent pinot noir and thirty percent chardonnay and came about when the house decided not to produce a 2004 Cuvée Nicolas François in this vintage, thus freeing up some juice for this bottling. The superb nose wafts from the glass in a relatively toasty blend of apple, tart peach, sourdough bread, complex, stony minerality, a touch of nuttiness and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with beautiful balance and focus, a very good core, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the classy finish. What I like about this wine is it is so well-balanced that its bone-dry backend never threatens to cross the line into flat out austerity. Today, this wine's structure has just a bit of the upper hand, which gives it the appearance of being just a touch lean in the mid-palate, but I suspect that a few years of bottle age will allow the wine to fully blossom at the core and this will be a passing phenomenon. It is certainly approachable now, but I would be inclined to give this another two or three years in the cellar to really let it come into its own. 2013-2025+. **92+.**

**2002 Jérôme Prévost La Closierie "Les Beguines" Extra Brut (RM02)**

The 2002 Jérôme Prévost "Les Beguines" has reached a beautiful stage of maturity and is at full bloom at age eleven. Back in 2002 (which was only Monsieur Prévost's fifth vintage), this bottling was comprised entirely from the old vine pinot meunier, as he had not yet planted the small two-tenths of a hectare parcel adjoining Les Beguines that contains small amounts of chardonnay, pinot blanc and pinot noir in addition to meunier. The nose on the '02 is outstanding, wafting from the glass in a refined combination of tart orange, white peach, warm biscuits, beautiful floral accents, an exotic vein of savory overtones and a bit of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully delineated, with a fine core, ethereal *mousse*, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and very refined finish. Great juice in full bloom. 2013-2025. **94.**

***Vintage-Dated Brut***

**2007 Bochet-Lemoine Brut Millésime (Cormoyeux)**

Bochet-Lemoine is a relatively new endeavor, having come about in 1990, as a certain Mademoiselle Valerie Bochet met a Monsieur Jacky Lemoine and subsequently brought together

two small, family Champagne houses when they were married in this year. The house is located in the village of Cormoyeux, which lies about six or seven kilometers to the north of Épernay (actually due north of the village of Cumières to be more precise) in the Vallée de la Marne. Their Brut Millésime is a blend of chardonnay and pinot noir, with the former grape ranging from fifty to seventy percent of the blend, depending on the vintage, and the balance made up of pinot (no precise information on the *cépage* was available on the house's website). The 2007 is a good wine, offering up a young and complex nose of apple, peach, warm bread, a touch of fresh nutmeg, lovely soil tones and a gentle touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with lovely mid-palate depth, good, but not particularly energetic *mousse*, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is not the most elegant Champagne, but it does deliver excellent complexity, plenty of weight at the core and a long finish, so there is an awful lot to like here. Based on the aromatics, I would guess that the 2007 vintage here was closer to seventy percent chardonnay. Good juice. 2013-2025+. **91+**.

**2007 Champagne J. Lasalle “Cuvée Angeline” Premier Cru Brut (Chigny-les-Roses)**

I have long been a fan of the Champagne J. Lasalle wines, and their current release of the “Cuvée Angeline” was showing beautifully in Beaune in November. The *cépages* of the 2007 is a blend of sixty percent pinot noir and forty percent chardonnay, with the wine going through full malolactic fermentation (as do all the Lasalle wines) and having aged on the lees for five years. The 2007 Cuvée Angeline offers up a stunning and youthful nose of delicious apples, a touch of tangerine, bread dough, chalky minerality and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, and like all of the Lasalle bottlings, supremely elegant, with a rock solid core of fruit, crisp and seamless acids, very refined *mousse* and outstanding length and grip on the complex and very classy finish. The epitome of refined bubbly. 2013-2030+. **93**.

**2007 Lebrun Servenay “Exhilarante” Vieilles Vignes Brut Millésime**

The 2007 Lebrun Servenay “Exhilarante” old vine bottling is still a very, very young Champagne and really is in need of at least a few years of bottle age to start to open up. The bouquet is young, complex and fairly marked by its yeast autolysis aromatics at the present time, but with notes of apple, grapefruit peel, stony soil tones and bread dough underneath. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully coarse, with bracing acids, young and elegant *mousse*, fine focus and impressive length and grip on the still very primary finish. I have little doubt that this will be a lovely wine in the fullness of time, but it is pretty tough sledding on the palate right now and really needs at least a couple of years to relax its snappy structure and start to show some generosity on the palate. 2014-2025+. **90+**.

**2006 Marc Hébrart “Spécial Club” Brut Millésime (Premier Cru- Mareuil-sur-Aÿ)**

Marc Hébrart's “Spécial Club” bottling is comprised of a blend of fifty-five percent pinot noir from the village of Mareuil-sur-Aÿ and forty-five percent grand cru chardonnay from the Côte des Blancs villages of Oiry and Chouilly and was aged a bit more than three and a half years on the lees prior to disgorgement. The 2006 Spécial Club is excellent, jumping from the glass in a complex blend of grapefruit, tart pear, gentle herbal tones, bread dough, smoke and a lovely base of complex minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant, with a lovely core of fruit, crisp acids, pinpoint bubbles and very good focus and grip on the long and classy finish. This is a lovely bottle that is already drinking very well, but I would have no hesitation to tuck it away for at least a few more years and really let it blossom with some secondary layers of complexity. Lovely wine. 2013-2025. **92**.

#### **2006 Veuve Fourny et Fils Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime (Premier Cru-Vertus)**

The Veuve Fourny et Fils Brut Millésime bottling is produced from a parcel of fifty year-old chardonnay vines and typically is the one wine in the house's lineup that does not have a percentage of its blend go through malolactic fermentation. The 2006 is a young and very promising wine, offering up a complex nose of apple, smoke, tart orange, chalky minerality and bread dough. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a superb core, crisp acids, elegant *mousse* and a very long, young and snappy finish. This needs a few years to really uncoil, but it will be a lovely wine once it has blossomed. 2015-2030+. **91+**.

#### **2006 Voirin-Jumel Brut Millésime (Grand Cru- Cramant)**

Voirin-Jumel was a new grower Champagne to me and I was very, very impressed with the quality of their 2006 Brut Millésime. Being located in Cramant, this is one hundred percent chardonnay- though it does not state Blanc de Blancs on the label (that I can recall), and is aged for four years on the lees prior to disgorgement. The '06 offers up a young, complex and very lovely nose of pear, tart orange, chalky minerality, brioche, a touch of almond and a floral topnote redolent of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary in profile, with fine focus and mid-palate depth, great mineral drive, frothy *mousse*, bracing acids and excellent balance on the very long and still very young finish. Give this lovely wine at least a few years in the cellar to really blossom. 2015-235. **92**.

#### **2005 Champagne J. Lasalle Brut Millésime Blanc de Blancs (Chigny-les-Roses)**

The 2005 Champagne J. Lasalle Brut Millésime Blanc de Blancs is a superb and very elegant young wine, with impressive complexity on both the nose and palate. This is still a wine that deserves at least another year or two of bottle age to really blossom, but it is quite enjoyable in its youthful state, offering up a classy bouquet of tangerine, a touch of strawberry, complex, chalky soil tones, bread dough, smoke and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a tightly-knit personality, a fine core, elegant *mouse* and excellent focus and grip on the very long, tight and well-balanced finish. A lovely and still quite young wine. 2014-2030+. **92**.

#### **2004 Paul Bara Brut Millésime (Grand Cru- Bouzy)**

The 2004 Paul Bara Brut Millésime is still a very young wine and showed a slightly green edge to both the nose and palate when I tasted it in November. This may just be a passing stage for the wine, but it will certainly want a bit of bottle age to blossom. The youthful bouquet is a mélange of green apple, grapefruit, a slight touch of grassiness, chalky soil tones, bread dough and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly bracing, with good depth (and perhaps even better depth hidden behind its substantial girdle of acidity!), refined *mousse* and a very long, slightly edgy and youthful finish. The wine is focused very nicely, but it is not particularly generous today and clearly needs some bottle age to unwind. At this early stage, I am not really sure just how superb it will be at its apogee, and there is a distinct possibility that I will have proved to have underrated this wine a bit when it has had five or six years to blossom. But, today, it is a bit hard to read and may always retain a bit of the edginess that it displays at the present time, and if this turns out to be the case, then my score should be spot on for the wine. 2015-2030+. **88+?**

#### **2004 Paul Bara "Spécial Club" Brut Millésime (Grand Cru- Bouzy)**

The 2004 Paul Bara "Spécial Club" is a superb young wine in the making and clearly the best of the range of Bara wines that I sampled in Beaune in November. The blend contains a bit



more chardonnay than is typical at the estate (thirty percent), with the balance made up of pinot noir and was aged for at least six years on the lees before disgorgement. The bouquet is deep, complex and very classy, delivering a blend of grapefruit, tart orange, stony minerality, bread dough, citrus peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with very elegant, pinpoint bubbles, crisp acids, lovely focus and balance and a long, bright and classy finish. This is a lovely bottle that will only improve as it really starts to reach its apogee, and though it is already a very fine drink, I would keep it in the cellar for another four or five years to let it reach its peak. 2013-2030. **92+**.

