

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

January-February 2018

Number Seventy-Three

- ❖ *Always the Right Time For the Right Bank- Recently-Tasted Pomerol and St. Émilion.* (pages 1-24)
- ❖ *Another Full Roster Of Beautiful Wines From Piemonte- Bruno Giacosa, Bartolo Mascarello, Burlotto, Marcarini, The Produttori and Many More.* (pages 25-51)
- ❖ *A First Look At the Excellent 2016 Vintage In the Northern Rhône and Plenty More 2015s and Older Vintages.* (pages 52-89)
- ❖ *New Champagne Releases From Transatlantic Bubbles.* (pages 90-97)
- ❖ *A Few More 2016 Beaujolais To Set the Stage For a Spring Visit.* (pages 98-105)
- ❖ *The White Burgundy Vintages- 2012-2015: Drinking Now?* (pages 106-122)
- ❖ *Catching Up On Sauternes- Recently-Tasted Ambrosial Elixirs.* (pages 123-132)

Coming Attractions

- ❖ *The Brilliant and Often Overlooked Grand Crus of Latricières-Chambertin and Chapelle-Chambertin.*
- ❖ *Two Spring Weeks Tramping Around In the Vineyards and Cellars of Champagne.*
- ❖ *Ric Forman's Iconic Winemaking Career- Charting the Course For California Greatness From Stony Hill to Sterling, Newton and Forman Vineyards.*
- ❖ *The Marquis de Laguiche and Maison Joseph Drouhin- A Perfect Marriage.*
- ❖ *More 2016 Burgundy, The Annual Loire Valley Report, Recently-Tasted Spanish Wines, Anselme Selosse, Château Pichon-Lalande, The Hill of Corton, The 2017 German Vintage, Champagne Bruno Paillard, Château Ausone, Old School American Wines, Nicole Chanrion, Château Montrose, Louis Boillot's Pommard "les Croix Noires", Special Club Champagne, Aged Muscadet, Clape Cornas, Mature Loire Reds, The 2001 Bordeaux Vintage, Recently-Tasted Alsace Wines, Chambertin and Clos de Bèze and the 1982 Bordeaux Vintage.*

View From the Cellar is published bi-monthly by John Gilman, who is solely responsible for its content. Electronic subscriptions are available for \$120 per year (\$220 for two years), available at www.viewfromthecellar.com. Inquiries may also be emailed to john@viewfromthecellar.com. Copyright 2018 by John B. Gilman, all rights reserved. Content may be utilized by members of the wine trade and/or media as long as either View From the Cellar or John Gilman are fully credited. Please do not share.

**ALWAYS THE RIGHT TIME FOR THE RIGHT BANK
ANOTHER COMPENDIUM FROM ST. ÉMILION AND POMEROL**



The view of Château l'Evangile as one leaves the drive at Château Cheval Blanc.

I last wrote a feature on the Right Bank of Bordeaux in the summer of 2016, so we are closing in on two years having passed since that last report. As readers might guess, I do love the wines of both Pomerol and St. Émilion, or at least the classically-styled ones that still exist in these two communes, and drink them with quite some frequency when opportunity allows. I imagine that in the world of claret drinkers, I am in the minority in probably drinking as much wine from the Right Bank as I do from the Left Bank, but the wines have always appealed to my aesthetic sensibilities. I wish that there remained more estates inclined to classically-styled wines on the Right Bank these days, as the number of properties that continues to make properly old school wines in these two communes seems to be reduced a bit each year, but there remains still a fine coterie of properties in both appellations that continue to make wines in the style that made the two communes famous in the twentieth century. I have often wondered at the attraction that some estate owners find in the more modern style of wines crafted here by the über consulting firms of Michel Rolland and Stéphane Derenoncourt, beyond of course the very real financial rewards that came with higher scores from Robert Parker that were part of his knee-jerk reaction to any project that either of these consultancies became involved with on the Right Bank back in the day. But, Monsieur Parker is well into his retirement today and the continued reliance on the Parker-favored consultancies is a bit baffling, as much of the rest of the wine world has been

moving away from these styles of wines for many years now. This is particularly true of younger generation wine drinkers, who seem to have no use for the Rolland and Derenoncourt style and really have little interest in the wines of the Right Bank these days, probably due to the vast influence that these Parker-styled consultants continue to wield on this side of the Gironde.

While the primary motivation twenty or twenty-five years ago for property owners on the Right Bank to turn over the aesthetic and stylistic directions of their properties to the über consultants was money, as in that era, signing up with one of the two gurus on this side of the Gironde virtually guaranteed higher prices and greater profitability for the proprietors of estates that switched styles (due to higher Parker scores which followed as surely as snow melting in the spring), it is not all that evident today that this road is still directly linked to profitability. Nor is it entirely clear that all of the owners of Right Bank estates today really need to make more money from their properties, as a great many are owned by highly successful business people from other walks of life and who have come to the Right Bank to perhaps do something a bit more important than simply ratchet up the quarterly earnings at the property or properties which they have purchased. For many of these people, I have to imagine that it would be inconceivable for them to simply turn over the reins of their other businesses to outside interests who have little or no real knowledge of their properties. But, this in effect is what they do on the Right Bank these days. While technical expertise in the running of their wineries is certainly necessary for owners who have come from outside businesses to produce wine on the Right Bank, I continue to wonder why so many choose to simply park themselves in the already very crowded stables of the über consultants, where their own wines are never going to stand out from the rest of the crowd, rather than aspiring to chart their own course for their properties. Again, given how successful so many of these people have been in their other businesses, it is impossible to imagine that they would have realized that success by using the same herd mentality that they do with their Right Bank estates.

The classically-styled wines of the Right Bank truly are unique wines that do not find a counterpart anywhere else in the world of wine, or at least this was the case when the wines were made in their traditional styles for which the region rose to fame in the middle of the twentieth century. With their reliance on merlot and cabernet franc for much of their personalities, which find such good homes in the varying soils of St. Émilion and Pomerol and come to such full expression here, there is really nowhere else in the world that can aspire to producing wines in that particular style that first made the Right Bank famous. I hope that this style of wine does not eventually disappear completely, given the continuing trend to turn so many properties over to the über consultants and their modern, globally bland brand of red wine. For, while one will never find another expression of merlot and cabernet franc that can emulate Château Magdelaine in its glory days, or Château Trotanoy today, it is easy to find hundreds of wines that taste and smell very similar to the most famous names in the rosters of the über consultants, from estates as far afield as Chile, California, Argentina and anywhere else in the world where the two grapes can be planted and the homogenizing winemaking practices of the übers can be copied. For, as any honest soul with half a palate will admit, having labored through large Right Bank tastings of the modernists in recent times, it is virtually impossible to tell one property from another at these large tastings without a lineup sheet, as they do all really taste the same. If the ultimate goal of the modernist school of winemaking on the Right Bank was to blot out any sense of *terroir* or individuality in the finished wine, it could not be done any better than it is today.

But, while so many good names on the Right Bank have fallen by the wayside in recent times, swallowed up by the ever-expanding rosters of the über consultants, this remains a period of golden opportunity for traditionally-styled producers on the Right Bank, as the global wine market has never been thirstier for their unique and compelling wines than it is today. In a wine world that is increasingly crowded by well-made, but relatively innocuous wines from dozens and dozens of countries, often clamoring for more attention from wine buyers, it becomes increasingly difficult for wineries that are not already very well established in the marketplace to find an audience. What is needed beyond the confines of a technically sound wine is one that speaks eloquently of its place of origin and argues persuasively in the glass that this wine belongs on the table or in the collector's cellar because it has something unique and original to say. Not all wine-producing regions today are equally gifted with the possibility to produce wines that fit this criteria, but the Right Bank of Bordeaux is a place where the preponderance of truly great *terroirs* gives the capability to craft wines that can set them above and apart from the crowd. Not all the *terroir* on the Right Bank is of great potential, but an awful lot of it is and much of that is now being overseen by the two big consultancies on this side of the Gironde, who have shown zero track record of being capable of crafting (or even interested in) wines that express the underlying *terroir* in their clients' wines. To squander this market advantage- a true gift of nature- by parking one's wines in the hands of the über consultants (whose historical records, at least to my mind, speak so eloquently of generic mediocrity, or at least mind-numbing sameness), rather than searching out a technical solution that allows the properties' wines to revel in this natural advantage of real *terroir*, in my opinion, borders on travesty. There have to be hundreds and hundreds of talented young winemakers in training who would leap at the chance to make wines of *terroir* in the traditional style at one of these great Right Bank estates, if given half a chance. It is just up to the owners of these properties to make this happen.

I suppose it would make sense to try and lay down a few criteria for what denotes traditional winemaking in the era and what does not. This is a bit problematic on several fronts, for I am not a technically trained winemaker for starters, and beyond this, discussion of winemaking practices in Bordeaux these days is generally not something that happens on any honest scale outside of the tight inner circles of each house. But, looking back at what was done in the days when so many great wines were produced on the Right Bank in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, it is possible to at least come up with a few broad brushstrokes in the cellar that lead more often than not to traditionally-styled wines that managed to express their underlying *terroir* so well back in this era. For starters, picking at true ripeness, rather than overripeness, clearly seemed to be one of the keys to expressing *terroir* in the finished wine. One can argue about "optimal ripeness" all day long, as it is one of the key propaganda phrases trotted out by the übers to describe their unvarying penchant of late picking of overripe grapes. Overripe fruit does not make great wine of *terroir*, period. Secondly, malolactic fermentation in barrel (and particularly new barrel) seems to be a foolproof way to banish *terroir* from your finished wine on either side of the Gironde. The great *terroir* wines of yesteryear on the Right Bank saw their malos done in tank, so it seems that to follow that this technique remains a necessary part of any equation set on producing traditionally styled wines. Lastly, *terroir* is a delicate thing and too much new oak, micro-oxygenation, reverse osmosis, or too much monkeying around with extraction enzymes and concentrators seems likely to disintegrate expression of *terroir*. Again, I have never made a wine or gotten a trained winemaker to speak honestly of these "tools in the cellar" (which are treated as the dirty little secrets that they truly are), so I do not have a strong

basis of experience to argue about the relative efficacy or destructive value to *terroir* of any of these particular techniques. I simply note as a wine historian that they were not used in the great traditional wines of yesteryear on the Right Bank and if one's goal is to replicate the glorious expression of *terroir* found in those great wines, which were crafted without the use these modern cellar tools, then the less they are part of the equation, the better. And if they are not utilized at all, that would seem to be ideal.



Having had a chance to drink so many superb, old school Right Bank wines over the last eighteen months has had me thinking quite a bit about what a classification system on the Right Bank might look like to mirror the one from 1855 that is still used on the Left Bank, if one were to base this system on the quality of the *terroir* expressed in these properties' wines in their most classically-aligned guises of excellence. With all due respect to the one currently in use for St. Émilion solely, its last iteration really makes it of highly dubious utility. While a classification such as this is not all that easy to do in this day and age, given that several of the finest *terroirs* on the Right Bank are now a bit buried under quasi-modern winemaking techniques, or even presently adrift in the rosters of the übers' clientele, if we look at these estates and their wines over the course of the last three or four decades, it at least gives us a base of wines through various stages of maturity with which to gauge the quality of their respective *terroirs* and come up with at least a ranking system on the Right Bank that merits some consideration. The really problematic wines for me in the hypothetical classification of the Right Bank listed below today are Ausone and Figeac, as I have no idea if they will ever really return fully to the styles that

made them famous during the second half of the twentieth century, but which are presently more modern in profile than their old school counterparts that laid their foundation of fame. But, being of a naturally optimistic bent on most days, I will include them in the classification under the assumption that they may one day return to the more classical side of the ledger. With that mentioned, here would be my Right Bank classification based on the aforementioned criteria and historical scope, with my list limited to the wines that I have ample experience tasting over the aforementioned time period (and noting that there are several properties on the Right Bank- in St. Émilion in particular- that I would not include in the classification based on what I have tasted in the past, as they are really Cru Bourgeois level). So do not assume that just because I have left Valandraud, le Dôme and Tertre Roteboeuf off of the list that I do not have experience with these wines. The estates in each Growth are listed first by commune, and then alphabetically, and I have not included any wines from the satellite appellations outside of Pomerol and St. Émilion.