**2004 Bérèche Père et Fils “Vieilles Vignes Sélectionnée” Brut (Ludes- Montagne de Reims)**

This was the first time I had tasted the “Vieilles Vignes Sélectionnée” from Bérèche Père et Fils, and the 2004 was absolutely superb. This wine was disgorged in February of 2012 and was just singing in January of this year. The stunning nose offers up a deep and vibrant aromatic constellation of apple, pear, warm brioche, a complex base of soil, a touch of citrus zest and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely rock solid at the core, with superb focus, elegant *mousse*, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced and classy finish. This is a really lovely example of the vintage, and while it is certainly approachable today, I would strongly suggest that a couple more years of bottle age will really pay dividends. 2015-2035. **94**.

**2004 H. Blin Brut Millésime (Vincelles)**

The marque of H. Blin is that of the cooperative in the Vallée de la Marne village of Vincelles, which was founded by Henri Blin and twenty-eight other *vignerons* in the village in 1947. Since 2009, the President of the co-op has been Simon Blin, the grandson of Henri. Vincelles is pinot meunier country, with fully seventy percent of the vineyards in this village planted to that variety, with the other thirty percent split equally between chardonnay and pinot noir. The 2004 H. Blin Brut Millésime is a pretty good bottle that offers up good value, with a bouquet of apple, pear, chalky minerality, bread dough and a nice touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, young and just a touch short on the backend, but with a good core, fine *mousse*, and sound focus and gentle acids on the well-balanced finish. This is not bad, but it is certainly not top division bubbly. 2013-2020. **87**.

**2004 Champagne J. Lasalle “Spécial Club” Brut Millésime (Chigny-les-Roses)**

The 2004 Spécial Club bottling from Lasalle is quite young and still in need of some bottle age to work through an adolescent touch of greenness on both the nose and palate. The deep and still very young nose offers up scents of grapefruit, apple, sourdough bread, citrus peel and a bit of grassiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a good core, fine *mousse*, and very good length and grip, but also with a slightly green edge on the backend that is hopefully just a reflection of a wine that is still too young for primetime drinking. Give this at least a few years to blossom. 2015-2030+? **89+?**

**2004 Veuve Clicquot “la Grande Dame” Brut**

I do not taste the Veuve Clicquot lineup with any regularity, so I was pleased to cross paths with the 2004 Grande Dame at a tasting here in New York in December. I was struck by how leesy this release of Grande Dame is on both the nose and palate at the present time, as the bouquet is a mix of apple, orange peel, dusty minerality, plenty of yeastiness and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and racy, with a fine core, pinpoint bubbles, snappy acids and a long and well-balanced finish. There is not a whole lot of breed in evidence in this wine today, and though I have little doubt that it will improve with a bit more bottle age, it seems likely to be one of the lesser vintages of Grande Dame. Today, the yeast

autolysis notes really get in the way of the wine a bit and I hope this dissipates as the wine ages. It is not bad by any means, but at this level, not bad is probably not really good enough! 2013-2030. **91.**

### **2003 Dom Perignon**

The 2003 Dom Perignon, which I had not had a chance to taste when it was initially released, is really a quite stunning example of the vintage. When I had initially heard that Moët et Chandon was planning to release a Dom Perignon from this torrid summer, I was a bit surprised, but figured that the superb track record Dom Perignon has had over the last several decades was sufficient evidence to not judge the wine before it was tasted. So, I was not disappointed to find that the 2003 Dom Perignon is indeed a young and classic wine in the making, with plenty of structural integrity and customary youthful snappiness. The lovely and very fresh nose wafts from the glass in a blend of quince green apple, complex minerality, young Dom herbal complications, sourdough bread, citrus peel and a nice touch of white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and very well-balanced, with a rock solid core, superb mineral drive, refined *mousse*, outstanding acidity and fine focus and grip on the very long and youthful finish. A lovely Dom in the making that is quite classic in profile and needing time in the cellar to really start to offer up its secondary layers of complexity. 2019-2040. **94+.**

### **2002 Chartogne-Taillet Brut Millésime (Merfy)**

Chartogne-Taillet is located in the small village of Merfy, situated northeast of Reims. I could not find specific information about the 2002 vintage Brut from Chartogne-Taillet on the domaine's website (or that of its US importer, the loquacious Terry Theise), but the 2004 is made up of a blend of sixty percent pinot noir and forty percent chardonnay and I am assuming that the 2002 is similar. These days, the estate is beginning to experiment with a bit of barrel fermentation- primarily in older barrels- but I believe that the 2002 was still all raised in stainless steel and the wine did not show any influence from oak. This was the first time I had tasted a wine from this producer and it was quite good, offering up a lovely nose of apple, warm bread, stony minerality, orange peel and a nice floral topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with fine focus and balance, a very good core of fruit, pinpoint bubbles and lovely length and grip on the refined finish. Good juice- sorry not to have more information about this particular bottling. **91+.**

### **2002 Claude Cazals Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime (Grand Cru- Mesnil-sur-Oger)**

The 2002 Claude Cazals Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime is a lovely wine, offering up a complex and blossoming nose of apple, orange peel, smoke, warm bread and a lovely base of stony minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite complex, with lovely mid-palate depth, bright acids, frothy *mousse* and excellent length and grip on the focused and very poised finish. This is a very lithe and stylish example of the vintage from this nine hectare domaine in Mesnil-sur-Oger. Having only tasted the 1996 previously from this estate, I was very happy to see the 2002 every bit as fine as the previous wine, and I really need to taste more of the Cazals wines in the future! 2013-2025+. **92.**

### **2002 Pascal Doquet "Grand Cru" Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime (Mesnil-sur-Oger)**

All of Monsieur Doquet's grand cru bottlings hail from his vineyards in Mesnil-sur-Oger, despite the house being based in Vertus. The 2002 Blanc de Blancs from Mesnil offers up a lovely nose of ripe pear, delicious apple, sweet brioche, complex, chalky soil tones, *crème*

*patissière*, as well as an odd, almost marshmallow-y touch of torrefaction from the oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully focused on the attack, with a rock solid core, excellent soil inflection, elegant *mousse* and a long, crisp finish that gets just a bit muddled from oak intruding into the festivities on the tail-end of the palate. This is clearly a great wine underneath a slightly sloppy oak element. The raw materials here are so good that the wine is still not a bad drink in its current guise, but there is buried treasure here that only needs a less heavy hand with the wood to discover! 2013-2025+. **88+**.

**2002 Moët et Chandon Vintage Brut**

Given how good the 2002 vintage is in Champagne, I was hoping for just a bit more from the 2002 Moët et Chandon Vintage Brut, but this wine is just a tad simple and, at least to my palate, a bit marked by a too generous *dosage* on the backend. The nose is a straightforward blend of apple, wheat toast, a bit of orange, dusty soil tones and a bit of marshmallow in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and fairly four-square, but with a good core, solid *mousse* and sneaky length and grip on the crisp finish. This is certainly not a bad wine, but it is a bit sweet and really seems still stuck a bit in the rather muddled style of the past here at Moët et Chandon. I was hoping for just a bit more, given how the non-vintage Brut was showing a bit more precision and minerality than it used to back in the day. This is a bit longer and deeper than the Brut Imperial, but not as precise or clean. 2013-2020. **87**.



### **2000 Paul Bara “Cuvée Marie de France” Brut Millésime (Grand Cru- Bouzy)**

The Cuvée Marie de France from Champagne Paul Bara is the house’s top bottling, is comprised entirely of pinot noir and is aged for a minimum of six years on the lees prior to disgorgement and release into the market. This is a touch drier than the other Brut bottlings from the house of Bara, with the *dosage* between six and seven grams per liter (as opposed to eight for the other bottlings). I had never previously tasted this cuvée from Paul Bara and had high expectations, but I did not find it showing quite the same suave palate impression as the 2004 Spécial Club bottling. The nose is certainly deep and complex, offering a much more leesy mélange of pear, apple, a touch of honeysuckle, bread dough, dusty minerality and orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite yeasty in personality, with elegant bubbles, sound acids and good length and grip on the slightly disjointed finish. At twelve years of age, I have a hard time imagining that this is still just too young, and have to conclude that it does not quite possess the customary focus and precision of other Paul Bara bottlings. Not bad, but I was expecting something a step up! 2013-2022+. **89.**

### **2000 Krug Vintage Brut**

The 2000 vintage of Krug is evolving very nicely and seems likely to be a year where the wine can offer superb pleasure at a fairly early age, which is not always the case with some of the more structured vintages from this superb house. The wine is blossoming nicely and shows some lovely secondary layers of complexity on the nose, with scents of apple, gentle smokiness, caraway seed, discreetly complex soil tones, bread dough and a gentle touch of nutskins wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and seamless, with a superb core of fruit, very elegant *mousse*, suave acidity, excellent grip and laser-like focus on the very long, complex and intensely flavored finish. This is a superb vintage of Krug that is already a very impressive drink, and I cannot see a whole lot of reason to defer one’s gratification, as the wine is really showing brilliantly today. 2013-2035+. **95.**

### **1999 Pascal Doquet “Grand Cru” Blanc de Blancs Brut Millésime (Mesnil-sur-Oger)**

I liked the Doquet 1999 Grand Cru bottling from Mesnil a bit better than the 2002, as the wine seemed a touch less foggy from its wood- perhaps this is a function of bottle age and the 2002 will close the gap as it gets a bit more mature. The nose is quite lovely in its blend of pear, apple, orange zest, chalky minerality, warm biscuits and just a touch of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite complex, with a lovely vein of minerality, a great core of fruit, excellent acidity, refined *mousse* and a long finish that is just a touch clipped by the wood at the very backend of the palate. The minerality seems to carry better to the finish on the 1999 (in comparison to the 2002 version), and while this wine would have been better with less (or more delicately applied) wood, this is a pretty good drink- even in its current guise. 2013-2025. **90.**

### **1998 Krug Vintage Brut**

The 1998 vintage at Krug is always going to be a bit of an outlier, as this is the last vintage since 1981 to include more than fifty percent chardonnay in the blend. The wine is absolutely lovely on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet showing a bit of its higher than customary chardonnay in its aromatic profile of apple, almond, fresh apricot, brioche, orange zest, a beautifully complex base of soil and gentle savory topnotes. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with vibrant acidity, exceptional focus and balance, elegant, pinpoint bubbles and outstanding mineral drive on the very long and complex finish. I

loved the 1981 Krug when it was released and the 1998 is a very fine follow-up to this small and exclusive club of chardonnay-dominant Krug vintage-dated bottlings. Great juice. 2013-2040+. **94+**.

### **1996 Dom Riunart Blanc de Blancs Brut**

The 1996 Dom Riunart Blanc de Blancs is still a very young wine and is just now beginning to stir on the nose and palate and start to hint at its ultimate character. The bright and very classy nose jumps from the glass in a gorgeous mélange of pear, lemon, chalky soil tones, lime zest and a gentle touch of the *crème patissière* to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very racy, with a rock solid core of fruit, frothy *mousse*, snappy acids and great length and grip on the poised and vibrant finish. While this wine is now beginning to blossom, it is still very early days for the '96 Dom Riunart Blanc de Blancs and I would be inclined to give this at least another three or four years of bottle age before having at it in earnest. 2016-2035+. **93**.

### **1996 Salon “Le Mesnil” Brut**

The 1996 Salon has a very high reputation, but I found the wine atypically forward for the vintage and its purported pedigree and already drinking. Not that the wine is a bad glass of bubbly for current consumption, but in the bracing vintage of 1996, most top bottlings of Champagne are still decidedly on the young side and not ready for the primetime. The '96 Salon offers up a lovely and quite evolved nose of pear, apple, *terres blanches* soil tones, a touch of smokiness and brioche. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely defined by its lovely soil signature, with a good core, sound *mousse* and really a very gentle- almost soft-structure. The finish is long and complex, but this wine is emphatically not going to make old bones and I would not hesitate to think about finishing it up over the next couple of years, as the acids seem pretty low and there is very little grip on the backend. It is a tasty bottle of bubbly, but hardly worthy of its lofty reputation or price tag. 2013-2016. **90**.

### **1995 Taittinger Comtes de Champagne Blanc de Blancs Brut**

It had been several years since I last crossed paths with a bottle of the 1995 Comtes de Champagne, before friends in Europe popped this bottle to celebrate my birthday while in Beaune in November, and the wine is drinking at its zenith at age eighteen. The deep and utterly beautiful nose soars from the glass in a combination of delicious apples, oranges, beautiful toastiness, incipient notes of nuttiness that recall toasted almonds, a brilliantly complex base of minerality, citrus zest and a faint whiff of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and hauntingly complex, with superb mid-palate depth, refined *mousse*, crisp acids and stunning length and grip on the perfectly balanced, refined and focused finish. After running into a few bottles here in the states back several years ago that seemed atypically forward (and possibly stored improperly), I was simply delighted to catch a bottle in pristine shape and absolutely singing on both the nose and palate. This is a great, great bottle of bubbly at its apogee of peak drinkability. 2013-2035. **96**.

### **1995 Salon “Le Mesnil” Brut**

Okay, I am officially in the dazed and confused camp about the continued high reputation of Salon. Maybe there were some great wines in the past, but at least since the 1985 vintage, this house has produced a bevy of vintages that are plagued by both extreme bottle variation and very early maderization. Is this really the stuff that a *Tête de Cuvée* is made of? The 1995 is already beginning to maderize on both the nose and palate (highly surprising in this very snappy

vintage), and this is a wine (or at least this bottle) that is in dire need of drinking up ASAP. The very old nose offers up a still stylish blend of baked apples and pears, almond biscotti, warm biscuits and a touch of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and powerfully put together, with a good core, good acidity, but fading bubbles and a long, tiring and oxidative finish. For the next year or two, this wine will continue to be palatable, and then it should descend briskly into full-blown maderization. This tastes and smells today like it was made from fallen apples, not chardonnay grapes! What is up with Salon these days? 2013-2015. **87.**

**1993 Dom Riunart Blanc de Blancs Brut (served from magnum)**

The 1993 Dom Riunart Blanc de Blancs is fully ready to drink in magnum, but still shows plenty of future ahead of it. The deep, complex and tertiary nose offers up a vibrant blend of warmed apples and pears, a touch of hazelnut, brioche, citrus peel and a very complex base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and at its absolute apogee, with a fine core of fruit, elegant *mousse*, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This is an interesting contrast to the 1995 Salon, for while both the aromas and flavors here are fully mature, there is not one touch of oxidation and the wine is perfectly balanced and will continue to cruise along at this very pretty plateau for at least a dozen years and probably longer. 2013-2025+. **92.**

**1989 Krug “Collection” Vintage Brut**

I continue to be dazzled by the 1989 Krug Collection, which seems just a tad racier and more structured than its earlier-released counterpart. In the context of the ripe 1989 vintage in Champagne, this little extra spine of acidity really adds dimension to the wine on the palate and allows the beautifully evolved bouquet and flavors to deliver their symphony in a most vibrant manner. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a complex constellation of apple, a touch of nutskin, tangerine, a gloriously complex base of soil, incipient notes of white *champignons* and topnotes of both smoke and orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, crisp acids and stunning backend complexity and mineral drive. The *mousse* is very refined and effortless, and the focus and balance here are simply impeccable. I note that my score on the '89 Krug Collection keeps climbing, which may be a reflection of the wine now starting to enter its apogee of peak drinkability. A brilliant wine. 2013-2040+. **95.**

**1985 André Beaufort Brut Millésime**

The 1985 André Beaufort Brut Millésime is a very lovely wine that has clearly been fully mature for decades and is now starting to slide a bit down the far side of its plateau. The nose is now getting just a touch “cuspy” with the threat of the maderization to come, but remains complex and very intriguing in its combination of baked apples and peaches, nutskins, lovely spice tones and a beautifully complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tertiary, with sound mid-palate depth, just a hint of oxidation on the backend, but still sound *mousse* and pretty good acids for its age. It is clearly time to drink this wine up in regular-sized formats, but it retains a lovely sense of breed and complexity in its advanced stage and I do not find the gentle dollop of maderization starting to appear here to be a hindrance to its present enjoyment. 2013-2015. **87.**

**1982 Krug Vintage Brut (served from magnum)**

This particular magnum was bought upon release by the gentleman who kindly brought it as an opener for one of our recent “Old White Burgundy” tastings here in New York. The mag was opened a good two or three hours before it was served and was just singing when it was

finally poured, soaring from the glass in a beautiful, toasty constellation of apple, wheat bread, very complex soil tones, a gentle touch of smokiness, fresh almond and orange peel. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and displays glorious mid-palate depth, with superb mineral drive on the backend, refined *mousse*, crisp acids and stunning length and grip on the very complex, wide open and beautifully vibrant finish. This is a great bottle of 1982 bubbly at its absolute apogee and serves as a stunning contrast to the already very long in the tooth 1982 Salon. A brilliant vintage of Krug. 2012-2030. **96.**

**1982 Salon “Le Mesnil” Brut**

When I think of how stunningly beautiful wines such as Comtes de Champagne, 1982 Krug Vintage, Cristal or Dom Perignon are drinking today from the 1982 vintage, I find it almost sad to taste such an oxidative and over the hill example of Salon from this lovely vintage. The '82 Salon is already fairly maderized, offering up a very old nose of fallen apples, leather, toffee, a bit of mushroom and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still showing an intact structure, with a good core, gentle *mousse* and a faded, but still reasonably long finish. If this was a bottle from a vintage of the first half of the twentieth century, this type of aromatic and flavor profile would be quite acceptable, but from a 1982 *Tête de Cuvée*, this is disgraceful. Drink up. **84.**

***Vintage-Dated Brut Rosé***

**2009 Jerome Prévost “Fac-Similé” La Closerie Extra Brut Rosé**

The 2009 “Fac-Similé” bottling, which I tasted at a restaurant in Beaune in November, is comprised of one hundred percent pinot meunier taken from fifty year-old vines. The back label states that it hails from the 2009 vintage, but no mention of vintage is found on the front label (sorry not to have gotten the code from the back label, but I was new to the Prévost wines at this time). The wine is excellent, offering up a deep and very complex bouquet of cranberries, blood orange, rye bread, smoky overtones and a beautifully complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very pure, with crisp acids, refined *mousse* and superb length and grip on the laser-like and very classy finish. Like all of the wines I tasted from Monsieur Prévost, this is a very vinous style of Champagne, with seemingly lower levels of pressure, but which is absolutely magical at the table. 2012-2022+. **93.**