First Growths

Château Lafleur
Château Pétrus
Château Trotanoy
Vieux Château Certan
Château Ausone
Château Cheval Blanc

Second Growths

Château La Conseillante
Château l'Evangile
Château Le Pin
Château Canon
Château Figeac
Château Magdelaine (through 2011)

Third Growths

Château Certan de May
Château Latour à Pomerol
Château Lafleur-Pétrus
Château Angélus
Château Bélair-Monange (likely to move up to 2nd in the future)

Fourth Growths

Château Clinet
Château l'Église-Clinet
Château Hosanna
Château l'Arrosée (now defunct)
Château Canon la Gaffelière
Château Corbin
Château la Dominique
Château Pavie

Fifth Growths

Château Bon Pasteur
Château Le Gay
Château Gazin
Château Petit-Village
Château Rouget
Château Beauséjour-Duffau
Château Fonplégade
Château la Gaffelière
Château Pavie-Macquin
Château Troplong-Mondot
Château Trottevieille

I should take a moment to mention that this article was nearly complete when I was invited to participate in a very deep and broad tasting of Château Trotanoy that was organized here in New York in mid-January by Omar Khan, one of our city's finest connoisseurs. My warmest thanks to Omar for inviting me to participate! It was a monumental lineup of great vintages, with the tasting joined by Edouard Moueix to add insight and historical background. As is always the case with an assembly of this many old vintages, not every bottle was in tip-top shape, and if a wine was clearly unrepresentative, I have not included a note on the wine here, and where a bottle was in the "good, but not great" camp, I mention that as well in the tasting note below. Edouard Moueix had very kindly brought along both the 2010 and 2009 vintages of Trotanoy to get us started for the evening, but as the bottles had recently travelled with him from California to New York, I do not include notes on the wines below, as both wines seemed to me to be out of sorts from travel and seemed quite marked by alcohol on this particular occasion. I did not recall them as that way when I tasted them in Libourne upon release and attributed this heady showing at least partially to their transport on the day of the tasting. As I have already written an historical feature on Trotanoy only a couple of years ago, I decided to include the tasting notes from this event in the following article, but will rework my feature on the estate sometime down the road, as Edouard had a few tidbits to share about Trotanoy during our evening together that I was unaware of before and which will necessitate a reworking of the historical feature on the property at some time in the future. In this regard, the most surprising information shared by Edouard Moueix was that though the vineyards at Trotanoy have been planted to ninety percent merlot and ten percent cabernet franc since at least the early twentieth century, for many years now, the *grand vin* here has been composed entirely from the merlot on the property and the cabernet franc at Trotanoy was sold off for a blended wine in the Moueix family stables. This was complete news to me; I do not know for how long this practice has been followed, but Edouard intimated that it has been for many decades now. Naturally, my article back in 2013 included the information that the *cépages* at Trotanoy was ninety percent merlot and ten percent cabernet franc!

The following notes are a celebration of the great traditional style of winemaking on the Right Bank, that really carved a niche for itself in the global wine market in the decades following the Second World War (the savvy Belgians and Dutch had already discovered just how great these wines were decades ahead of their counterparts in the rest of the wine consuming world) and which has been so successfully championed by the Moueix family in Libourne since

they set up their present day business marketing and making these wines in the early 1950s. As I do not now regularly visit Bordeaux each year to taste the new vintage, I have lost track a bit of who still makes traditionally-styled wines on the Right Bank, and perhaps I will need to retrace my steps on this side of the Gironde in the near future to fine tune my list, but the vast majority of notes that follow are from estates who still continue to craft wines in the great Right Bank tradition. (A notable exception to this is, of course, Château Figeac, who brought in Michel Rolland a couple of years ago.) It is a tradition and a style of wine that deserves championing, as it produces some of the most beautiful and unique wines to be found across the globe today. It is important to discern these traditional-styled wines from the modernists on this side of the Gironde whose numbers are increasingly swelled by new estates each year, as the über consultancies of Messieurs Rolland and Derenoncourt continue to sign up new clients and decrease the number of fine traditionalists in Pomerol and St. Émilion. I admit that it is important to acknowledge that not all of the properties who have flocked to the übers were producing fine wines prior to their signing on the dotted line, but it is also important to remember that they always had the potential to do so if they had chosen a different stylistic path to follow. Let us hope that many will one day decide to dip their toes back in the water of the old school camp on the Right Bank and see just what their true potential might be.

St. Émilion and Pomerol

2008 Château Canon (St. Émilion)

I know that my mantra of classically-styled wine on the Right Bank includes “no malo in barrel”, but the 2008 vintage of Canon proves that one can still show *terroir* while doing some of the malolactic in cask, if one has such a great *terroir* to work with from the start. In this vintage, the team at Canon allowed twenty-five percent of the blend to undergo malo in barrel and the wine has turned out very well indeed (despite this?). The bouquet is a young and promising mix of black cherries, sweet dark berries, tobacco leaf, espresso, cigar smoke, dark soil tones and a deft framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with a fine core, lovely shape and focus on the backend and a long, balanced finish that closes with nascent complexity and fine-grained tannins. This is still a young wine in need of at least a handful of more years in the cellar to blossom, but it should prove to be one of the top wines on the Right Bank in this great vintage. 2022-2055. **94.**

2008 Vieux Château Certan (Pomerol)

Readers know what a big fan I am of the utterly classic 2008 vintage in Bordeaux, and though I have written a couple of times about the vintage over the years, I had never had the chance to taste the 2008 VCC until recently. Not surprisingly, this is an outstanding example of this superb year, offering up a deep and youthfully black fruity bouquet of cassis, dark berries, tobacco leaf, a touch of mint, dark soil tones, espresso, cigar smoke and a nice touch of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and already very pure on the attack, with a good core, suave, seamless tannins and lovely length and grip on the vibrant and still quite youthful finish. This will be a classic vintage of VCC with sufficient bottle age. I would imagine it will start to drink with a bit more generosity in another five or six years and probably reach its plateau around 2030. 2023-2075. **94.**

2006 Château Corbin (St. Émilion)

The 2006 vintage of Château Corbin is quite a strong wine and is just now really hitting its plateau of peak drinkability. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a complex blend

of black cherries, dark berries, cigar ash, dark soil tones and a delicate framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a good core, modest tannins and lovely focus and grip on the very nicely balanced finish. Good juice that has decades of fine drinking ahead of it. 2017-2040. **92.**

2005 Château Corbin (St. Émilion)

The 2005 Château Corbin is still a young wine that is a bit bound up by its fine structural elements today, but with a handful of more years in the cellar, this is going to be an outstanding bottle. The bouquet offers up a youthful mix of black cherries, cassis, a touch of lavender, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, a bit of fresh herb tones and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, young and tangy, with a rock solid core, fine soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, vibrant and still quite primary finish. Like all the 2005s, this still needs time in the cellar, but it is going to be outstanding. 2022-2060. **93+.**

2005 Vieux Château Certan (Pomerol) Served from half bottle

The 2005 Vieux Château Certan is still a very young wine, even out of half bottle, but its ultimate quality is very, very clear and all that is needed is more time in the cellar. The pure and primary bouquet jumps from the glass in a fine blend of black cherries, plums, Cuban cigar wrapper, gravel, espresso and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent soil signature, lovely focus and balance, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a very long, poised and tangy finish. Like so many of the very top 2005 Bordeaux, this is a long distance runner and is still in need of extended cellaring before it will start to stir. 2032-2100. **95.**



Monsieur Alexandre Thienpont in the cellars at Vieux Château Certan.

2004 Château Canon (St. Émilion)

The 2004 Canon is another very good, off vintage wine produced at this lovely estate. The nose wafts from the glass in a quite black fruity blend of dark berries, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, a touch of menthol, espresso and a discreet framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and very nicely balanced, with a solid core, just a bit of backend tannin and good length and grip on the stylish and reasonably complex finish. A very solid bottle of 2004 claret. 2015-2030+. **87.**

2004 Château Figeac (St. Émilion)

I have only tasted the 2004 vintage of Figeac on a couple of occasions, but it has always acquitted itself well. This most recent bottle was very respectable, offering up a bouquet of black cherries, a touch of mint, singed tobacco, a classic base of dark soil tones, fresh herbs and a touch of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just a touch four-square by the high standards of this property, with a solid core, good focus and grip and a long, modestly tannic finish. This is not a vintage of great ripeness at Figeac and the wine will always be influenced a bit by this characteristic, but within this context, it is really quite a successful example of the property and its inimitable *terroir*. 2016-2035+. **88+.**

2003 Château Figeac (St. Émilion)

I have only tasted the 2003 vintage at Figeac on a single occasion, which was as part of a vertical back at the property on one of my last trips to the region to taste *en primeur*. While the note is a bit out of date now, I was quite favorably impressed with the wine and include the note here, as I have never written this wine up previously. The bouquet back in the spring of 2012 was really quite good, offering up a deep and fairly exotic blend of mint, sappy black cherries, dark plum, singed tobacco, chocolate and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with very low acids, a very good, sappy core and a long, slightly chewy and quite smoky finish. There is a slightly dry edge to the tannins here that will probably always be part of the equation to some extent (as is the case with many 2003 Burgundies for instance), but this is a very good example of the vintage and one of the few 2003 clarets that I would be happy to drink any time. It was still a few years away from really drinking well back in March of 2012, but should be softened up nicely by now. 2018-2040. **91.**

2002 Château Canon (St. Émilion)

The 2002 Canon is a good, solid wine, which I like better on the nose than on the palate, as the palate leaves a slight impression of being a tad more extracted in personality than the style of the 2002 vintage would lead one to expect at this fine property. The bouquet is certainly quite convincing, offering up scents of black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee bean, a touch of menthol and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep and quite full-bodied for a 2002, with a slightly dense core and finish. The tannins here are soft, but the wine today is a bit four-square and seems likely to always stay that way. Not bad, but the least interesting of these three 2002s. 2016-2030. **87.**

2002 Château Corbin (St. Émilion)

I do not recall tasting too many 2002 Bordeaux bottlings, but the 2002 Corbin and Figeac are both quite nice middleweights that are drinking very nicely at age fifteen. This is really a lovely wine and fully underscores how well Annabelle Bardinet Cruse is managing this fine St. Émilion property. The nose is pure and impressively complex, offering up scents of black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of coffee, a fine base of soil, a discreet base of new oak and a

topnote of menthol. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and elegant in profile, with a good core, melted tannin and lovely complexity on the sneaky long finish. A fine example. 2015-2030. **90.**

2002 Château Figeac (St. Émilion)

The 2002 Château Figeac is a very good wine that is now fully mature and drinking nicely. It is not a deep and full-scale example of Figeac, but it is very emblematic of this fine estate in a more middleweight vintage, offering up a lovey nose of red and black cherries, Cuban tobacco, a bit of heather, signed soil tones, a dollop of fresh herbs and an understated touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and complex, with lovely focus and balance, melting tannins and impressive length and grip on the fully mature finish. Good juice. 2017-2027+. **88+.**

2001 Château Figeac (St. Émilion)

The 2001 Figeac is a beautiful example of this lovely vintage, with the wine starting to really blossom and drink with the style and grace of old school Figeac. The bouquet is just captivating, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of mint, black cherries, cigar smoke, a touch of nuttiness, Cuban tobacco, complex soil tones and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and quite sappy at the core, with fine focus and grip, modest tannins and lovely balance and grip on the very long and very classy finish. A fine, fine vintage of Figeac from the golden age here. 2016-2040. **93.**

2001 Château l'Église-Clinet (Pomerol)

The 2001 Château l'Église-Clinet is an okay, slightly hot and chunky, modern wine which offers pretty good aromatics, but a rather uninteresting palate presence. The wine is nearing its plateau at age seventeen and the nose is quite enjoyable with some aeration right now, offering up scents of black cherries, boysenberry, chocolate, meaty tones and slightly resinous, spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and shows a fair bit of heat on the backend, with a plush core, very little complexity and a long, meltingly tannic finish. This is passable, but hardly a serious wine. 2018-2035+. **84.**

1998 Château Figeac (St. Émilion)

The 1998 Château Figeac is one of the greatest young vintages from this property in the last twenty-five years and the wine continues to show stunning potential. It is a far cry from ready to drink, but it is getting to that stage where it is awfully tempting to start opening bottles! The deep and stellar bouquet jumps from the glass in a sappy blend of black cherries, red plums, Cuban cigar wrapper, a great base of soil tones, chocolate, still a bit of Figeac's youthful herb tones, toasty new oak and a topnote of St. Émilion nutskin. On the palate the wine is pure, full and sappy at the core, with excellent soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. A gorgeous bottle of Figeac that still deserves at least a few more years in the cellar to really hit its apogee. 2021-2075. **95.**

1998 Château Gombaude-Guilhot (Pomerol)

The 1998 Château Gombaude-Guilhot is a young and very fine example of this outstanding Right Bank vintage. The bouquet still shows a bit of new oak spice that needs to better integrate, but seems likely to do so over the course of time. Aromas of black plums, black cherries, espresso, a touch of tariness and chocolate waft from the glass to go along with the spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid

core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and very good length and grip on the youthful finish. This will be a lovely wine when it is ready to drink. 2022-2060. **90+**.

1998 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

The 1998 vintage of Trotanoy is one of the legends in the making at this great estate, and all that is needed for this wine is an additional ten to twelve years of bottle age to allow the wine to fully blossom. This is an utterly classical vintage here, offering up a deep, pure and still youthful bouquet of red and black plums, black cherries, gravelly soil tones, cigar wrapper, incipient smokiness and a nice touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly seamless, with a rock solid core of fruit, fine-grained tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long, nascently complex and captivating finish. This is clearly an old school vintage of Trotanoy that follows my “thirty year rule” for this property’s greatest wines, and is aging at an even more leisurely pace than I anticipated when I last drank a bottle in 2013 and is consequently, still many years away from truly blossoming. But, it will be utterly profound in the fullness of time. 2030-2100. **96**.

1990 Château Canon (St. Émilion)

When I wrote my feature on Château Canon a few years back, I had not tasted the 1990 vintage here for many, many years and the wine did not feature in that report. Consequently, I was very curious to see how the wine was evolving when I heard it would be part of our tasting lineup at the end of December. The wine is very good, but shows some of the roasted character of the vintage in its bouquet of black cherries, a touch of menthol, chalky soil, roasted game elements and a topnote of cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wide open structurally, with a good core, melted tannins and good length and grip, but without some of the customary Canon elegance that one enjoys here in most top vintages. This is a very good wine, but not a great Canon. 2018-2030. **90**.