**2006 Paul Bara “Spécial Club” Brut Rosé (Grand Cru- Bouzy)**

The 2006 Paul Bara “Spécial Club” Brut Rosé is comprised entirely of pinot noir and is a superb bottle of bubbly. The wine is quite a deep salmon color and offers up a complex and vibrant bouquet of cherries, woodsmoke, orange peel, rye toast, chalky minerality and a topnote of dried roses. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with a youthful personality, a rock solid core, elegant *mousse* and exceptional cut and grip on the very long and minerally finish. More complexity will emerge here as the wine ages, and while it is already very tasty, I would not hesitate to tuck it away in the cellar for a few years and really let it blossom fully. Lovely juice. 2013-2025+. **92.**

**2000 Dom Perignon Rosé**

The 2000 Dom Perignon Rosé is a beautiful wine that is cut very much in the vinous and almost Burgundian style that I always find with this great wine. The utterly stunning nose soars from the glass in a constellation of dried cherries, orange zest, woodsmoke, chalky minerality, rye toast and a gentle touch of meatiness that I often find in this bottling. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex, with great mid-palate intensity, elegant *mousse*, a wide open personality, sound, framing acids and exceptional length and grip on the focused and very

classy finish. The more gentle acidity here in the 2000 Dom Perignon Rosé strongly suggests that this is a vintage for more near-term drinking (though the balance is impeccable and the wine may cruise along like this for many more years to come), and my gut feeling is that this is not a vintage of Dom Rosé that will make old bones. But, for drinking over the next several years, it will be splendid. 2013-2020+? **94.**

**1996 Dom Riunart Brut Rosé**

The 1996 Dom Riunart Brut Rosé is a beautiful wine that is just now beginning to blossom and show its full range of aromatic and flavor complexity. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a vibrant combination of oranges, tart cherries, bread dough, chalky minerality, citrus peel and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully defined by its minerality, with a rock solid core, very refined *mousse*, crisp acids and outstanding focus and balance on the very long and youthful finish. This is a superb bottle of Brut Rosé from what is clearly a great vintage for Dom Riunart. 2013-2035. **93+.**

**1990 Dom Riunart Brut Rosé**

I was very fortunate to be served both the 1996 and the 1990 Dom Riunart Brut Rosés at a dinner with friends in Burgundy right towards the end of my three week trip there in November, and I cannot tell you just how good it felt to settle in after grinding out a very arduous schedule of tasting young wines over the previous eighteen days and savor a couple of glasses of mature Rosé Champagne before tackling a beautiful lineup of older Burgundies! The 1990 Dom Riunart Brut Rosé is a beautiful example of the vintage that is at its apogee today, delivering a lovely bouquet of white cherries, rye bread, orange peel, a touch of woodsmoke and a lovely base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant, with a wide open personality, great cut and grip, superb focus, elegant *mousse* and excellent grip and complexity on the very long and well-balanced finish. Some 1990 bubbles have been a bit long in the tooth when I have tried them of late, but the 1990 Dom Riunart Brut Rosé is fresh as a daisy and at its zenith. 2013-2020. **93.**



JACQUES LARDIÈRE BIDS ADIEU  
TO MAISON LOUIS JADOT



In December of 2012, Maison Louis Jadot's long-time Technical Director, Jacques Lardière retired from his position at the well-respected Beaune négociant house, leaving behind a legacy of great wines and a passion for the region and its beautiful *terroirs* that will never be surpassed. Monsieur Lardière arrived at Louis Jadot in 1970 as a young man of twenty-three, assisting the domaine's long-time winemaker and Managing Director, André Gagey, in his duties in the cellar, and after a brief cellar apprenticeship under the watchful eyes of Monsieur Gagey, Jacques Lardière assumed full-time responsibilities for the winemaking and *elevage* of the large range of Jadot wines in the 1971 vintage. Over the ensuing years, Monsieur Lardière also took over the responsibilities for vineyard management and grower relationships for the large *négociant*, and eventually became one of the best-known public faces of Maison Jadot in the four corners of the globe, with his boundless energy and infectious enthusiasm fully reflected in the superb array of red and white wines that he crafted during his long tenure at the domaine. As Maison Jadot grew with the acquisitions of the former domaines of Clair-Daü in 1985 and the vineyards of Maison Champy in 1989, the breadth of vineyards under the Jadot banner expanded dramatically and Monsieur Lardière was widely respected within Burgundy for the great skill with which he nurtured the Jadot vineyard holdings and expressed the underlying *terroirs* in the growing number of red and white Burgundies produced by the domaine. During the week leading up to the annual Hospices de Beaune festivities in November of 2012, Maison Louis Jadot organized a series of events to honor Jacques Lardière during his illustrious career at the domaine. I had the pleasure to attend one of these events on November 15<sup>th</sup>, where an all-star lineup of Europe's finest *vignerons* turned out to pay homage to Monsieur Lardière.

Maison Jadot had planned a fitting pair of vertical tastings to start this November evening's festivities, with verticals of the domaine's Chevalier-Montrachet "les Demoiselles" and Musigny hosted at the winery by Maison Jadot's Managing Director, Pierre-Henry Gagey and Monsieur Lardière, prior to a lovely dinner and more old wines later in the evening. It was very moving to see all of his esteemed winemaking colleagues from around Europe at the event to assist in celebrating Monsieur Lardière's career, and the roster of attendees whom I saw (and I am sure that I only had a chance to say hello to a small percentage of the attendees on this evening) amongst the crowd reads like the "who's who" of the European wine world: Véronique Drouhin, Jeremy Seysses, Dominique Lafon, Jean-François Coche, Anne-Claude Leflaive, Jean Trimbach, Angelo Gaja and Marcel Guigal were only a few of the winemaking luminaries that I had a chance to chat with during the course of the evening, and I am sure this only a small percentage of the well-known people in the world of wine that were at the event. In addition to the tasting on November 15<sup>th</sup>, Jacques Lardière has also hosted a series of "farewell" tastings in the US (and I am sure elsewhere in the world) during the course of 2012, with one taking place here in New York in June of last year. I have put together the notes from the tasting in June and November of 2012 to make up this report, with the tasting notes appearing at the end of the article.

As long-time subscribers will recall, I wrote a full-length historical feature on Maison Louis Jadot back in June of 2010, and though I had intended to write a new biographical piece for this article on Monsieur Lardière's tenure at the domaine, I could not think of anything that was left out of the section on Jacques Lardière in that feature and decided it would be better to simply reprint it here, rather than try and redo it and lose a bit of its tenor. For, during the preparation of that article, both Messieurs Gagey and Lardière were extremely generous with their time in fielding my litany of questions about the past, present and future of Maison Jadot and if we left any stones unturned at that time, it was not from want of trying!

***Jacques Lardière (From Historical Feature on Maison Jadot- Issue 27- May-June 2010)***

*Perhaps Louis Jadot has never been as blessed as it is today, as the domaine has two very well-respected ambassadors in the house's Managing Director, Pierre-Henry Gagey and its long-time Technical Director, Jacques Lardière. Given that Jacques Lardière has been with the firm since 1970, it will not be too many more years before he retires and passes on the baton at Louis Jadot to another figure. It is pretty hard to imagine the future at Louis Jadot without Jacques Lardière, as he has been one of the public faces of the estate for the last forty years, and has played a very large role in a time of dramatic success at the domaine. It was during his tenure that the domaine seamlessly added all of the new vineyard holdings to their already impressive lineup, first with the addition of the old Clair-Daü estate in 1985 and then the former Champy vineyards a few years later. This influx of great new vineyard holdings in the 1980s was no doubt a very large project for Jacques and André Gagey to manage, as by all accounts the Clair-Daü vineyards were not uniformly in great shape at the time of the Jadot acquisition, and I am sure that there was plenty of work to be done to try and retain as many of the old vines as possible in these plots, while replanting what was not up to the quality standards of Maison Jadot. But the task was handled flawlessly and the quality of the wines that have been turned out from these vineyards over the last two decades is passionate testimony to Monsieur Lardière's and his team's viticultural skills.*

*When Jacques Lardière arrived at Louis Jadot in 1970 at the age of twenty-three, he was a young man of enormous enthusiasm, talent and charisma. Now, forty years later, it is amazing to see how little of Jacques' energy has dissipated over the years, and there are few vigneron anywhere in the Côte d'Or that can match the Lardière exuberance when talking about his wines, his vineyards and his views on winemaking, viticulture or the responsibilities that fall upon the shoulders of a vigneron in Burgundy to guard the unique expression of terroir that each and every parcel of vines in the Côte d'Or possesses. Even at age sixty-three (and a very young sixty-three I might add), Jacques Lardière simply bubbles over with enthusiasm when talking about his wines and his philosophy, with wild hand gestures, staccato bursts of passionate discourse as he makes his points, and quick turns on a dime as he holds court about a certain wine, parcel of vines or the basic tenets of human excellence. Intellectually-charged, Monsieur Lardière is one of the most thoughtful and articulate vigneron that one is likely to find anywhere in Burgundy, and his passion for his métier is self-evident after the first thirty seconds of conversation.*

*For Jacques Lardière, the Burgundian vigneron has a very deep responsibility to produce the finest and most authentic wine possible from each and every plot of vines that he or she works with. For a wine to truly possess character and soul, one must first and foremost understand and guard its unique voice of terroir, and beyond that, ensure that the wine is as "charged" as possible at the time of bottling, so as to have a long and positive an evolution in bottle. In the Lardière philosophy, the greatest expressions of terroir are only reached in the fullness of time, and it is up to the winemaker to do everything in his or her power to guard the purity of the expression of terroir in the finished wine. And one of the most impressive characteristics of his philosophy and his personality is his curiosity and conviction that each and every terroir up and down the Côte d'Or has a voice worth capturing, for it is not only the greatest of the greatest vineyards (the Musigny, Chambertin and Bonnes-Mares to name but a few) that are worthy of squeezing every last ounce of "typicité" out of the soil in the finished wine. Rather, each and every vineyard has its own unique expression of terroir that is precious, and the winemaker must respect this and seek to always maximize the wine's voice inherent in its soil.*

*Beyond safeguarding each vineyard's own unique expression of terroir, another of the elements of winemaking that is fundamental to Jacques' approach in the cellar is to ensure that each wine is as intense as possible when it is bottled. This intensity is not to be confused with extraction, or opulence or weight, but rather that the "energy" of the wine accurately reflects what has been harnessed in the vineyards over the course of the growing season and captured in the grapes from which the resulting wine is to be fashioned. Invariably, with both his red and his white wines, this attention to maximizing the "energy" of the wine results in structured, long-lived wines that demand time in the cellar to unfold fully and really come into their own. Jacques loves to talk about the essence of a wine as its "memory of the growing season"- the wind, the sun, the rain of that particular year- which are captured first in the grapes and then in the wine, and in the fullness of time this memory becomes writ large on the aromatic and flavor spectrums of the wine at full maturity. The profile of that particular growing season are captured in perpetuity (or nearly so) in the wines of that vintage, if the winemaker has done his or her job well (often by staying out of the way as much as possible), and this is part of the magic of wine*

*that we can capture and revisit yesteryear through wines that are made with an eye towards capturing this memory and energy.*

*Needless to say, with such a philosophy, there is always something of interest to be found for Jacques Lardière in each and every vintage that unfolds in the manicured slopes of the Côte d'Or. This is a quality that one finds again and again embodied in the very best winemakers of the world, an understanding and a fascination with every year, rather than a fixation solely on the most favored of vintages. Ask Jacques about the great 2005 vintage of red Burgundies and he will praise it, but at the same time it is clear that it is not the most interesting type of vintage for him: "Certainly the 2005 is a great vintage, and a very long-lived vintage too, but it was a shame that people overlooked the fantastic 2006 reds in their rush to buy the 2005s." He continued, warming to his subject with a characteristic wave of his hand, emphatic bounce of his curls and a pirouette, "the 2005s are superb, but look at these 2006s- they have everything- depth, typicité and great balance and structure for aging- and they will be just fantastic and absolutely classic wines when they are fully mature!"*

*The same passion can be seen when one discusses specific crus with Monsieur Lardière, as his love for his Chevalier-Montrachet "les Demoiselles", Musigny, Clos des Ursules, Clos de Bèze or Chapelle-Chambertin is only tempered by his profound passion for the wines from many of the less well-known terroirs with which he works. He warms to his subject, whirling around and expounding:*

*"People say that great Burgundy is too expensive, and for wines like Musigny or Montrachet, maybe that is true, but one has to understand that there is a very limited amount of these wines and very strong demand. But what they overlook is that there are so many great wines made in the less well-known villages and vineyards of Burgundy, and if people want to find great value and great wines, it is very, very possible if they will look beyond the most famous appellations. All it takes is a little imagination. Look at the hill of Corton for instance- we have Corton "Pougets", Corton "Grèves" and a Corton rouge that are all fantastic wines- deep, structured and beautiful expressions of their underlying terroirs. All of these wines age beautifully and are simply great wines when they are fully mature- what more could you ask for- and they cost only a portion of what Chambertin "Clos de Bèze" sells for! Or look at a wine like the Savigny-lès-Beaune "Clos des Guettes" or Pommard "Rugiens"- just great wines year in and year out, and yet most people do not pay a whole lot of attention to them. If you are willing to be shrewd and look at some of the less famous appellations these days, one can find absolutely great wines for very fair prices!"*

*Jacques Lardière is clearly one of the great ambassadors of Burgundy, and his philosophical and passionate approach to his métier will be sorely missed in a few years' time when he steps back and tries to ease into retirement.*

*Since I wrote the historical piece on Maison Jadot two and a half years ago, the domaine has admirably prepared for the retirement of Monsieur Lardière, bringing on board another very talented winemaker, Frédéric Barnier, quite some time ago to work alongside of Jacques Lardière for a few years to allow for as seamless of a transition as possible in the domaine's*

cellars. As Monsieur Barnier assumes the role once occupied by Jacques in the cellars and in the vineyards at Maison Jadot, I have little doubt that the excellence for which this Beaune house is so well-known today will continue on far into the future and that the cellars and vineyards are in very able hands. But, as many of us who have been fortunate enough to know Jacques Lardière over the years have commented over the course of 2012, as the mandatory day of retirement was inexorably coming around, it is highly unlikely that Burgundy will anytime soon see another figure that combines Jacques' passionate love for the fiber and soul of Burgundy with a seemingly boundless source of energy and enthusiasm. For Monsieur Lardière is certainly a man of his generation, and it is not hard to imagine him on the barricades somewhere in France during the revolution of 1968, and his philosophy and genial worldview were certainly forged in the much more optimistic ethos of the 1960s and 1970s and it is not hard to find his generosity of spirit lurking behind the beautiful expressions of *terroir* in each and every one of his wines. Characteristically, when I asked Jacques a few years ago whether or not he would entertain some sort of consulting arrangement with Maison Jadot after his "official" date of retirement arrived, he said, "no, that would not be right for Frédéric to still have my looking over his shoulder and people always comparing the two of us- when it is my time to go, Frédéric will be more than ready to take over the responsibilities and it is only proper that he not have me hanging around here making it more difficult for him."

While Jacques Lardière has been universally respected over the years for his fine career at Maison Jadot, this is not to say that his winemaking philosophies are always in complete accord with those of the vast majority of his colleagues in Burgundy. Monsieur Lardière has always been a fan of relatively high temperatures during fermentation for his red wines- perhaps learned in the crucible of the challenging 1971 vintage, where much of the pinot noir fruit in the Côte de Beaune was damaged by hail and Jacques convinced André Gagey that the most expeditious approach to the vintage would be to use high fermentation temperatures and relatively short maceration periods to set the color and extract the wines fully, without risking hail taint. As this methodology produced stellar 1971 reds at Maison Jadot, it is quite easy to understand that Monsieur Lardière would remain a fan of relatively high temperatures during fermentation for his red wines on into the future. Over time, he came to prefer longer maceration times than most of his colleagues for red wines (twenty-five days would not be uncommon, versus a more standard twelve to fifteen days) when the conditions of the vintage allowed, and often preferred to de-stem completely. Indigenous yeasts were always utilized during Monsieur Lardière's tenure. He was also a proponent of using fairly high percentages of new oak for his red wines throughout most of his career, and over time, he began to employ higher percentages of new wood in vintages that he deemed to be a bit weaker structurally, reasoning that to craft the long-lived red wines that Maison Louis Jadot was rightfully famous for in the first place in more "gentle" vintages might require a bit more new wood to add a bit more spine to the wines. In my younger days, I sometimes questioned some of these tenets, but over time, it has certainly been proven that Monsieur Lardière was correct and I was wrong about some of these practices.

On the white wine side of the ledger- and I have often heard it said in other famous cellars in the Côte d'Or that "Jacques Lardière's superb touch with both red and white wines is extremely rare in Burgundy and is certainly one of his greatest accomplishments" (as one is usually a better red wine or white wine maker)- one of Jacques' most controversial techniques was his penchant for partially blocking the malolactic fermentation in lower acid vintages, as he

vastly preferred to keep acid levels up high and give the Jadot white wines the ability to age as long and gracefully as the vintage would allow. His view was that this approach was vastly more attractive than acidulating the wines, and he has practiced this technique with the white wines (when deemed necessary) for the entirety of his Jadot career, as the first year he used this methodology was in his inaugural vintage of 1970. However, partially blocking the malo remains a point of debate in some circles of the winemaking community in Burgundy, and even at his retirement tasting, Anne-Claude Leflaive took the microphone and questioned him at some length about this approach for his white wines. However, while I was once upon a time rather critical of this approach, given how well a wine such as the Jadot 1989 Corton-Charlemagne just showed at a recent tasting a few weeks ago (please see the article on white Burgundies earlier in this issue), it is pretty hard to argue with the results of Monsieur Lardière's methodology, as there not a whole lot of 1989 white Burgundies with the bounce and vibrancy of the domaine's Corton Charlie from this rather soft vintage! I am still not entirely convinced that one does not lose just a bit of *typicité* when using this technique (I often find a very attractive, but almost uniform signature of fresh pear and pastry cream in the Jadot white Burgundies with a partial malo blockage), but I suppose the question becomes whether one is willing to sacrifice many additional years of positive evolution in the bottle in a ripe and softer vintage like 1989 in exchange for more precise expressions of *terroir* right out of the blocks. And of course, there is the strong possibility that more expressive *terroir* simply arrives a bit later in these wines. There were probably a great many 1989 white Burgundies that were more defined by their soils at the outset than the 1989 Jadot Corton-Charlemagne, but most of those are already dead and gone from a lack of structural integrity, so it is very easy to see the merit in certain types of vintages for this technique.