1990 Château Magdelaine (St. Émilion)

In contrast to the good 1990 Canon paired up with it, the 1990 Magdelaine has managed to avoid some of the vagaries of the vintage and is a stellar bottle. The bouquet is deep, complex and quite black fruity for Magdelaine, offering up scents of black cherries, cassis, cigar ash, chalky soil, nutskin and a gentle topnote of menthol. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly adolescent in profile, with a superb core of fruit, burgeoning complexity, fine focus and grip and a very long, fine-grained and vibrant finish. There is a bounce and a mineral drive here that is pretty rare in many 1990 Right Bank wines. This still needs at least a few years to fully blossom, as is customary with this Queen of St. Émilion. 2023-2065+. **93**.

1989 Château l’Evangile (Pomerol)

The 1989 vintage of Château l’Evangile is drinking beautifully at age twenty-seven and remains as fresh as a daisy and has decades and decades of life still ahead of it. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex and very refined blend of cherries, raspberries, saddle leather, a superb base of almost salty soil tones, a touch of roasted venison, a discreet framing of new wood and a touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with an excellent core of fruit, beautiful focus and balance, melting tannins and a very long, refined and seamlessly structured finish. A superb bottle. 2016-2050. **94**.

1988 Château Certan de May (Pomerol)

Château Certan de May made three absolutely magical wines in the decade of the 1980s, with it hard to choose between the '82, '85 and '88 vintages here! The 1988 is currently drinking splendidly, wafting from the glass in a pure and complex constellation of plums, black cherries, black truffles, gravelly soil tones and a topnote of cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and laser-like in its focus, with a plush core of fruit, fine soil signature, melting tannins and a long, tangy and very classy finish. The '88 Certan de May is just entering its plateau of peak drinkability and should continue to delight for many decades to come. 2016-2050. **94+**.

1986 Château Certan de May (Pomerol)

In this vintage, Certan de May could well be one of the most successful wines produced in Pomerol. At age thirty-two the wine is now drinking very well, offering up a superbly complex nose of black plums, dark berries, cigar ash, dark chocolate, herb tones, a good base of soil, a touch of smoky oak and gentle balsamic tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and now into its plateau of maturity, with a lovely core, melting tannins and fine focus and grip on the long, poised and classy finish. This had a fair bit of ripe tannin in its youth and needed fully a quarter century to blossom, but it is now into its apogee and will continue to drink with breed and style for many more years to come. 2018-2040. **93**.



1985 Château l'Arrosée (St. Émilion)

I have loved the 1985 Château l'Arrosée since very early on in the wine's lifetime, and it continues to drink with style and grace as it passes by its thirtieth birthday. The bouquet shows a bit more toasty new oak than one would like when the wine is first poured, but once the wine settles down in the glass, all the beautiful fruit tones come up and absorb most of the new wood, with the bouquet eventually delivering a complex mélange of red and black cherries, cigar smoke, coffee, a lovely base of soil and toasty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely plush on the attack, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, mature and velvety finish. Lovely juice. 2016-2030. **92.**

1985 Château Canon (St. Émilion)

I have always been a big fan of the utterly classic 1985 Canon and this most recent bottle was absolutely singing and made a very good bottle of '85 l'Église Clinet alongside of it look rather ordinary. The bouquet here jumps from the glass in a vibrant blend of black cherries, espresso, dark soil tones, a touch of menthol, cigar smoke and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still in the process of unfurling, with a lovely core, fine soil signature, suave, modest tannins and a long, classy and complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2018-2050. **94.**

1985 Château Corbin (St. Émilion)

The 1985 vintage of Château Corbin was produced under the watchful gaze of Annabelle Cruse Bardinet's maternal grandmother, Madame Blanchard, who was proprietress of this lovely estate from the 1950s until the 1990s. The 1980s was an era when the extended Cruse family who shared ownership of this château, in addition to Certan-Giraud in Pomerol and other wine businesses, was not able to invest in their wineries and one has to imagine that the 1985 Corbin was made on a shoestring budget and is so good, simply because of the quality of the vintage and the underlying *terroir* at Corbin. The wine today is a very pretty middleweight, offering up a bouquet of cherries, sweet red plums, a touch of walnut, cigar wrapper, a lovely base of soil tones, woodsmoke and a touch of menthol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and still has a touch of backend tannin, with solid depth at the core, fine focus and grip and a long, slightly rustic finish. I am sure this was made with quite generous yields back in this era and plenty of ancient casks in the cellar and is a very old-fashioned wine in these regards, but it has a noble rusticity to it that is quite enjoyable and still manages to convey the lovely *terroir* here to advantage, despite it having probably received none in its cellar regimen in these more impecunious times at Corbin. 2018-2035. **87.**

1985 Château l'Église-Clinet (Pomerol)

I remember very well how thrilled I was back in the late 1980s when I was able to find a case of the 1985 Château l'Église-Clinet to add to my cellar, and though I eventually parted ways with eight of the bottles to finance some Rousseau Chambertin back in my early merchant days, the memory of the four bottles I drank out of the box in their youth is still etched in my mind. This was a very, very good and flashy wine in its youth, but having not had a chance to drink a bottle in more than twenty years, I had no idea what to expect from the wine at our recent Right Bank tasting. The wine has aged respectably, but has lost some of its early sappy beauty and not replaced it with additional complexity, so I felt a little vindicated in having drunk four bottles in their first blush of youthful beauty and then swapped out the remainder of the case for 1993 Rousseaus. The nose is deep and *à point*, but a bit heavy on the extraction, as it offers up scents of plums, black cherries, herb tones, a touch of tariness, charred wood and toasty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly complex, with good, but not great depth at the

core, modest tannins and good, solid length and grip on the broad finish. This used to be very sappy in its youth, but it seems that this was from its very generous puppy fat of fruit and that there was not quite the same depth here as the best 1985s. This was paired up with a very classy 1985 Canon and was clearly the second place wine. 2018-2035+. **91.**

1985 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

As I mentioned in my historical feature on this property a few years back, the 1985 vintage of Trotanoy is one of the most underrated in modern times here. The wine is supremely elegant in profile on both the nose and palate, but still with impressive depth and intensity of flavor. The bouquet is a classic mix of raspberries, red plums, a touch of green olive, a complex base of soil tones, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and suave on the attack, with a lovely core, melting tannins and impressive focus and grip on the very long, very elegant and complex finish. This is not the powerful side of Trotanoy that one finds in vintages like 1982 or 1975, but it is a complete and very classic expression of this superb *terroir*. 2016-2050+. **94+.**

1982 Château Canon (St. Émilion)

The 1982 vintage of Château Canon continues to drink beautifully and is really one of the more flamboyant vintages I have tasted from the property. The superb bouquet jumps from the glass in a blaze of black cherries, menthol, a hint of nutskin, a beautifully complex base of soil tones, woodsmoke and a touch of toasty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very sappy at the core, with excellent focus and grip, melting tannins and a very long, voluptuous and classy finish. A marvelous Canon. 2018-2050. **94.**

1982 Château La Dominique (St. Émilion)

The 1982 vintage of La Dominique has always been one of my favorites for this property and the wine continues to drink very nicely at age thirty-six. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, menthol, cigar ash, dark soil tones and a fairly generous base of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with good complexity and grip, still a touch of backend tannin and a long, well-balanced and focused finish. Good juice with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2018-2040. **92.**

1982 Château Latour à Pomerol (Pomerol)

It has been almost two years since I wrote my domaine profile of Château Latour à Pomerol and I have been fortunate to drink the 1982 vintage from this property on a couple more occasions since the historic vertical tasting I attended in early 2016 that formed the basis for my article. This is a great vintage for this historically underrated property, and the wine continues to just cruise along at its plateau of peak maturity. The bouquet is deep, complex and sappy, offering up notes of baked plums and black cherries, a touch of blood orange, cigar smoke, a touch of Pomerol herbs, chocolate, incipient nutskin and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely plush with the vintage's generosity on the attack, with a superb core, ripe, melting tannins and excellent focus and grip on the long and complex finish. The wine is drinking very nicely indeed, but is still climbing and will show even more nuance with further bottle age. A lovely, lovely example of the vintage. 2017-2045+. **94.**

1982 Château Magdelaine (St. Émilion)

The 1982 vintage of Magdelaine gets better and better every time I come back to it and this is probably going to end up being the greatest wine produced at this estate between the 1961 and the 2005. Today, the '82 is wide open and revels in its sappy goodness, offering up a beautiful aromatic combination of sappy cassis and black cherries, menthol, a very complex base

of chalky soil tones, cigar ash and a lovely, almost autumnal topnote of bonfires. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very plush on the attack, with a great core and stunning transparency for a 1982. The finish is very, very long, with modest tannins, excellent complexity and a sense of elegance and refinement that borders on First Growth quality. A stunning wine that is now entering its apogee. 2018-2060. **96.**



The understated beauty of Château Canon, on the Côtes section of St. Émilion.

1982 Château Pavie (St. Émilion)

While readers are no doubt aware that I am hardly a fan of what Château Pavie has become in the last several years, we should remember that there is no need to romanticize the previous several decades at this well-situated St. Émilion estate, as the reality is that the property had probably not had a strong run of vintages since the end of the 1940s. By all accounts, the 1982 vintage is the high watermark for this property in the intervening era and the wine is a good, solid bottle, but hardly life-altering in its quality. The bouquet offers up a rather ashy blend of cassis, dark soil tones, cigar ash, a touch of celery salts and a topnote of tobacco smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit dense and over-extracted, with a good core, still some tannin to resolve and good, solid length and grip on the modestly complex finish. A solid citizen, but not one I would vote into public office. 2018-2035+. **87.**

1982 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

At our January vertical tasting, we had a very, very good bottle of 1982 Trotanoy, but I have had even more open and opulent examples in the last few years. That said, with some extended aeration, this wine started to open up nicely and offered a superb bouquet of black plums, black cherries, new leather, a very complex base of soil tones, a nice touch of meatiness,

vanillin oak and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full and powerful in profile, with a plush core, superb focus and grip, a very long and well-balanced finish and still just a bit of ripe tannin perking up the backend. A great Trotanoy that still has a very, very long life ahead of it. 2023-2075. **96.**

1981 Château Ausone (St. Émilion)

It is quite clear from tasting through many of the vintages of the 1980s that this was a magical decade at Ausone, and the 1981 is clearly one of the very finest wines produced on either bank of the Gironde in this vintage. At age thirty-four, the wine is now just into its plateau of peak maturity, but it retains a bit of tannin and will continue to drink beautifully for many more decades to come. The deep, pure and utterly classic nose jumps from the glass in a blend of cherries, pomegranate, walnuts, fresh cocoa, a stunningly complex base of limestone soil tones and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and quite sappy at the core, with beautiful structure and grip, with modest tannins, tangy acids and outstanding focus and intensity of flavor on the long and utterly pure finish. A beautiful expression of this inimitable *terroir*. 2015-2040. **92.**

1981 Château l'Evangile (Pomerol)

The 1981 vintage is most successful in Pomerol and these wines remain some of the very best-kept secrets from the decade of the 1980s in Bordeaux, as the grapes were all brought in here before the autumn rains changed the profile of the vintage elsewhere on the Gironde. The 1981 l'Evangile is an outstanding wine and is not far off the quality of the fine 1985 produced here, albeit a bit different in style. The bouquet is deep, pure and beautifully *à point*, wafting from the glass in a mix of black plums, gentle meatiness, sealing wax, a touch of lavender, gentle tariness, cigar ash, a touch of Pomerol herb tones and a fine, fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and utterly seamless, with a fine core of fruit, melted tannins and excellent length and grip on the very well-balanced and gently wild finish. A superb l'Evangile! 2018-2040. **94.**

1981 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

At our vertical tasting we had a good bottle of the 1981, but I have had even more pristine examples in the past. This particular bottle showed very nicely, offering up a wide open and classy aromatic profile of black plums, cassis, saddle leather, gravel, a nice touch of menthol and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and quite refined on the attack, with a good, solid core, fine focus and grip and a long, meltingly tannic and black fruity finish. Superior examples have included a lot of Trotanoy's red fruity elements and notes of roasted gamebird as well, but this most recent bottle was quite black fruity and just a tad reticent. 2018-2035. **92.**

1981 Vieux Château Certan (Pomerol)

This was my second and last bottle of 1981 Vieux Château Certan out of a mixed lot purchased at auction a few years back, and it showed even better than the first bottle of the pair. No doubt this was to giving it another couple of years in the cellar to more fully recover its equilibrium after shipping. This is a marvelous vintage of VCC and one of the great sleepers still out there from the decade of the 1980s. The wine offers up a beautiful and *à point* nose of cassis, cigar smoke, a lovely spread of VCC botanicals, dark soil tones and espresso. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and grip, melted tannins and lovely acidity adding a vibrancy and bounce to the backend of this complex and classy wine. Fine juice. 2017-2045. **94.**

1979 Château Certan de May (Pomerol)

Most of my tasting experience with Certan de May is from the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, both of which were outstanding here, and I often wonder how the wines were in the 1950s and 1960s. After the 1980s, the percentage of new oak was increased here (though everything else remained quite classical in style) and I found that the wines lost just a bit of soil signature as a result. The 1979 Certan de May has always been considered one of the finest wines of the vintage and it continues to drink beautifully, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of black plums, cigar ash, balsam boughs, a lovely base of dark soil tones, bonfire and a fine topnote of spice. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and velvety, with a good core, melted tannin and lovely length and grip on the balanced and *à point* finish. A lovely Pomerol still in its plateau of peak drinkability. 2017-2030+. **93.**