In any event, whether or not one is predisposed to accede to every single tenet of Monsieur Lardière's winemaking philosophy, it is virtually impossible to disagree with other aspects of his philosophical foundation, as he has been a superb overseer of the vineyard patrimony at Maison Jadot over the course of his career and his love for *terroir* reaches far down the appellation system beyond the usual constellation of the most famous grand crus and premier crus. As he neared the end of his career at Louis Jadot, Monsieur Lardière oversaw the conversion of some fourteen hectares of the domaine's seventy hectares of Côte d'Or vineyard parcels over to *biodynamique* viticulture, and one would expect that in the not too distant future, the entirety of Maison Jadot's patrimony will be farmed under *biodynamique* principles. The domaine stopped using any chemical treatments in their vineyards in the 1990 vintage (beyond anti-fungicides in damp years), and there is little doubt that one of Monsieur Lardière's lasting legacies will be the superb viticultural foundation that he helped to lay at Maison Jadot. And then, there are the wines! As several of the recent tastings of Louis Jadot wines has so eloquently pointed out, this house produces some of the longest-lived and most compelling wines in the Côte d'Or, and one does not really gain a true appreciation for just how special the Jadot wines are until one has had the opportunity to drink a few at their true apogees- many decades out from their release dates! For the "official" retirement party on November 15<sup>th</sup>, the domaine presented verticals of Chevalier-Montrachet "les Demoiselles" back to the 1929 vintage and Musigny back to the 1971 vintage (with most vintages of Musigny still in their climbing mode and not yet even at their zeniths). Viewed through the prism of these great wines, it is pretty easy to come to the conclusion that Jacques Lardière's epoch at Maison Jadot is really only part of a continuum, with the legacies of the Jadot family and André Gagey before him, and that of Frédéric Barnier to



follow after him, creating a richly-woven historical tapestry of magical Burgundies. But, certainly future generations of wine lovers will come to the conclusion that the era of Jacques Lardière here at Louis Jadot was one of its most colorful, energetic and highly successful periods in the vibrant life of the maison. Like a great many Burgundy lovers of my generation, I will greatly miss Jacques Lardière during my visit to Maison Jadot in the years to come, as his infectious enthusiasm for life far transcends the world of wine and has always struck me as one of the defining elements of a life well-lived. But, I am sure we will cross paths for a coffee or a glass of wine in Beaune (or elsewhere where the Burgundy paths lead) as the years continue to unfold and I look forward to witnessing the next chapter in the masterpiece of Jacques Lardière's career.



As I was preparing this article, I exchanged a few words with Monsieur Lardière, and he was quick to point out that while Frédéric Barnier has fully assumed his former role at Maison Jadot, he still “remains in the environment at Louis Jadot and will be occupied with a few projects- particularly making three or four annual trips to foreign markets on the part of the domaine” into the foreseeable future, so for those wishing to spend a few hours more surrounded by Louis Jadot wines in the company of Jacques Lardière, there will be opportunities in the coming years. Just next week, Monsieur Lardière will be joining Monsieur Barnier in a presentation of twenty vintages of Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles” in conjunction with the Paulée de New York. So, Monsieur Lardière may be officially *en retrait*, but he is not yet ready to devote himself solely to his golf game and work through his cellar, and his boundless energy will continue to be felt in some guise in the Jadot universe for at least a few more years to come. And when the day comes when he decides it is time to fully step away from the stage, we

will still have all those great vintages crafted during his tenure to keep alive and poignant those memories, for not only has the “energy” of the vintage been captured in each and every one of those wines, but also the “energy” of the man behind them is captured as well, making each glass just that bit more magical. Let’s toast to a brilliant career done the right way. *Chapeau* Jacques Lardière!

### ***Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”***

#### **2009 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

2009 is a very ripe vintage for white Burgundy, and this is of course evident on the nose of the ’09 Les Demoiselles from Maison Jadot. The extroverted bouquet offers up a blend of honeysuckle, apple, pear, fresh almonds, chalky soil tones, a touch of orange zest and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and well-balanced, with sound framing acids, good focus and just a touch of backend heat poking out on the long finish. This is a very, very fine 2009 white Burgundy, but it will not make “old bones” by the standards of this long-lived bottling. 2012-2025. **94.**

#### **2006 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

In the last decade, 2003 and 2006 stand together as my least favorite white Burgundy vintages, and the 2006 les Demoiselles is already quite evolved and shows signs of needing drinking up in the not too distant future. The ripe and mature nose offers up a heady blend of apricot, tangerine, almond paste, chalky soil tones, a bit of nutskin, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still interesting, albeit very evolved, with a good core, soft acids and sound complexity on the long and nutty finish. This is getting old, and it may be that this is a function of premox or it may simply be a reflection of this heady white Burgundy vintage. In either case, it is time to drink this puppy up before it fades. 2012-2015. **90.**

#### **1998 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1998 Les Demoiselles from Louis Jadot is holding up well enough, with no signs of premature oxidation, but this is not a great vintage for this great wine. The fully mature nose offers up scents of pear, almond skins, oranges, leather, apple skins and butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit buttoned up in what seems to be a perpetual adolescence, with a touch of phenolic bitterness on the backend, solid focus, soft acids and a structure that is beginning to fray a bit on the backend- seemingly without ever really having blossomed. It is okay in the context of the 1998 white Burgs, but no better. Drink up. **85.**

#### **1992 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

So many of the 1992 white Burgundies I have tasted of late are in eclipse, but the ’92 Jadot les Demoiselles was absolutely singing in November. The deep, pure and utterly captivating nose wafts from the glass in a constellation of baked apples, fresh almonds, peaches, complex, chalky minerality, orange zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and *à point*, with a fine core, impressive complexity and lovely cut and bounce on the long, bright and very classy finish. This is a superb example of the 1992 vintage and a wine that still has plenty of life ahead of it. 2012-2020+. **95.**

#### **1990 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1990 les Demoiselles has had a very good run, but, like so many other 1990 white Burgundies, this wine has begun to decline in the last couple of years and is in need of drinking up in the not too distant future. The deep and mature nose offers up a combination of oranges, baked apples, a touch of honey, lovely soil tones, nutskins and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite complex and interesting in its tertiary style, with good



mid-palate depth, but a structure that is now starting to crack and is beginning to show signs of uncovered alcohol on the long finish. This was great in its day, but it is starting to slide down the far side of the plateau and needs drinking up. 2012-2014. **88.**

**1989 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1989 les Demoiselles was not served at the retirement *fête* from Monsieur Lardière, but as I had a recent note on a lovely bottle, I thought I would include it in this article, rather than in the article on mature white Burgundies that appears elsewhere in this issue. The '89 les Demoiselles is a beautiful example of the vintage, offering up a pure and classy aromatic constellation of pears, baked apples, vanilla bean, chalky soil complexity, a touch of *crème patissière* and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively fresh for the vintage, with lovely focus and complexity, a fine core, vibrant acids and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced and classy finish. A beautiful vintage of les Demoiselles for current drinking. 2011-2025+. **94.**

**1985 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1985 Louis Jadot les Demoiselles was one of the first “great” white Burgundies I ever has the pleasure to taste (I was very fortunate that this bottling, along with the grand crus from Domaines Sauzet and Leflaive from this era are what I cut my teeth on in my early career), and this was the first grand cru white I ever bought for my own cellar in my early wine merchant days. For a very long time it was a totally pure, intense and magical wine, and while it has entered into a more mellow stage of maturity, it continues to cruise along beautifully and offer up outstanding drinking. The deep and classic nose wafts from the glass in a mix of pear, tangerine, almond paste, Chevalier chalky soil tones, musky floral nuances and a bit of what is now quite buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fully mature, with a fine core, superb complexity, crisp acids and fine focus and grip on the very long and soil-driven finish. Just a lovely, lovely wine, the 1985 les Demoiselles has relinquished a bit of its earlier grandeur, but shows no signs of slipping any time soon! 2012-2025. **93.**

**1978 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1978 les Demoiselles is starting to get a bit long in the tooth, but is still not a bad drink. The very complex and fully mature nose offers up an almost exotic mélange of apricot, oranges, a whisper of spiced meats, buttered almonds, lovely soil tones and a distinct topnote of candied lemon peel. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and starting to fatigue a bit, with a bit of overt oxidation starting to crop up in the mid-palate and the fruit just beginning to fade a bit on the long finish. Drink up. **86.**

**1967 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1967 les Demoiselles from Maison Jadot has a bit of botrytis to it, which has kept it alive in kicking in its slightly tropical guise. The bouquet is a blend of pineapple, apricot, pretty soil tones, a touch of new leather, marmalade and brown butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still quite vibrant, with good acidity and focus, a fine core and very good length and grip on the complex and slightly heady finish. Botrytis and chardonnay are not my favorite combination, but one can see that with the proper dish, this would be quite enjoyable still to drink at the table. 2012-2020+. **89.**

**1929 Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1929 vintage of Louis Jadot’s Chevalier-Montrachet “les Demoiselles” is still very sound on both the nose and palate, and while it is a very old bottle of white Burgundy, it still has plenty of life in it. The deep and tertiary bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of honeyed oranges, almonds, brown butter, a touch of new leather, marinated orange peels and a beautiful

base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively sound structurally and intensely flavored, with good acids and balance, fine focus and a very long, complex and mature finish. This is really a lovely wine and is far more than simply of archeological interest! 2012-2025+. **90.**

### **Musigny**

*The Musigny bottling from Maison Louis Jadot has been an “estate” wine since the 1985 vintage, when a tiny slice of .17 hectares in the vineyard was purchased by the domaine alongside the remainder of the vineyard patrimony of the former Domaine Clair-Daü. I asked Monsieur Lardiére what was the condition of the vines in Musigny when they were purchased in 1985, and he replied that “the wines were a good age, around forty years-old, and very well-maintained when we took them over and they were in a perfect state from that very first vintage.” Prior to the 1985 vintage, which was the first produced from the former Clair-Daü parcel, Maison Louis Jadot used to purchase their Musigny uniquely from the Domaine de Comte de Vogüé, which they had done for many, many years. In fact, I have had very old bottles of Louis Jadot Musigny where it was printed on the label that the wine had been sourced from Comte de Vogüé. The tasting in November demonstrated that there is no meaningful qualitative differences between the estate Musigny produced since 1985 and the previous “négociant” vintages sourced from Comte de Vogüé, and this is one of the great interpretations of Burgundy’s greatest terroir.*

### **2002 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

Readers are already well aware of my rather lukewarm enthusiasm for the pretty, fruit-driven vintage of 2002, and when even a young vintage of Musigny has difficulty harnessing a profound signature of *terroir*, then I think my estimate of the vintage is not so far-fetched as it is made out to be in certain circles! The 2002 Jadot Musigny is a perfectly pleasant glass of pinot, offering up a pretty nose of red and black cherries, juniper berries, gamebirds, coffee, woodsmoke and a nice framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows lovely fruit and spice-derived complexity (only missing its dirt!), with lovely focus and balance, good mid-palate depth, moderate, quite ripe tannins and fine length and grip on the tangy and fruit-driven finish. This is one of the better 2002 red Burgundies I have had in the last few years, but I would be absolutely astonished if it ever blossoms into a great vintage of Musigny! 2018-2060. **91.**

### **1997 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

I know it is heresy, but I had a slight preference for the riper 1997 Jadot Musigny than the 2002 version that preceded it, as this wine’s more black fruity profile also shows quite a bit more Musigny *terroir* in its personality. The deep and ripe nose offers up a mélange of dark berries, black cherries, leather, woodsmoke, a touch of orange peel, gamebirds, lovely base of soil and a topnote of mustard seed and thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite defined by its dark soil tones, with a good core, fine focus and a long, still fairly tannic and complex finish. This is still a fairly young example of the vintage, but it shows some lovely promise and will prove to be one of the great sleeper vintages at Maison Jadot in the years to come. Fine juice! 2017-2060. **92.**

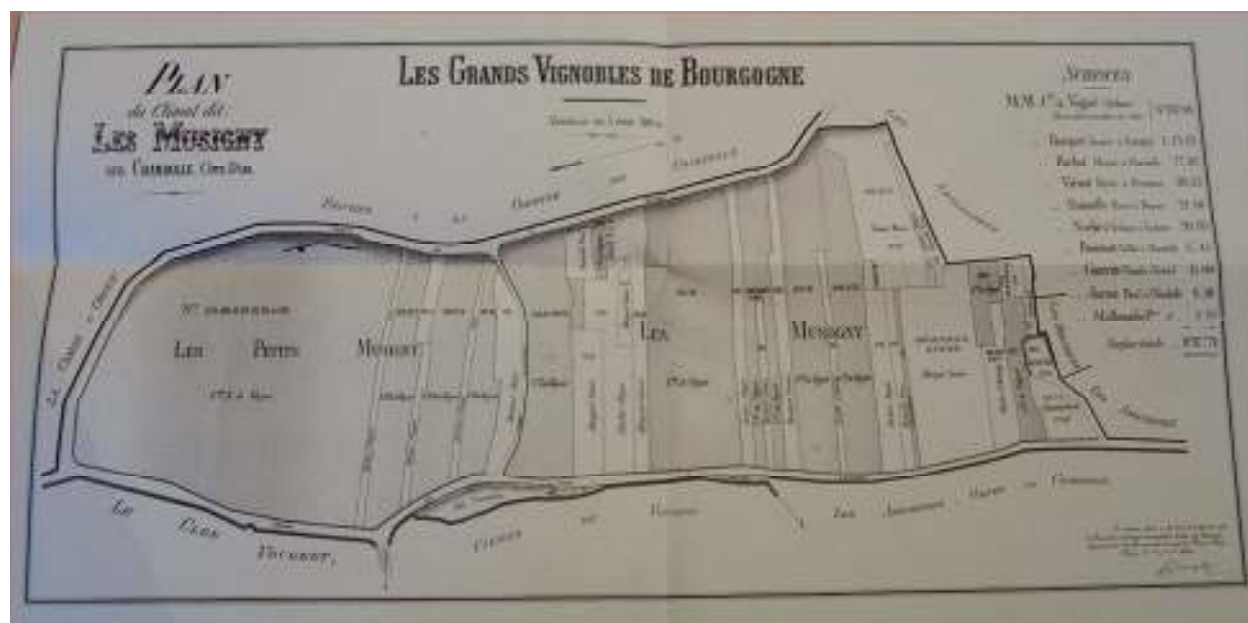
### **1996 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1996 Jadot wines are amongst the finest of the entire vintage and the Musigny showed brilliant potential at our tasting in November of 2012. The stunning bouquet soars from the glass in a youthful constellation of red and black cherries, truffles, kaleidoscopic soil tones

(now, this is real Musigny character!), woodsmoke, iron, gamebirds, mustard seed, coffee and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and still very young, with a great core of fruit, bright, beautifully-integrated acids, superb mineral drive on the backend and outstanding focus and grip on the perfectly balanced, poised and moderately tannic finish. This is one beautifully refined and balanced young 1996 red Burgundy, and in the fullness of time, this is very likely to be one of the defining vintages in the long and illustrious career of Jacques Lardière. A brilliant wine in the making- but the 1996 Jadot Musigny is still very much a puppy and will need at least another dozen years of cellaring to really start to blossom! 2025-2100. **96+.**

### **1993 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1993 Louis Jadot Musigny was showing exceptionally well at Jacques' retirement *fête*, delivering a marvelous and youthful bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, game, another outstanding base of Musigny soil tones, charred wood, herbs, coffee bean and just a touch of new leather. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and starting to stir behind its lovely structural elements, with a great core of black fruit, ripe tannins, lovely acids and brilliant length and grip on the very soil-driven and laser-like finish. This bottle, not surprisingly, as it hails from the domaine's cellars, is a touch less evolved than the last bottle of '93 Musigny I tasted a few years back, but both bottles show consistently brilliant potential. At its apogee, I would expect the 1993 Musigny to be in the same rarefied class as the 1996, but to be a slightly more black fruity interpretation of this great *terroir*. 2023-2100. **96.**



### **1985 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

This was the first time I had the good fortune to taste the 1985 Jadot Musigny, which was the first year produced solely from the domaine's small parcel of vines that arrived with the purchase of Domaine Clair-Daü in that year. It is an utter classic and a beautiful and youthful example of the vintage, offering up a superb aromatic blend of red and black cherries, juniper berries, incipient notes of *sous bois*, a touch of summer truffles, a beautifully complex base of soil and a dollop of nutskins in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still with a fair bit of tannin, with lovely mid-palate depth, outstanding focus and balance and a very long, vibrant and youthful finish. This is a glorious bottle in the making, and while it is

already immensely enjoyable to drink, I would still argue that giving this an additional five or six years in the cellar would pay great dividends. 2018-2060+. **95.**

**1979 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot (served from magnum)**

Having had an unrepresentative bottle of this several years ago, I was so happy to see it in our lineup in November at Jacques Lardière's retirement celebration. Out of magnum, the 1979 Jadot Musigny is simply drinking beautifully. The deep, complex and tertiary nose offers up scents of dried black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, leather, gamebirds, glorious soil tones that are both autumnal and iron-laced, a touch of orange peel and a touch of leather. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and absolutely *à point*, with lovely complexity, plenty of mid-plate intensity of flavor, fine focus and balance, melted tannins and lovely length and grip on the tangy and fully mature finish. This is a lovely middleweight that shows no signs of slowing down in the immediate future (at least out of magnum), but is at its apogee. I would strongly suspect that individual bottles of the '79 Musigny also continue to drink very well indeed and show no signs of imminent decline, but as I noted at the outset, I have only crossed paths with this wine out of bottle on a single occasion and it was not a pristine example. 2012-2022+. **91.**

**1978 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1978 Musigny from Maison Jadot is a brilliant wine that I had not had a chance to taste in several years, and if anything, this most recent bottle was even more stunning than the great bottle I enjoyed four or five years ago. The deep, pure and absolutely brilliant bouquet wafts from the glass in a vibrant combination of red and black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, deep, iron-infused soil tones, summer truffles, gamebirds, fresh herbs, woodsmoke and developing autumnal notes of the forest floor to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with stunning focus and complexity, tangy acids and great length and grip on the seamless, still fairly young and utterly refined finish. This is a great, great bottle of Musigny that is still climbing, and I would try to leave it alone for at least another five years. It should prove to be nearly timeless and would be a strong candidate for serving at the domaine's two hundredth anniversary celebration! 2018-2090. **98.**

**1976 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1976 Musigny from Louis Jadot is a lovely example of this drought vintage, offering up a complex and autumnal bouquet of cherries, dried red berries, orange peel, woodsmoke, iron soil tones, coffee, dried herbs, *sous bois* and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and shows still a slightly dry edge from the style of the vintage. The wine has excellent focus and mid-palate depth, with sound acids, fine complexity and still a bit of chewy tannin perking up the long and classy finish. While the 1976 Jadot Musigny seems likely to always bear the sturdy style of its vintage (like an unwanted tattoo later in life may recall the indiscretions of youth), I find it still to convey a lovely sense of Musigny *terroir* and in its way, I find it highly more satisfying than the 2002 Musigny- though the two wines are not a great deal apart in terms of absolute quality. An excellent 1976 Burgundy! 2013-2040. **92+.**