1979 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

I very much like the 1979 vintage at Trotanoy, which is not a great year, but is very true both to its *terroir* and the style of the year, and that type of authenticity is worthy of praise. The nose is wide open, resolved and complex, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of plums, black cherries, gamebird, chocolate, gravel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and beautifully *à point*, with lovely complexity and balance and a long, silky and elegant finish. Good juice. 2018-2030. **91.**

1978 Château Magdelaine (St. Émilion)

Served from magnum

It had been a full decade since I last tasted the 1978 Magdelaine and the wine continues to cruise along much as I recall, being in the good, but not great camp when it comes to vintages from this era at the property. The bouquet is lovely, offering up scents of cherries, nutskin, menthol, a fine base of quite autumnal soil tones and a topnote of cigar wrapper. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and very nicely balanced, with tangy acids, melted tannins and good focus on the moderately long, fully mature finish. This is a touch short on the backend, by the exalted standards of Magdelaine, but a good, honest example of the vintage and *terroir*. 2016-2035+. **89.**

1978 Château Rouget (Pomerol)

The 1978 Château Rouget is fully mature and probably starting to get to the further side of its plateau of peak maturity, as the tannins that remain on the finish are starting to vie with the fruit for attention, rather than seamlessly interwoven. The bouquet is still absolutely lovely, offering up a complex mixture of cherries, raspberries, iron-like soil tones, a bit of spiced meats and a topnote of Cuban cigar wrapper. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, still with a lovely core, fine focus and grip, but perhaps just starting to hint at drying out on the backend. As I mentioned, the tannins seem to be starting to peel away just a bit from the fruit on the finish, which may mean that drinking up over the next dozen years or so will be warranted. This is still a very nice drink, but I would not bury it deep in the cellar anymore. 2017-2030+. **89.**

1978 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

The 1978 vintage is another fine example of Trotanoy, but our bottle at our vertical was in the good, but not great category and I have had even finer examples in the recent past. This wine offered up a lovely and complex nose of black cherries, leather, a touch of blood orange. Gravelly soil tones, game, cigar smoke and an exotic topnote of cardamom. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and fully mature, with solid core and a long, poised and very well-balanced finish. Superior examples of the '78 in the past have shown a bit more mid-palate

dimension and greater precision than this particular bottle, but this was still highly enjoyable. 2018-2030+. **91.**

1976 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

At our January vertical, the 1976 Trotanoy acquitted itself very nicely and I was quite impressed, as this was the first time I had ever tasted this particular vintage. There was just a whisper of oxidation in the aromatics when the wine was first poured, but once the wine was out of the blocks, this disappeared completely. Once open, the bouquet is a fine blend of red plums, black cherries, leather, black truffle, gravelly soil tones and plenty of Trotanoy's smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite complex, with good, but not great depth at the core, fine focus and grip and a long, meltingly tannic and classy finish. This is a very, very strong 1976. 2018-2030+. **90.**



1975 Château la Conseillante (Pomerol)

The 1975 Château la Conseillante is a lovely example of this superb Pomerol vintage. The wine is now fully into its apogee of peak drinkability, wafting from the glass in a very elegant blend of black raspberries, plums, cigar smoke, gravelly soil tones, a touch of tobacco leaf, gently toasty oak and a hint of violet still remaining in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and very refined in profile, with a velvety texture, fine mid-palate

depth and a long, classy and tangy finish. Almost all of the tannins here have melted away, but the wine is still beautifully balanced and has decades of life still ahead of it. 2017-2040. **92.**

1975 Château l'Evangile (Pomerol)

The 1975 vintage of Château l'Evangile is one of the greats of Pomerol of the second half of the twentieth century. For fans of this estate who only know the estate's wines after its purchase by Lafite-Rothschild in 1985, the style of the 1975 would come as a bit of a surprise, as it is a wilder, more powerful and less polished example of this great *terroir*, which really has more in common stylistically with Château Lafleur's wines in this era than it does with the more elegant expressions crafted here today. The wine is beautifully complex on both the nose and palate and is only just reaching its apogee of maturity at age forty-one, offering up a deep nose of dark berries, black plums, bitter chocolate, cigar smoke, a bit of meatiness, gravelly soil tones, charred wood and a touch of Pomerol's fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is complex, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with great depth at the core, still a bit of ripe backend tannin to continue to resolve, great focus and grip and a very long, palate-staining and magical finish. This is the greatest vintage of Château l'Evangile I have ever had the pleasure to taste. 2016-2050. **96+.**

1975 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

At our New York tasting, we had a good bottle of the 1975, but I would peg it at the ninety percentile and I have had several bottles in recent times that included that extra ten percent of perfumed precision and complexity. In any case, this was not a hard wine to drink, as it blossomed beautifully to offer up scents of cherries, red plums, a bit of meatiness, cigar smoke, a touch of nutskins, gravelly soil tones and a delicate touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, and utterly suave in structure, with a rock solid core, great soil signature, melting tannins and outstanding length and grip on the impeccably balanced and complex finish. Pristine bottles of this wine consistently merit **96** or **97** points, but this bottle was not quite ideal in its provenance and had lost just a touch of the magic during its storage and travel history. But, that said, it was still a lovely glass of wine! 2018-2040+. **94.**

1974 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

I have had the pleasure to drink the 1974 Trotanoy on a handful of occasions over the years and this wine continues to transcend the vintage. Edouard Moueix joked, when tasting this wine in New York in January, for the very first time, "I can see where some of our 1975 went in the blend of the 1974s!" This was probably the case, as vintages were a bit more fungible in this epoch and the addition of a little juice from the follow-up vintage was hardly a rarity in this era in Bordeaux, as it would serve to add just a bit of puppy fat to the fruit of the wine soon to be released. The 1974 Trotanoy benefited from the next vintage being one of legendary proportions in Pomerol and has outclassed the majority of 1974s since day one and continues to drink beautifully, offering up a complex nose of black cherries, dark berries, cigar ash, gravelly soil tones and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just a touch four-square (particularly in the context of this epic vertical lineup), but with fine focus and balance, good grip and a long and fairly complex finish. This is a very good bottle and well worth taking a punt on if one is lucky enough to cross paths with it at the right price. 2018-2028+. **88.**

1971 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

The 1971 vintage of Trotanoy was the very first, mature example of this property that I ever had a chance to drink, as the wine has been wide open and drinking with the breed of maturity since the late 1980s. It continues to cruise along beautifully and was singing in New York in January, offering up a pure and complex nose of black plums, black cherries, leather, dark soil tones, black truffles, just a whisper of remaining vanillin oak and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with a velvety texture, fine focus and grip, a lovely core, melted tannins and outstanding purity on the long and vibrant finish. Edouard Moueix noted that he has always found the 1971s in Pomerol as good, or better, than the 1970s! 2018-2040. **93.**

1970 Château l'Evangile (Pomerol)

The 1970 vintage of l'Evangile is outstanding and this is clearly one of the overlooked stars of this fine year in Pomerol. The bouquet is pure, complex and still retains a nice, old school veneer of meatiness in its classic blend of black plums, black cherries, singed tobacco, a great base of soil tones, a touch of mint, chocolate and a topnote of roasted meats. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and plush on the attack, with an excellent core, broad shoulders and a long, meltingly tannic and impeccably balanced finish. This is drinking beautifully today, but has plenty of life still ahead. 2017-2040. **94.**

1970 Château Figeac (St. Émilion)

I have long enjoyed the 1970 vintage of Figeac and the wine is really drinking beautifully at the present time. The bouquet shows a lovely influence from its cabernet sauvignon component, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of black cherries, cigar smoke, a touch of cocoa, gravelly soil tones, menthol and a nice dollop of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and elegant, with a lovely core, melted tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. The '70 Figeac remains at its apogee today and still has decades of fine, fine drinking ahead of it. 2018-2040. **94.**

1970 Château Magdelaine (St. Émilion)

I seem to drink an awful lot of 1970 Magdelaine these days and I have absolutely no complaints with that! This is one of three bottles of the wine that I drank with enormous pleasure during 2017, with the wine showing as brilliantly as ever on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is deep, pure and utterly refined, offering up scents of black cherries, menthol, chalky soil tones, cigar smoke, a dollop of St. Émilion fresh herbs and a lovely topnote of nutskin. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and sappy at the core, with stunning soil signature, melted tannins, bright acids and superb length and grip on the complex and vibrant finish. A brilliant vintage for this brilliant estate. 2017-2050. **96.**

1970 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

While I have long shared Edouard Moueix's enthusiasm for the 1971 Pomerol vintage, I have to give the nod today to the 1970 Trotanoy over its counterpart from the succeeding vintage. The bouquet on the 1970 is lovely, offering up a wide open blend of black plums, black cherries, Cuban cigars, bitter chocolate, dark soil tones, gamebird and a fine topnote of black truffles. On the palate the wine is deep, full and complex, with a superb core, fine focus and grip and a very long, poised and still gently tannic finish. The 1970 Trotanoy was long bound up in its structural elements and was one of the slowest wines of this vintage to finally blossom fully, but it has done so now and is an outstanding wine. 2018-2050. **94.**

1966 Château Ausone (St. Émilion)

The most recent bottle of 1966 Ausone that I tasted was superb, offering up a deep and utterly classic, old school, exotic Ausone bouquet of cherries, pomegranate, menthol, a touch of nutskin, summer truffles, candle wax, cigar wrapper, mocha a beautifully complex base of chalky soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and brilliantly complex, with a fine core of sweet red fruit, stunning soil signature, and simply superb length and grip on the focused, perfectly balanced and vibrant finish. The '66 Ausone is at the absolute top of its game today, but has decades of life still ahead of it. A superb and totally underrated vintage from this legendary estate. 2014-2040+. **94.**

1966 Château Fonplégade (St. Émilion)

Château Fonplégade is not a particularly well-known estate these days, due to the fact that it is simply another property paying tribute to Michel Rolland and lost in his cookie-cutter lineup of boring, modern and simplistic wines. However, the property is well-situated on the Côtes section of St. Émilion, just downslope from Belair-Monange, and probably has very good potential, if the current owners would hire someone who values *terroir* to make the wines here. The 1966 Château Fonplégade is a good example of just what might be accomplished here, for though this was not a great era in the history of the estate, the wine is far more interesting to drink today than any of the wines Michel Rolland has sullied with his hands at the property since being hired to consult here. The nose is still quite lovely, offering up scents of red and black cherries, cigar wrapper, a touch of sealing wax, herb tones, coffee and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and well-balanced, with quite modest complexity, but good freshness and surprising length and grip on the elegant finish. There is some very good *terroir* being wasted here at the present time. 2018-2030. **87.**

1966 Château Magdelaine (St. Émilion)

At a recent Right Bank tasting we had an off bottle of the 1966 Magdelaine, which was sad, but a week or two later, I had another bottle of the '66 served to me and it confirmed that this is indeed one of the greatest wines of the vintage. The bouquet is bright and vibrant, soaring from the glass in a complex blend of cherries, black plums, cocoa, sweet cigar wrapper, a gorgeous base of limestone soil tones, candle wax and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and precise on the attack, with a marvelous core of fruit, stunning transparency and a very, very long, complex and meltingly tannic finish. The higher acids of the 1966 vintage work to perfection here to keep everything focused and vibrant. A great Magdelaine! 2017-2040+. **95.**

1966 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol) Served from Magnum

I have had great, great bottles of the 1966 Trotanoy, but unfortunately, our magnum at the vertical tasting was not the finest example of this magical wine. It was still very good, but there is an extra element of vibrancy and complexity here in pristine examples that was not on display in January. The bouquet was still very, very good, offering up scents of black cherries, plums, roasted game, a fine base of soil tones, a touch of heather and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite velvety in texture, with a good, but not great core, good complexity, but a rather laid back finish that lacks the length and grip of a pristine bottle of the '66 Trot. This is just the luck of the draw with old wines, but I was a bit saddened for this particular magnum, as I had extraordinary expectations for this wine out of a larger format! *C'est le vin!* 2018-2035. **91.**



1964 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

I had not tasted a bottle of the 1964 Trotanoy since the end of 2004, so I was delighted to find it in our lineup at Omar's vertical tasting in January and discover that this bottle was a truly exceptional specimen! This is a brilliant vintage of Trotanoy, soaring from the glass in a blaze of black plums, black cherries, chocolate, gamebird, gravelly soil tones, plenty of smokiness and a fine topnote of black truffles. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and velvety, with a rock solid core, great soil signature, melting tannins and stunning length and grip on the complex and utterly refined finish. This is an old school vintage of Trotanoy with a bit more musculature still showing at its apogee than vintages from 1971 forwards show at the same point in their respective evolutions, but also an absolutely complete and compelling vintage of this legendary wine. The Holy Grail bottle of '64 Trotanoy I have been searching for all these years! 2018-2040+. **96.**

1962 Château Pavie (St. Émilion)

The 1962 vintage of Pavie is okay, but like many of the second and third tier estates from this era, it is now best on the nose and starting to lose a fair bit of structure on the palate as it slowly descends down the far side of its plateau. The bouquet is really still quite complex, offering up a blend of cherries, cassis, sealing wax, charred earth, French roast, damp herbs and a good base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, velvety and starting to get very laid back structurally, with a gentle core, modest complexity and a short, but still extant finish. The tannins are long gone here and this wine will probably start to crack up structurally in the coming

years, but it is still not a bad drink and is quite enjoyable for the complexity of the aromatics. 2018-2030? **86.**

1959 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol)