**1971 Musigny- Maison Louis Jadot**

Jacques Lardière certainly hit the ground running in his first vintage solely in charge of the winemaking at Maison Jadot, and his 1971 Musigny is an absolute masterpiece! The deep and brilliant bouquet delivers a lovely and very complex constellation of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a lovely touch of violets, iron-infused *sous bois*, gamebirds, a touch of porcini, nutskins, juniper berries, lavender, coffee and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and at its absolute zenith of peak drinkability, with glorious focus and balance,

magical complexity, melting tannins and sensational length and grip on the bright, bouncy and glorious finish. It is the profound beauty of the fully mature 1971 Musigny that makes me argue so vociferously to still keep in the cellar bottles such as the 1985 and 1978, as both of those wines could reach the same celestial peak as the 1971 in the fullness of time. 2012-2035+. **98.**

### ***November 15<sup>th</sup> Dinner Wines***

#### **1969 Pouilly-Fuissé “Mont de Pouilly”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1969 Pouilly-Fuissé “Mont de Pouilly” from Louis Jadot was a very fun and inspired pull from the domaine’s cellars to include in the dinner after our exalted tastings of les Demoiselles and Musigny, as Jacques Lardière is certainly a man who finds the merits of each and every *terroir*. Though the wine is quite mature, it is fresh for its age and still shows a lot of character on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a blend of apple, orange peel, Pouilly-Fuissé’s toasty soil tones, honey and a touch of citrus zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tertiary, with solid depth and just a touch of backend toffee starting to poke through and indicate that the wine is soon going to start to slide down the far side of the plateau into decline. But, for a forty-three year-old bottle of Pouilly-Fuissé, what’s not to like? 2013-2018? **85.**

#### **1996 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Louis Jadot**

I was quite impressed that the domaine opted to serve a 1996 at the retirement dinner, and the wine showed quite well and only hinted that a bit of premoxy was on the way in the bottle which I tried. The nose is deep, mature and lovely, offering up scents of apple, pear, nutskins, a touch of honey, orange peel, a fine base of soil, vanillin oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with an *à point* personality, a good core, fine focus and very good length on the finish- which does show a bit of diminution of grip and is the first sign that premoxy is starting to get the upper hand with this particular bottle. It was still a tasty drink for the dinner, but I wondered how many bottles were pulled from the cellars and not up to being served for the meal? 2013-2016. **88.**

#### **1985 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos des Rochevères”- Château des Jacques (served from magnum)**

Out of magnum, the 1985 Moulin-à-Vent “Clos des Rochevères” from Château des Jacques was showing beautifully at the dinner, offering up a complex and very vibrant nose of cherries, dried red berries, a touch of acorn, bonfire, fennel seed, a stony base of granite and dried oak leaves. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely *à point*, with a fine core of fruit, tangy, well-integrated acids, still a touch of tannin and outstanding length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. This is a beautiful bottle of Moulin-à-Vent that is drinking at its peak, but has decades of life still ahead of it! 2013-2035+. **93.**

#### **1989 Corton “Pougets”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1989 Corton “Pougets” is drinking beautifully at age twenty-three, offering up a wide open, complex and vibrant bouquet of cherries, red currants, a touch of eucalyptus, forest floor, gamebirds, coriander seed and a nice base of stoniness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very tangy for a 1989 red Burgundy, with a lovely core of fruit, still a bit of tannin to resolve and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and quite classy finish. This lovely wine will cruise along for a very, very long time, but it is starting to drink really well today. Corton is so underrated! 2013-2075+. **93.**

**1979 Clos de la Roche- Maison Louis Jadot (served from magnum)**

Out of magnum, the 1979 Clos de la Roche from Maison Jadot is drinking splendidly well, but it is probably getting towards the far side of its plateau of maturity and prudence would suggest drinking this wine up over the next decade or so. The classic and tertiary nose wafts from the glass in a blend of desiccated cherries and plums, coffee, hung game, *sous bois* and a nice touch of dried oak leaves. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite broad-shouldered for a '79, with a good core, fine focus and complexity, tangy acids and a long, meltingly tannic and refined finish. The acids here are nice and bright, but they seem to be rather delicately embedded into the body of the wine today, and I suspect that over the next several years, they may begin to become a bit volatile, so I would lean towards drinking this wine up over the relatively near-term and enjoy it while the balance is still impeccable. 2013-2020+? **92.**

**1952 Romanée-St.-Vivant- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1952 Romanée-St.-Vivant from Louis Jadot is a lovely wine at its apogee, but still with a touch of backend tannin and no signs of slowing down anytime soon! The deep and absolutely stunning nose jumps from the glass in a mélange of raspberries, orange zest, a touch of dark berry, heather, dark soil tones, singed wood and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex, with a lovely combination of autumnal soil tones and still quite bright fruit tones. The core is deep and pure, the focus and balance excellent and the finish is very long, slightly chewy and quite classy in an “old school” style that I find immensely appealing. Just a beautiful old bottle of RSV with plenty of life still remaining. 2013-2030+. **93.**

***Wines From the June 12<sup>th</sup> Farewell Dinner for Jacques Lardière Here in New York***

*Please observe that the tasting notes on both the 1985 Clos St. Jacques and 1959 Clos des Ursules appeared already in the piece on older red Burgundies back in Issue Forty.*

**2006 Puligny-Montrachet “Champ Gain”- Maison Louis Jadot (served from magnum)**

2006 is far from my favorite recent white Burgundy vintage, but the '06 Champ Gain from Louis Jadot was showing pretty well out of magnum in June of 2012. The nose is fresh and quite ripe, offering up scents of apple, pear, a bit of corn meal, deep soil tones, gentle smokiness and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and reasonably crisp for the vintage, with a good core of ripe fruit and very good length on the balanced and fruit-driven finish. This is one 2006 white Burgundy that avoids any signs of heat on the finish, but it is a gently structured wine and should be drunk up in the next few years. 2012-2016. **88.**

**2004 Puligny-Montrachet “Referts”- Maison Louis Jadot (served from magnum)**

The 2004 Referts from Maison Jadot was also showing very well out of magnum, but it seemed a bit more forward than I might have anticipated from this racy vintage (if premo was not a constant consideration) and I would be inclined to drink this wine up over the near-term as well. The nose is really quite lovely, offering up scents of pear, white peach, a touch of lemon peel, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and *à point*, with a good core, crisp acids and very good length and grip on the wide open and complex finish. Good juice for current consumption. 2012-2017. **91.**

**1991 Meursault “Goutte d’Or”- Maison Louis Jadot**

It has been quite a while since I last tasted a 1991 white Burgundy, but the '91 Goutte d’Or from Maison Jadot was drinking very well indeed and was impressive enough that I may keep an eye out for other white options from this vintage. The deep, complex and mature nose offers up scents of almond, citrus blossoms, apple, passion fruit, a touch of honey, incipient notes

of nutskin and a beautifully complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, gentle, framing acids, superb soil signature and lovely length and grip on the complex and classy finish. Fine juice and a total surprise for a 1991 Meursault! 2012-2020. **90.**

**1989 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Maison Louis Jadot**

Jacques Lardière made great wines in 1989 and the Clos de Bèze from this vintage was just singing at the farewell luncheon in New York in June. The pure and utterly superb nose offers up a lovely constellation of roasted cherries, strawberries, a touch of blood orange, grilled meats, a bit of nutskin, very complex and gently autumnal soil tones and a topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and at its apogee, with a lovely core of fruit, great purity and focus, melting tannins and outstanding length and grip on the tangy and complex finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Clos de Bèze that will last and last and last. 2012-2075. **95.**



**1985 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos St. Jacques”- Maison Louis Jadot**

The 1985 Clos St. Jacques from Maison Jadot is a beautiful example of the vintage that has just now begun to truly blossom and is drinking very well indeed. The deep and beautiful nose offers up scents of cherries, red plums, woodsmoke, summer truffles, a beautifully complex base of soil, fresh herbs, a touch of sweet nutskin and just a bit of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully delineated, with a fine core of fruit, lovely complexity and very good acidity for the vintage. The finish is very long, shows just a bit of melting tannin and is

beautifully balanced and classy. It is interesting to see how this wine has evolved, as it was quite black fruity for much of the first twenty-odd years of its life, but is now blossoming into a beautifully red fruity example of Clos St. Jacques. Lovely juice. 2012-2050+. **94.**

**1959 Beaune “Clos des Ursules”- Maison Louis Jadot (served from magnum)**

I had the pleasure to taste this beautiful bottle of Beaune at one of the farewell dinners hosted for Jacques Lardière, Louis Jadot’s retiring Cellar Master, during this spring. The wine is a beautiful bottle that is at its absolute apogee in magnum, wafting from the glass in a superbly complex mélange of black cherries, plums, chocolate, gamebirds, a great base of soil, charred wood, *sous bois*, sweet nutskin and a touch of cocoa powder in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and vibrant, with a great core of fruit, still a touch of tannin and outstanding complexity on the very, very long finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Beaune, the ’59 Clos des Ursules will last for decades. 2012-2050. **94.**