At our Trotanoy vertical, the bottle of 1959 was in full flight and could have carried Icarus all the way to the sun. The last bottle of 1959 Trotanoy that I drank several years ago was a Nicolas bottling, but this most recent example was a château bottling and even a shade superior to that last wine. The brilliant bouquet offers up a constellation of plums, dark chocolate, black truffles, nutskin, a glorious base of dark soil tones, a lovely note of almost sweet leather (if this makes any sense?), heather and cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with bottomless depth at the core, great focus and grip and a very, very long, very complex and utterly complete finish. The 1959 is a brilliant bottle of Trotanoy at its absolute apogee, and as it nears its sixtieth birthday, a perfect example of the iron fist in the velvet glove! 2018-2050+. **96.**

1950 Château Pétrus (Pomerol)

I had only had the good fortune to taste the 1950 Château Pétrus on one previous occasion in my life, which was back in early 2001, when I drank the wine out of magnum at an epic Right Bank magnum dinner. As I wrote about then, this was still the “old school” style of Pétrus, with less refinement than what arrived here with the 1961 vintage forwards, but still with all of the great *terroir* of this property front and center. I adore this style of old school Pomerol and this recent bottle of the 1950 Pétrus was magical, offering up a deep and brilliant bouquet of black cherries, pomegranate, desiccated raspberries, a touch of balsam bough, nutskin, gamebird and a lovely topnote of high quality leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very complex and quite defined by its underlying soil signature, with a great core of fruit, melted tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very long and very classic finish. This was a perfect wine when I last tasted it out of magnum sixteen years ago, and maybe that was also the case with this regular-sized format, but on this particular evening, the wine was flanked by so many great old examples of First Growths from the Médoc that it may have been slightly out of step stylistically and not appreciated by me quite as much as it deserved. I would love to revisit the wine one day and see if this was indeed the case! 2017-2060+. **97.**

1947 Château Trotanoy (Pomerol) Nicolas Bottling

I had never tasted the 1947 Trotanoy before, which predates the purchase of this estate by the Moueix family by six years. The 1947 vintage in Bordeaux can be a bit roasted in personality, given the torrid summer of '47, and these are not always the most refined examples of a particular *terroir*, but this is not evident at all in this magical vintage of Trotanoy. The stunning bouquet is pure, complex and still very vibrant, jumping from the glass in a complex blend of baked plums, and black cherries, spit-roasted venison, heather, cigar wrapper, a gorgeous base of Trotanoy soil tones, nutskin and upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full and velvety on the attack, with stunning complexity and mid-palate depth, great focus and grip and a very, very long, fully mature and refined finish. A great wine by any measure, the 1947 Trotanoy stands out for its quite elegant profile in a vintage where this characteristic is not always self-evident, even in the greatest wines of the vintage! 2018-2040+. **96.**

1945 Vieux Château Certan (Pomerol)

When I wrote my feature on this great property back in 2009, I had a note on the 1945 that was from an absolutely lovely bottle. Only a couple of years ago I had a chance to share a bottle in one hundred percent pristine condition and it quickly became apparent that my 96 point score for this wine was under-appreciating its magnificence! The most recent bottle was bottomless in its depth and limitless in its beauty, offering up a beautifully sweet and resolved nose of black cherries, black plums, singed tobacco, dark soil tones, a touch of candle wax, roasted meats, cigar ash and a nice dollop of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core in only the way that the heroic old vintages of Pomerol can be. The finish is very, very long, with still a bit of tannin remaining, glorious complexity and very fine acids that add lift and grip on the simply perfect finish. What a magical wine. 2014-2045. **100.**

1928 Château Rouget (Pomerol)

When you think how long ago 1928 was, it is hard to believe that I have had the good fortune to drink the 1928 Rouget on three occasions in the last half dozen years. This last bottle was out of my cellar, where it had been very, very generously placed by a good friend of mine as a birthday present five or six years ago. Happily, I had the chance to serve the wine blind to my friend as part of a dinner *chez moi*, so we could share in his generosity. This particular bottle showed even better than the last one I drank, back in 2014, as it offers up a lovely, old and tertiary bouquet of dried raspberries and plums, dark soil tones, cigar ash, mocha and a nice touch of meatiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a plush core, little sign of remaining tannins, good focus and balance and a long, gently malty finish that shows the wine's age a bit, but hardly to the detriment of current drinking pleasure. At this stage in a wine's long life in bottle, there are always going to be examples that are better than others, but we were lucky and this was a really good bottle of 1928 Rouget. 2017-2035. **90.**

IN A PIEMONTE STATE OF MIND
ANOTHER ROUND OF BAROLO, BARBARESCO & FRIENDS



When I first planned this feature on the wines of Piemonte, I had just finished an amazing run of Barolo and Barbaresco tastings in the fall of 2017 that included an inordinate number of bottles of wine from the great Maestro of the region, Bruno Giacosa. Sadly, Signor Giacosa passed away on January 22nd of this year, ending the greatest single winemaking career in the history of Piemonte. He was eighty-eight. Bruno Giacosa had been retired for many years, having suffered a stroke in 2006 and having handed over the day to day management of the family winery to his talented daughter, Bruna, but he was still the spiritual foundation of this great Neive domaine up until his passing at the start of this year. Over the course of his long and illustrious career, Signor Giacosa set a standard for excellence with his wines and his unwavering commitment to quality that has inspired several subsequent generations, and in many respects, he was the Henri Jay of his home region, blazing a path that has inspired many of the greatest subsequent producers in Piemonte. As I have written two in-depth historical features on the Giacosa family's domaine and their celestial wines, I will not here go deeply into the details of Bruno's fine career, but only note how much he will be missed the world over. His great accomplishments in the world of Piemontese wines have left a living and dynamic legacy that will continue to dazzle us for many, many decades to come, as his long-lived and utterly beautiful wines exude the spirit of integrity and inspiration that only a great artist can leave in the wake of his passing. Bruno will be sorely missed around the family cellars in the town of Neive, but his spirit lives on and will shine again with each and every bottle of Bruno Giacosa wine that we share in the years to come. Sleep well Maestro.

My writing a second feature on the great Bruno Giacosa back in the spring of last year has had me on Piemonte swing of unparalleled excellence in the last few months, as it seems that every time I get a chance to drink something that is not part of the editorial lineup for the upcoming issue, it has turned out to be a fine, mature bottle of Barolo or Barbaresco. My good luck stretch with these wines has included a few epic dinner lineups (one completely awash in mature and magical wines from *Signor* Giacosa) and I have been also regularly dipping into my cellar for mature bottles when the tasting schedule allows, as at the present time, I simply cannot get enough mature Piemonte wine! Working on the historical piece on Bruno and Bruna Giacosa provided so many breathtakingly beautiful bottles of wine in the lead-up to the release of the article, that I have tried in the last couple of months to keep the momentum going from that period of Giacosa research and make sure that my monthly tasting schedule continues to be sufficiently sprinkled with Piemontese wines of proper age and pedigree. It has kind of been like Christmas morning for a ten year-old that has now stretched on for several months! For this report, I have culled together notes on other top producers from the region whose wines have been part of this movable feast, and coupled these with the considerable number of additional bottles of Bruno Giacosa wine that I have been so lucky to drink in the last several months. With the Giacosa notes, I have not included any crus that I had tasted in the period leading up to the release of the article back in April (there has certainly been more than a few bottles of the same wines that were in that article), preferring to simply add notes here on Bruno Giacosa wines that I did not cover in my spring 2017 feature on the family estate.

Looking back, I cannot recall a time in my wine-drinking life where I have drunk so many bottles from Bruno Giacosa over an extended period of time, and I have little doubt that this chapter of wine drinking will remain etched in my memory as one of the true highlights of a life that has been already more than blessed with great runs of magical wines. As always, though my cellar still has its fair share of Giacosa bottles, it has been the extraordinary generosity of friends who have helped make this last several months so awash in *Signor* Giacosa's wines. But, there have also been plenty of other outstanding Piemontese wines in this last several months to augment the lineup of Giacosa wines, and the notes that follow have plenty of input from folks like Bartolo Mascarello, Marcarini, the Produttori del Barbaresco, Cordero, Oddero and Cappellano, to mention just a few of my favorites. There have not been many opportunities to drink bottles from other great producers, such as Giacomo Conterno, either of the great Rinaldi estates or Guiseppe Mascarello y Figli during this stretch, but that is just the luck of the draw and given the wines that appear below, I am sure that no one is going to lament my lack of equally good fortune with these other favorite estates! I should mention that one of the great eye-openers for me in this run of Piemontese heaven were the very old wines from the historically important estate of Fontanafredda, whose wines I had very little experience with prior to being served the 1945, 1938 and 1935 bottles from the property back in February of last year and being completely blown away by their quality and continued vigor at quite advanced ages. Clearly, this was one of the most important Barolo estates back in the first half of the twentieth century and I have been negligent not to already know this and have been hunting for these wines in the market!

As readers may recall, the estate of Fontanafredda is one of the birthplaces of Barolo as we know it today in its modern guise, as this property came about as a wine-producing estate due to the efforts of the pioneering Marchesa Giulietta Falletti, who was the first in the region to ask

that her Barolo be a dry wine vinified in the style of the wines of Burgundy. The Marchesa knew the wines of Burgundy from her youth, having been born in France and living there up until the time that she married the Marchesi Falletti in the first half of the nineteenth century. Prior to the Marchesa Falletti inheriting her deceased husband's massive estate in Piemonte and hiring a French oenologist, Louis Oudart, to help her cellar team make their Barolo in a dry style, the Barolo of her era had been a partially sweet wine done much in the style of a Recioto bottling of Valpolicella. The Marchesa wanted her wines to be dry like Burgundy, and with Monsieur Oudart's assistance, created what would become our modern day version of Barolo. The quality of her excellent, new dry Baroli came to the attention of the King of Italy, who wanted to emulate her success with the "new Barolo" and set up his own, massive wine-producing estate in the hills of Piemonte as well. These vineyards from the king would eventually become Fontanafredda, when the Count di Mirafiore purchased the king's former estate in 1878. The wines of Fontanafredda had a great reputation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but I had no idea that the excellence of the Barolo here continued on well into the first half of the twentieth century. But, these stunning old Baroli from Fontanafredda from the thirties and forties were a complete revelation and all the confirmation I needed that this estate was a top producer at least up to the end of the second world war.

Another of the real eye-openers for me in preparing this report were the wines of Poderi Colla, whose wines I had never tasted before and whose classical style and exceptional quality really stood out in these tastings. The Colla family is one of the most important historically in the last fifty years in Piemonte, as Giuseppe "Beppe" Colla was one of the great winemakers in the region in its formative modern days from the late 1940s to the late 1980s. He was the owner and winemaker at Prunotto during much of his long and illustrious career, up until the time that he sold Prunotto to the Antinori family in 1989. The first vintage he vinified, straight out of Oenology school, was the 1949. During his time at the helm at Prunotto, which he took over upon the retirement of Alfredo Prunotto in 1956, this was one of the great, classically-styled Barolo producers in the entire region, with the wines up in the top tier alongside those of people such as Bruno Giacosa, Giovanni Conterno and the two great Mascarello estates. Amongst the many innovations that Beppe Colla precipitated during his tenure at Prunotto was the bottling of the very first single vineyard bottling of Barolo, a Bussia Soprano in the 1961 vintage. Beppe's younger brother Tino worked alongside of him at Prunotto for several decades, and eventually the two brothers (after their retirement from Prunotto in 1989), and in association with Tino's grand-daughter Federica, founded a family domaine of their own in 1994. This is Poderi Colla, so it is a relatively new estate in the region, but with roots that run very, very deep in the history of great, classically-styled Piemontese wine.

Readers have been asking me for several years now to cover more new releases from Piemonte, as most of my drinking and writing on the wines from the region have focused in the past on more mature wines, updates on older vintages, or domaine profiles of some of my favorite producers in Alba. With this article, I have managed to include a fairly large number of tasting notes on new releases in the market, to augment all of the great old wines that I had the good fortune to share during the fall and winter of 2017. Happily, many of the current releases that I have been able to taste and write about for this report are Barbera bottlings from many of the top estates in the Langhe, including a great many from the 2016 vintage, which looks extremely promising. I have tasted plenty of examples of Dolcetto and other varietals as well

from the recent vintages of 2015 and 2016, but the great bounty of new Barbera releases reported on below has reminded me poignantly of just how much I love this grape, which I think is dramatically underrated. Top flight Barbera (and the 2016 from G. B. Burlotto may well be the greatest young example I have ever had the pleasure to taste) is a very complex, elegant and ageworthy wine in its own right, and it deserves even greater recognition in the market than it currently receives. This is particularly true for those who might be priced out of some of the very top bottlings of Barolo and Barbaresco these days, for the most famous producers from the old school certainly come with price tags today that would not be out of place in the Burgundy market, but there is an amazing wealth of great Barbera currently in the market and pipeline that the savvy shopper would do well to salt away in their cellars for future pleasure!

I have also been able to taste a nice range of 2013 Baroli for this report, and though the notes below are nowhere near as deep as I would like, it is a nice cross section of this excellent vintage. I am deeply indebted to Fabio Alessandria of G. B. Burlotto and his US importer, Filippo Pistone, for digging into their own cellars to make sure that I had a chance to taste the full range of their stunning 2013 Baroli, as well as the current releases of their other red wines in the market. It was extremely kind of both gentlemen to do so, for the wines are long sold out at the supply level, though still to be found in the marketplace for the intrepid collector. The following notes are sorted simply by vintage, with all varietals lumped together on a year to year basis. Within each vintage grouping, the wines are listed alphabetically by producer. I hope the following report will underscore that there is a lot more to Piemonte wine than just Barolo and Barbaresco, as there are a stunning array of wines currently in the market from Valtellina (the present day releases of Ar. Pe. Pe. in particular are brilliant across the board), as well as scores and scores of really lovely examples of Dolcetto, Freisa and the aforementioned, Barbera grapes that merit plenty of attention.

First, A Couple of Chardonnays!

2016 Chardonnay- Giovanni Viberti

The 2016 Chardonnay from Giovanni Viberti is surprisingly refined, offering up a bright and soil-driven bouquet of apple, pear, a touch of lemon peel, lovely, almost salty soil tones and almond blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and still quite youthful, with a fine core, impressive mineral drive and a long, zesty and well-balanced finish. This is very good juice! 2018-2025. **89+**.

2015 Chardonnay- Giovanni Viberti

Giovanni Viberti's 2015 chardonnay is also a very good wine, but it does not have quite the same vibrancy as is found in the 2016, which is not a function of the extra year of bottle age, but rather the warmer summer of 2015. The bouquet is still plenty bright, delivering scents of apple, salty soil, a touch of wild fennel, fresh almond and a bit of dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, wide open and drinking well, with a good core, lovely balance, but not quite the same focus and bounce of the really good 2016 version. 2018-2021. **87**.

2016 Barbera d'Alba- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2016 Barbera d'Alba from Burlotto is one of the most beautifully complex and elegant young examples of this varietal that I have had the pleasure to taste in a long time. The bouquet is very pure and nicely soil-driven, offering up scents of red and black cherries, lovely,

chalky soil tones, gamebird, a touch of nutskin, camphor and a really lovely mix of fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full and focused, with a lovely core of potentially sappy fruit, marvelous transparency, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy and seamlessly balanced finish. Great Barbera in the making! 2020-2040. **92.**

2016 Dolcetto d'Alba- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2016 Dolcetto d'Alba from G. B. Burlotto is beautifully fragrant and expressive, with a vivacity that is simply the essence of well-made Dolcetto. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a blaze of red and black cherries, gamebird, lovely soil tones, camphor, a hint of pepper and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with lovely intensity of flavor, nascent complexity, a seamless sense of balance and a long, vibrant and crunchy finish. Lovely juice that is showing beautifully out of the blocks, but has the balance to also age nicely for eight to ten years. 2018-2026+. **89.**

2016 Freisa Langhe- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2016 Freisa Langhe from the Alessandria family's beloved Burlotto estate is another absolutely stellar wine. The bouquet is very pure, refined and vibrant, offering up scents of black cherries, sweet dark berries, gamebird, a bit of cola, complex soil tones, fresh oregano and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and very well-balanced, with a sappy core, excellent soil signature, moderate, well-integrated tannins and a long, poised and very promising finish. This is quite approachable today, but it is still primary and another year or three in the cellar will pay significant dividends! Fine juice. 2018-2030+. **90+.**

2016 Nebbiolo della Langhe- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2016 Nebbiolo della Langhe from Burlotto is a beautiful wine in the making, with the purity and precision of this very promising vintage very much in evidence in its complex bouquet of cherries, gamebird, camphor, chalky soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh oregano and a topnote of dried rose petals. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant in profile, with a sappy core of fruit, excellent soil signature, fine-grained tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, vibrant and impressively complex finish. This is Baby Monvigliero from Burlotto this year! 2021-2045. **91.**

2016 Verduno Pelaverga- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2016 Pelaverga from Burlotto is excellent, as this varietal has also clearly done well in this top vintage. The bouquet is typically peppery and transparent, offering up scents of dried cherries and red currants, pepper, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil and a wide variety of savory and herb elements in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and complex, with tangy acids, modest tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex and soil-driven finish. A fine, fine example of Pelaverga. 2018-2028. **90.**

2016 Dolcetto d'Alba "A Elizabeth"- Cascina delle Rose

The Dolcetto vines for this bottling from Cascina delle Rose are planted in the fine Rio Sordo vineyard in Barbaresco. The 2016 version is bright and juicy, offering up a refined nose of black cherries, gamebird, woodsmoke, lovely soil tones, just a whisper of Italian herbs and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is fullish, open and vibrant, with a good core, fine focus and complexity, just a bit of tannin and a long, tangy and classy finish. I really like this wine, which is accessible right out of the blocks and is not overly muscular, as can sometimes be the case with young Dolcettos. Fine juice. 2018-2025+. **89+.**



2016 Barbera d'Alba- Castello di Verduno

The Barbera d'Alba from Castello di Verduno hails from vineyards in the village of Neive in the Barbaresco region. The wine sees three months in large *botti* during its *elevage*, with the remainder of its time spent in either tank prior to bottling. The 2016 version is a fine example, wafting from the glass in a blend of black cherries, lovely soil tones, woodsmoke, a touch of peanut, gentle spices and a topnote of wild fennel. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, bright and plenty tangy out of the blocks, with a good core, modest tannins and a long, vibrant and still almost snappy finish from very good acidity. This is a young wine and really needs a bit of time in decanter if it is going to be drunk now. Like so many serious examples of Barbera, it will be even better with a few years in the cellar. 2018-2030. **89.**

2016 Dolcetto d'Alba "Campot"- Castello di Verduno

The Castello di Verduno's bottling of Dolcetto hails from the Campot vineyard in the village of Barbaresco, where the Bianco family also has substantial holdings, including a fine slice of Rabajà. The family's 2016 Dolcetto is excellent, delivering a classic bouquet of sweet dark berries, black cherries, a touch of oregano, dark soil tones, bonfire and a nice touch of roasted meats. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and tangy, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. A lovely example of Dolcetto. 2018-2028. **89+.**

2016 Dolcetto d'Alba "Pian Balbo"- Poderi Colla

The 2016 Dolcetto d'Alba "Pian Balbo" from Poderi Colla is a fine example of this classy vintage and this underrated varietal. The bouquet is bright and expressive, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of black cherries, licorice, lovely soil tones, a hint of road tar, fresh oregano, woodsmoke and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with a solid core, fine soil signature, a touch of tannin and a long, well-balanced finish. This is already a very tasty drink, but a year in the cellar would allow the bit of backend tannin to soften up further. Good juice. 2019-2028. **88.**

2016 Dolcetto d'Alba "Roussot"- Francesco Rinaldi e Figli

The vineyards of Roussot lie in the hillside that includes Cannubi, so these are very well-situated Dolcetto vines. The 2016 Dolcetto "Roussot" from Paola Rinaldi is a lovely wine, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of sappy black cherries, a bit of road tar, anise, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a gentle topnote of oregano. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and wide open in personality, with a good core, fine acids and lovely length and grip on the balanced and gently tannic finish. This is high class Dolcetto! 2018-2030. **90.**

2015 Barbera d'Alba- Cascina delle Rose

The 2015 Barbera d'Alba from Cascina delle Rose is given a longer *elevage* than many examples of Barbera these days, with the wine spending fifteen months in large, older *botti* prior to bottling and then held in the cellars an additional six months in bottle prior to release. Like the Dolcetto from Cascina delle Rose, the Barbera vines for this bottling hail from the fine Rio Sordo vineyard in Barbaresco. The 2015 Barbera is lovely, offering up a deep and vibrant nose of black cherries, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil, a touch of peanut and gentle tariness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully open for inspection, with a superb core, fine focus and grip, modest tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. Fine and very classic juice. 2018-2030. **90.**

2015 Barbera d'Alba "Costa Bruna"- Poderi Colla

The Colla family's Barbera vines are located in the village of Barbaresco, with a half hectare of the vineyard still planted with vines from 1930. The 2015 is an outstanding example of Barbera, with impressive depth and precision on both the nose and palate. The bouquet offers up a fine blend of black cherries, roasted gamebird, dark soil tones, a bit of road tar, bonfire and a nice touch of fresh oregano in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, a fair bit of ripe backend tannin, impressive focus and grip and a long, complex finish. This is outstanding Barbera. 2019-2030+. **90+.**

2015 Nebbiolo d'Alba- Poderi Colla

The 2015 Nebbiolo d'Alba from Poderi Colla is a fine, red fruity example, offering up an elegant and complex bouquet of cherries, anise, lovely soil tones, fresh oregano, roses and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with a good core, moderate tannins and a long, poised and gently tarry finish. This is very Barbaresco-like in personality and is a terrific value, but it could use a couple of years in the cellar to really blossom. Impressive juice. 2020-2035+. **90.**

2014 Rosso di Valtellina- Ar.Pe.Pe.

The 2014 Rosso di Valtellina from Ar.Pe.Pe. is a lovely wine, cut in a medium-bodied format and long on both breed and personality. The bouquet is pure and classy, offering up a complex blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of road tar, gamebird, fresh

oregano and a lovely base of stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, bright and tangy, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and gently tannic finish. This is made to be an easy-going, early-drinking wine, but it cannot help but still show off the polish and complexity of all bottlings from Ar.Pe.Pe. 2018-2025. **89.**

2014 Cà d'Maté- Cantine Garrone (Valli Ossolane)

Cantine Garrone is located in the tiny Ossola Valley, which is the most northerly DOC in Piemonte and only ten kilometers from the Swiss border. The region was only given its own DOC, Valli Ossolane, in 2009. The altitude in the vineyards here is very similar to Valtellina. The Cà d'Maté cuvée from Cantine Garrone is a blended wine comprised of Nebbiolo and fifteen to twenty percent of a grape called Croatina, with the final proportions dependent on the style of the vintage in the Ossola Valley, with the wine spending its first six months in stainless steel tanks and then is racked into a combination of older *botti* and *barriques*. The 2014 Cà d'Maté is a lovely wine, offering up a bright and complex nose of sweet dark berries, stony minerality, a bit of road tar, woodsmoke, fresh oregano and a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely tangy, with a fine core, lovely soil signature, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, complex finish. This is not quite as elegant on the palate as top Valtellina, but perhaps that is the addition of the Croatina? But, I like the complexity here and the wine seems like it will age quite nicely, as it is very well-balanced. 2018-2035. **89.**

2014 Nebbiolo della Langhe- Giovanni Viberti

Claudio Viberti, the youngest son of Giovanni and Maria Viberti, has now taken the reins of this family winery, which until the 1990s, sold almost all of its wine locally or in their acclaimed restaurant *Buon Padre* in the village of Barolo, run for many years now by Maria. Claudio's 2014 Nebbiolo is a very fine example, offering up a bright and detailed bouquet of cherries, roses, a touch of camphor, lovely soil tones and a topnote of fresh oregano. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and already drinking quite nicely at age four, with a good core, tangy acids, a touch of backend tannin and a long, bouncy finish. Good juice. 2018-2030. **88+.**

2013 Barolo- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

I have to confess that I am as guilty as the next collector in focusing my Burlotto buying habits on Monvigliero and Cannubi, but the family's blended Barolo is really, really good year in and year out, and the 2013 is certainly no exception! The youthful nose takes a bit of time in decanter to start to stir, but it opens up nicely to offer up scents of sappy cherries, camphor, beautiful chalky soil tones, roses, hints of the gamebird to come, anise and a nice touch of sweet nuttiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and perfectly balanced, with tangy acids, ripe, chewy tannins, a lovely core and a long, soil-driven and nascently complex finish. This is still a puppy and needs a good ten to fifteen years to really blossom, but it is so beautifully balanced that it is almost easy to drink today! 2025-2060. **92.**

2013 Barolo "Acclivi"- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2013 Barolo "Acclivi" from Burlotto is an absolute classic in the making and does not need the extended aeration of the *normale* to blossom aromatically, as the bouquet jumps right out of the glass when the bottle is opened to deliver scents of red and black cherries, a touch of red curry, gamebird, camphor, a complex base of soil tones, nutskin, a bit of tariness and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and beautifully balanced, with its full-bodied format offering up a superb core of fruit, suave, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. There is plenty of Monvigliero in the blend of this wine (which also includes

fruit from the Verduno vineyards of Rocche Olmo and Neirane) and the 2013 Acclivi has really taken on the Monvigliero elegant personality this year! 2027-2060+. **93+**.

2013 Barolo “Monvigliero”- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2013 Monvigliero from Fabio Alessandria is typically light in color and perfumed in its aromatic constellation. The gorgeous and still quite youthful bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of black cherries, red plums, camphor, gamebird, fresh oregano, complex limestone soil nuances, nutskin, lovely spice tones, dried roses and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, refined and absolutely seamless, with a full-bodied format, an excellent core, suave, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This is a great, great vintage of Monvigliero. 2027-2075+. **95**.

2013 Barolo “Cannubi”- Comm. G. B. Burlotto

The 2013 Barolo “Cannubi” from the Commendatore G. B. Burlotto is a bit more black fruity in profile than the Monvigliero, but every bit as refined and seamless. The bouquet is marvelous in its refined blend of black cherries, licorice, complex soil tones, hints of the beef bouillon to come, camphor, a touch of celery seed, fresh oregano, gentle smokiness and an exotic topnote of cola. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, refined and rock solid at the core, with a great signature of soil, ripe, seamless tannins, tangy acids and stunning length and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. I kept thinking as I tasted this wine that this is how Bartolo Mascarello’s 1982 must have smelt when it was first released! Stunning juice. 2029-2075+. **95**.



The G. B. Burlotto parcels of vines in the great vineyard Monvigliero in Verduno.

2013 Barbaresco- Pio Cesare

The Barbaresco from Pio Cesare is made primarily from the family's substantial holdings in the village of Treiso. Sixty-five percent of the wine is raised in traditional *botti* for thirty months and thirty-five percent in *barriques* (of which one-third of these smaller casks are new each year) prior to bottling. All of the oak here, either *botti* or *barrique*, is French in origin, rather than Slavonian. The 2013 version is a lovely and quite classic wine, offering up a youthful bouquet of red and black cherries, fresh oregano, a fine base of soil, a bit of road tar, incipient notes of bonfire and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and properly structured out of the blocks, with a good core, fine transparency and plenty of firm, well-integrated tannins perking up the youthful and tangy finish. This will be a very good bottle of Barbaresco in the fullness of time. 2028-2060+. **91.**

2013 Barbaresco "Il Bricco"- Pio Cesare

The Pio Cesare bottling of Il Bricco hails from their holdings in the Cru of Bricco di Treiso. The wine is raised a bit differently than the blended Barbaresco here, with the wine fermented in stainless steel and undergoing a maceration of only fifteen days (ten less than the *normale*), prior to its *elevage* of thirty months in a combination of *botti* and new *barriques*. For the Cru bottling of Il Bricco, the proportions are reversed from the Barbaresco *normale*, with seventy percent of the blend raised in all new barrels and thirty percent in *botti*. The 2013 Il Bricco is a very good young wine, offering up a promising aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, gamebird, lovely spice tones, a hint of the curry to come, a complex base of soil, woodsmoke and quite a bit of pretty well-integrated, spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with an outstanding core of fruit, fine soil signature, ripe, firm tannins and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. This wine is clearly produced from some of the filet sections of Bricco di Treiso and I wish it was raised as traditionally in the cellars as the *normale*, as it would be stunning without the new wood in the mix. I do not mind it at all the way it is, other than the sense that it could be even better with just a touch of *barrique* and mostly *botti* utilized in the *elevage*, and less new wood. This is not really a modern wine, but more of a hybrid, and well done in its style, but I actually like the *normale* a bit better in 2013! 2028-2050+. **89.**

2013 Barolo- Pio Cesare

The 2013 Barolo *normale* from Pio Cesare is again raised in a combination of seventy percent *botti* and thirty percent *barriques*, with all of the oak of French origin. My technical sheets do not say what percentage of the *barriques* are new oak, but I would guess it is similar to the Barbaresco and a third of the small barrels are new wood. The maceration period for the Barolo is actually a touch shorter than the Barbaresco *normale*, spending twenty days in contact with the skins. The wine is excellent, offering up a quite promising bouquet of cherries, camphor, a touch of licorice, a fine base of soil, fresh oregano, gamebird and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, youthful and tangy, with a lovely core, superb soil signature, ripe, buried tannins and impressive length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. Fine juice that just needs some time in the cellar to blossom. 2030-2070+. **91+.**

2013 Barolo "Ornato"- Pio Cesare

The Cru of Ornato lies in the village of Serralunga d'Alba and the team at Pio Cesare raise this in the same fashion as their Cru Barbaresco bottling, with seventy percent of the cuvée raised in all new French *barriques* and thirty percent in *botti*. The 2013 Ornato offers up a fine nose of red and black cherries, hazelnut, fine soil tones, gamebird, a touch of fresh oregano, anise and a generous serving of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and

well-balanced, with the new oak tannins even better integrated here than in the Barbaresco “Il Bricco” bottling. There is a very good core of fruit here, fine focus and excellent length and grip on the vibrant and youthful finish, and this is going to be very good juice with sufficient bottle age. The new oak treatment here seems to work better than in the Il Bricco, but I still feel the need to reiterate that the raw materials here are exceptional and this is a Barolo that does not need the “makeup” of new wood and could be even better if raised in the traditional manner. In fact, it would be stunning if raised all in old *botti*! 2030-2060+. **91.**

2013 Barbaresco “Roncaglie”- Poderi Colla

The 2013 Barbaresco “Roncaglie” from Poderi Colla is a superb example of this outstanding vintage, offering up outstanding purity on both the nose and palate and impressive soil signature. The bouquet is bright and vibrant, offering up scents of cherries, gamebird, a touch of red curry, a very complex base of soil tones, coffee, gentle spices and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full and very transparent in personality, with a fine core, excellent focus and grip, ripe, firm tannins and a long, adolescent and very promising finish. This is still a properly young Barbaresco and still many years away from full maturity, but all of the constituent components are in place here and this is going to be an excellent wine in the fullness of time. 2025-2065. **92+.**

2013 Barolo “Bussia” Dardi Le Rose- Poderi Colla

Dardi Le Rose is the name of the farm that the Colla family purchased in Monforte, which Beppe Colla first bottled on its own at Prunotto back in the 1961 vintage, perhaps making his 1961 Bussia the first single vineyard bottling of Barolo. The Colla family farms eight hectares of vines in Bussia Soprano, with six of them dedicated to nebbiolo. Their 2013 Bussia is a superb and classic wine, offering up a fine aromatic constellation of cherries, a hint of orange peel, spit-roasted gamebird, anise, camphor, a marvelous base of soil, fresh oregano and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with an excellent core of fruit, outstanding soil signature, excellent focus and grip and a long, ripely tannic and vibrant finish that shows excellent nascent complexity. This is a classic bottle of Bussia that is going to be simply superb when it is ready to drink. 2028-2075. **93+.**

2013 Sito Moresco- Gaja

The 2013 Sito Moresco from the Gaja family is composed of a blend of predominantly nebbiolo, with cabernet sauvignon and merlot playing supporting roles. The wine offers up a lovely and very refined bouquet that is quite nebbiolo-centric, delivering scents of red and black cherries, licorice, tobacco smoke, gamebird, soil and a well-done framing of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a fine core of fruit, good soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a very long, nascently complex and well-balanced finish. I am not normally a big fan of these blended wines from Piemonte, but this is really well done and I am dutifully impressed. It could do with at least a few more years to soften up and blossom further, and should peak around 2023. Fine juice. 2020-2050. **92.**

2013 Barbaresco- Mario Giribaldi

I have to confess that I was quite underwhelmed by the Barbera and Dolcetto bottles I tasted from Mario Giribaldi, which did not show well at all, but this 2013 Barbaresco is quite good. The bouquet is complex and very correct, offering up scents of cherries, hung game, a touch of curry, fresh oregano, a good base of soil and a topnote of bonfires. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly tannic, with a good core, nice transparency and a long, chewy and nascently complex finish. There is a touch of uncleanness at the tail end of the finish, but it does not detract dramatically. This is not the most elegant winemaking, but there is

a sense of “noble rusticity” here that should work out nicely with sufficient bottle age. Not a great example of Barbaresco, but a good, honest wine. 2023-2055. **88.**

2013 Barbera d’Alba “Bricco Airoli”- Giovanni Viberti

The Barbera d’Alba “Bricco Airoli” from Claudio Viberti hails from the highest elevation vineyards in the village of Barolo. The 2013 version is a fine example of Barbera, offering up a deep and still quite youthful bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of peanut, licorice, road tar, a touch of oregano and lovely soil tones that will turn autumnal with a few more years in the cellar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, bright and nicely soil-driven, with a good core, sound acids, still a bit of tannin and a long, complex and very nicely balanced finish. This is not the most elegant example of Barbera, but it has heart and soul. 2018-2028. **89.**

2013 Barolo “Buon Padre”- Giovanni Viberti

The 2013 Barolo “Buon Padre” from the Viberti family is made in a partially traditional style, though with a bit of modernity adapted in the cellars as well. The maceration period is fairly short, at thirteen to eighteen days in roto-fermenters, but afterwards, the wine is raised for three to four years in old, neutral oak *botti*. The 2013 Buon Padre is a fine bottle in the making, offering up a beautifully red fruity nose of cherries, camphor, woodsmoke, gamebird, a touch of road tar, licorice and lovely, delicate spice and fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is quite elegant on the attack, full-bodied and properly structured on the backend, with a fine core, excellent soil signature, firm, well-integrated tannins and a long, tarry and complex finish. This is going to be a very, very good bottle of Barolo when it is ready to drink. 2025-2065. **91+.**

2012 Barolo “Bussia” Dardi Le Rose- Poderi Colla

The 2012 vintage of Bussia Soprano from Poderi Colla is just starting to blossom nicely at age six and will not need too many years in the cellar to offer up generosity on the palate to go with its lovely aromatic complexity. The bouquet is all beautiful red fruit and spice tones, wafting from the glass in a blend of cherries, orange peel, fresh oregano, red curry, gently autumnal soil tones, gamebird and a touch of rose petal in the upper register. On the palate the wine is very pure, full-bodied, complex and impressively transparent, with lovely focus and grip, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and very well-balanced finish. This does not have the same core of fruit as the stellar 2013 Bussia, but this is a complete wine in every respect and will drink very well at maturity, which should arrive six or seven years ahead of the 2013 version. 2022-2045. **92.**

2011 Grumello “Rocca de Piro”- Ar.Pe.Pe. (Valtellina Superiore)

The 2011 Grumello “Rocca de Piro” from Ar.Pe.Pe. is a lovely bottle of high altitude, transparent nebbiolo. The bouquet is deep, nascently complex and quite serious in its aromatic constellation of black cherries, anise, woodsmoke, lovely minerality, new leather and a beautiful mix of upper register fresh herb tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very transparent, with a lovely core of fruit, moderate, ripe tannins, tangy acids and impeccable focus and balance on the long and complex finish. This is drinking very well already, but clearly has the balance and suave structure to also age very nicely. 2018-2035. **91.**

2011 Barolo “San Pietro” Riserva- Giovanni Viberti

The single vineyard Barolo “San Pietro” from the Viberti family was first bottled on its own in the 1989 vintage. The 2011 San Pietro is excellent, offering up a pure and complex bouquet of cherries, anise, gamebird, bonfire, a lovely base of soil, a touch of camphor, fine

spice tones and a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripely tannic, with a fine core, excellent transparency, tangy acids and impressive focus and grip on the complex and very well-balanced finish. This is an excellent bottle in the making, which still needs at least five or six more years of bottle age before it really starts to drink well, but which will deliver decades of pleasure when it has blossomed fully. Fine juice. 2023-2065. **92.**



2010 Sassella “Stella Retica”- Ar.Pe.Pe. (Valtellina Superiore)

The 2010 Sassella “Stella Retica” from Ar.Pe.Pe. is yet another outstanding bottle from this fine producer. The bouquet is deep, ripe and beautifully soil-inflected, offering up scents of black cherries, a bit of hung game, chicory, wild fennel, mountainside herbs, a great base of stony soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit tarry on the backend, with a superb core of fruit, ripe, well-integrated tannins, tangy acids and a long, focused and very promising finish. This is still a fairly young wine and really deserves a few more years’ worth of bottle age to truly blossom and start to drink with generosity. With a bit of patience, it will be an outstanding bottle. 2020-2040. **91+.**

2010 Barbera d’Alba- Olek Bondonio

I have a nice little pile of Barbera from Olek Bondonio aging in the cellar, as I find that his example starts out life pretty structured and really needs some bottle age to blossom properly. This 2010 Barbera was quite chewy out of the gate, but is coming around beautifully with some time in the cellar and now offers up a pure and complex bouquet of red and black cherries, forest floor, lovely spice elements, roasted gamebird, a touch of Barbaresco-like red curry, roses and a

smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and beautifully balanced, with bright acids, fine focus and grip, just a bit of remaining tannin and a very long, poised and impressive finish. This is excellent Barbera! 2018-2028. **90.**

2010 Ghemme “Anno Primo”- Cantalupo

The 2010 Ghemme “Anno Primo” from Cantalupo is still a fairly young wine and quite reductive when first opened, so I strongly recommend an extended decant prior to serving. This note is from a bottle that sat over night with the cork in place, after a glass had been poured out to make room for oxygen. With air, this is a very good wine, offering up scents of red and black cherries, a bit of road tar, *sous bois*, woodsmoke, roasted meats and a spicy topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely complex, with a good core, modest tannins and a long, well-balanced and focused finish. There is a touch of “noble rusticity” here that is quite appealing and really works well at the table. 2018-2030. **88.**

2010 Barolo- Mario Giribaldi

The 2010 Barolo from Mario Giribaldi is surprisingly new oaky in personality, which I did not expect from this producer, based on the other wines in the range that I tasted for this report. The new wood is actually done pretty well, and seems to be integrating nicely on the palate. The bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, camphor, licorice, a touch of road tar, a good base of soil tones and a pretty well-done framing of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a respectable core, moderate tannins and a long, chewy and very solid finish. It seems to me that the mid-palate has given up a bit of amplitude during its sojourn in *barrique*, which is too bad, as the raw materials here are really quite solid. This is not bad, but *elevage* in one, two and three wine *barriques* would probably produce a far more interesting example of Barolo. 2023-2045. **88.**

2010 Barbera d’Asti “Vigna del Noce”- Ezio T (Renato and Ezio Trinchero)

Every time I taste a Barbera “Vigna del Noce” from the Trinchero brothers, I always am struck by how this wine has a sense of depth that is more akin to Barolo than most other examples of Barbera! Of course, it does not hurt that the vines for this bottling were planted in 1929! The 2010 Vigna del Noce is stunning, offering up a deep and very pure bouquet of black cherries, gamebird, camphor, dark soil tones, gentle balsamic touches, bonfire and a discreet touch of fresh oregano in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite robust for Barbera, with a superb core, fine soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and still fairly youthful finish. This is a good drink in its moderately chewy way today, but will be even better with a bit more bottle age. 2020-2040+. **91+.**

2010 Barolo “Monvigliero” Riserva- Castello di Verduno

The Castello di Verduno only owns thirty *ares* of vines in the great vineyard of Monvigliero, with their vines having been planted in 1967. The wine sees thirty days of maceration followed by two and a half years in *botti* and then an additional forty months in bottle in the cellar prior to release. The 2010 Monvigliero Riserva from the Castello di Verduno is an absolutely superb wine in the making, offering up a deep and pure bouquet of black cherries, bonfire, spit-roasted gamebird, superb soil tones, licorice and a nice touch of fresh oregano in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a sappy core, fine focus and grip, tangy acids and a long, ripely tannic and nascently complex finish. This is a more black fruity example of Monvigliero than the wine produced by their cousins over at G.B. Burlotto, but this is another outstanding example of this exceptional *terroir*. 2023-2055+. **92+.**

2010 Barolo “La Volta” Riserva- Giovanni Viberti

The single vineyard La Volta Barolo from the Vibertis was also first bottled in the 1989 vintage. The 2010 is excellent, offering up a deep and quite black fruity nose of black cherries, dark berries, road tar, hung game, licorice, woodsmoke and a touch of fresh oregano in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still a bit chewy, but starting already to show some secondary layers of complexity as it develops. The tannins are ripe and nicely integrated, there is good depth at the core and the finish is long, balanced and quite classical in profile. This is not quite as elegant in profile as the 2011 San Pietro Riserva, but this is still a good bottle of Barolo. 2021-2055. **90+**.

2010 Barolo “Bricco delle Viole” Riserva- Giovanni Viberti

The 2010 Bricco delle Viole Riserva from Claudio Viberti is a fine example of the vintage, offering up a deep and complex nose of dark berries, bonfire, camphor, a bit of road tar, anise, roasted game and a nice topnote of gentle spice tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and shows off excellent mid-palate depth, with a blossoming palate impression, moderate, chewy tannins and a long, focused and very well-balanced finish. This needs more bottle age to blossom properly, but it is showing excellent potential and should end up even a bit more refined and complex than the La Volta 2010 Riserva. Fine juice. 2023-2060. **92**.

2009 Sori Tildin- Gaja

The 2009 vintage of Sori Tildin from Angelo Gaja and his family includes five percent Barbera in the blend. The wine is deep, full-bodied and quite refined in its relatively youthful state, offering up a promising nose of red and black cherries, chocolate, gamebird, nutskin, a touch of licorice and a fair bit of nutty and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and fairly tannic still, with a good core of fruit, just a bit of backend heat and a long, well-balanced and promising finish. This is more marked by its new oak on the backend of the palate than was the case with the fairly oaky wines produced by *Signor* Gaja back in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, and I liked the more smoky and vanillin oak aspects of the 1980s here over the more nutty and spicy oak elements in the wines today, as I feel those vanillin new oak tones marry better with Barbaresco (though of course no new wood would be preferable to my palate!) and I wonder how the new wood here is going to integrate over the very long haul. In any event, the wine is very well made and will be tasty when it has fully blossomed and if the wood integrates seamlessly, then my score will seem a tad conservative. 2024-2050. **92**.

2008 Barolo “Dagromis”- Gaja

The Barolo “Dagromis” from the Gaja estate is made from a blend of grapes from parcels in La Morra and Serralunga. The 2008 Dagromis offers up a very suave bouquet of cherries, camphor, nutskin, a lovely base of soil and a generous serving of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and well-balanced, with fairly low acids for the vintage, still some backend wood tannins that are being slowly absorbed into the body of the wine and lovely length and grip on the nascently complex and promising finish. This wine is supposed to be raised solely in one and two wine *barriques*, but it seems like there must have been some new casks used in the *elevage* of the 2008, as there seem like more wood tannins than would be possible solely from used barrels. It is a good wine that would be even better with less oak influence, but this is the world we live in. 2023-2050. **90+**.

2007 Grumello “Buon Consiglia”- Ar.Pe.Pe. (Valtellina Superiore)

The 2007 Grumello “Buon Consiglia” from Ar.Pe.Pe. is a beautiful bottle of wine that is now into its apogee of peak drinkability and at the height of its powers. The superbly refined and fully mature bouquet offers up scents of desiccated black cherries, licorice, woodsmoke, roasted *pigeon*, a touch of pepper, a superb base of soil and plenty of spice notes in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and *à point*, with a fine core, impressive soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish that will continue to get more autumnal with further bottle age. There is a nice interplay of bitterness and sweet cherry fruit on the backend here that recalls a bit Emidio Pepe’s Montepulciano. Fine juice. 2018-2035. **91.**

2007 Sassella “Vigna Regina” Riserva- Ar.Pe.Pe. (Valtellina Superiore)

The 2007 Sassella “Vigna Regina” Riserva from Ar.Pe.Pe. is truly a great wine, with the elegance and complexity on both the nose and palate that only the finest wines in Piemonte can offer. The beautiful bouquet wafts from the glass in a vibrant mix of black cherries, grilled meats, anise, complex soil tones, a touch of nutskin, espresso, cedar and a full potpourri of spice tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, transparent and complex, with an excellent core of fruit, moderate tannins, bright acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and perfectly balanced finish. Great juice. 2018-2040. **93.**

2006 Sassella “Ultimi Raggi”- Ar.Pe.Pe. (Valtellina Superiore)

The 2006 Sassella “Ultimi Raggi” from Ar.Pe.Pe. is beautifully black fruity and more precise and cooler in fruit tones than the very good 2007s from the estate. The bouquet here jumps from the glass in a refined mix of cassis, black cherries, anise, gamebird, dark soil tones, a touch of cigar ash, beautiful botanical elements and a lovely note of chicory in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full and really hitting its stride, with a rock solid core, excellent soil inflection, modest tannins and a long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is a great wine by any measure! 2018-2035+. **93+.**

2002 Sassella “Rocche Rosse” Riserva- Ar.Pe.Pe. (Valtellina Superiore)

The 2002 Sassella “Rocche Rosse” Riserva from Ar.Pe.Pe. is moving into a lovely, tertiary stage of its evolution and is at its apogee. This is not as inherently elegant of a wine as the 2006 Ultimi Raggi or the 2007 Vigna Regina, but there is lots to like here, as the nose offers up a complex constellation of dark berries, licorice, forest floor, cigar ash, chicory, just a whisper of botanicals, cedar and a bit of cola in the upper register. On the palate the wine is complex, full-bodied and fully ready to drink, with a good core, fine focus and grip, melted tannins and a long, well-balanced and gently autumnal finish. A lovely drink, but getting towards the further side of the plateau, as we all will one day. 2018-2028. **90.**

1990 Barbaresco “Asili di Barbaresco” Riserva- Bruno Giacosa

1990 was the first vintage of Asili produced by Bruno Giacosa after the legendary 1967 Riserva Speciale bottling from this great vineyard, and the 1990 is everything one would hope from a synthesis of Piemonte’s greatest winemaker and Barbaresco’s greatest *terroir*. The bouquet is deep, pure and simply stunning, offering up a sappy and exotic blend of cherries, blood orange, fresh bay leaf, a gorgeously complex base of chalky soil tones, a touch of red curry, incipient notes of gamebird and a distinctive topnote of red curry. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still rock solid at the core, with great purity and focus, plenty of evidence of the sappiness to come when the wine is fully open, ripe, seamless tannins and great length and

grip on the complex and simply stunning finish. This is a great, great example of Asili! 2022-2055+. **96+**.

1990 Barolo “Collina Rionda di Serralunga” Riserva- Bruno Giacosa

My good friend Mannie Berk of The Rare Wine Company is always quick to point out to me when I express relative dissatisfaction with the 1990 vintage in Piemonte that “the vintage was far better in Barbaresco than in Barolo.” While the 1990 Collina Rionda is a very good, young bottle of Barolo, it does not seem likely to reach the same levels of brilliance found in both the Santa Stefano and Asili Riservas from this vintage from *Signor* Giacosa. The bouquet offers up a still fairly closed blend of red and black cherries, soil tones, bay leaf, woodsmoke and roasted game. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and hermetically sealed still, with little signs of generosity on the attack and a still rather assertive structural chassis. There is good depth at the core, but not the great sappiness (yet?) one finds in so many great Giacosas, with firm, chewy tannins and very good, but not great length on the focused finish. Perhaps this is still just way too young and its greatness is masked, but my gut feeling that it is not destined for the very top division of *Signor* Giacosa’s wines from this decade. 2025-2060. **92+?**

1990 Barolo-Bartolo Mascarello

I generally have a strong preference for the 1989 over the 1990 vintage in Barolo, but this 1990 from *Signor* Mascarello is an outstanding wine by any measure and is not far off the pace of his stellar 1989 bottling. The superb bouquet is pure and complex, delivering a fine range of red and black cherries, camphor, tobacco, beef bouillon, forest floor, oregano, sweet onion and a gently tarry topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively soil-driven, with fine focus and grip, a lovely core, moderate tannins and a very long, complex and precise finish. This does not show any of the roasted tones that are so familiar with most examples of 1990 Barolo and is a classic and very successful vintage from Bartolo. 2017-2050. **94.**

1989 Boca- Cantine del Castello Conti

Boca is the smallest DOC in the upper reaches of Piemonte, with only eleven producers making wine from this tiny region. It is ten kilometers from Gattinara, which is its closest wine-producing neighbor. The single hectare of Castello Conti’s vines in Boca were planted here in 1971 by Ermanno Conti, and his three daughters now run the estate today. The 1989 Boca from Cantine del Castello Conti is a fine bottle of nebbiolo that is now at its plateau of peak maturity. The bouquet offers up an excellent blend of desiccated black fruit, coffee, road tar, balsamic overtones, dark soil and a topnote of bonfire. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tarry, with a good core, very good balance and grip and a long, gently tannic finish that closes with a nice note of backend bitterness. Good juice. 2017-2030. **89.**

1989 Barbaresco “Santo Stefano di Neive” Riserva- Bruno Giacosa

While I have tasted many of the top wines from the great 1989 vintage in recent times, I had not crossed paths with a bottle of the ’89 Santa Stefano Riserva from *Signor* Giacosa in many, many years. Not surprisingly, this wine is a legend in the making and will probably be proven to be the greatest vintage of this bottling produced since the legendary 1964. The bouquet is pure and stunning, offering up a still youthful constellation of sappy red and black cherries, gamebird, a touch of tariness, a very complex base of soil, fresh oregano, orange peel, woodsmoke and an exotic touch of menthol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely seamless, with bottomless depth at the core, tangy acids, ripe, suave tannins and stunning length and grip on the complex and perfectly balanced finish. This wine is

still climbing and will be even better ten years down the road. It is hard to imagine this not meriting a perfect score when it is fully ready to drink! 2025-2085. **98+**.

1989 Barolo “Falletto di Serralunga” Riserva- Bruno Giacosa

The 1989 Falletto Riserva from Bruno Giacosa is another absolute monument to Barolo, and though the wine is still eight to ten years away from really starting to drink well, it is already a bit difficult to keep one’s hands off of bottles in the cellar. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a blaze of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, road tar, pungent roses, forest floor, gamebird and an exotic touch of menthol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is very pure, very deep and full-bodied, with that signature Giacosa sappiness at the core, brilliant focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and outstanding grip and complexity on the very, very long and utterly seamless finish. Sheer greatness. 2025-2085. **98+**.



1989 Barolo-Bartolo Mascarello

I have no doubt that the 1989 Bartolo Mascarello Barolo will prove to be one of the greatest vintages in the long and consistently excellent career of this *maestro*, but it is only just starting to show its secondary layers of complexity and desperately deserves more time in the cellar to really reach its apogee. The bouquet is deep, pure and very promising, offering up a blend of cherries, beef bouillon, roasted gamebirds, a touch of wild bay, complex, autumnal soil tones and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is very pure, full and sappy at the core, with great soil inflection, ripe, fine-grained tannins, outstanding focus and grip and a very,

very long, pure and complex finish. It is not a crime to be drinking this wine today- if you have enough bottles remaining in the cellar that you are not going to miss one ten years down the road- but this is a wine that is still climbing and its best days are still several years further out. 2016-2060+. **95+**.

1988 Barolo “Monfalletto”- Cordero di Montezemolo (La Morra)

The 1988 Barolo “Monfalletto” from Cordero is a fine example of the vintage and is just starting to stir and blossom into full maturity. The bouquet offers up a superb blend of black cherries, tar, a bit of smoked meats, camphor, dark soil tones and a nice topnote of anise. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and fairly tarry in personality, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature and still a bit of firm tannin perking up the long and complex finish. This has many, many years still ahead of it, but with a properly long decanting, this is drinking very well indeed. 2017-2050. **92**.

1985 Barbaresco “Santo Stefano di Neive” Riserva- Bruno Giacosa

Given how many bottles of the 1982 Santa Stefano Red Label I have drunk over the years, it is surprising that I have seldom had the pleasure to drink the superb 1985 version, and it is more than fifteen years since I last crossed paths with this wine. It is a fine, fine wine, but not one of the legends of the decade of the 1980s from *Signor* Giacosa. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a nicely blossomed blend of red and black cherries, bonfire, a touch of road tar, lovely soil tones, oregano and a topnote of fresh bay leaf. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and still sporting a bit of backend tannin, with fine focus and grip, a good, solid core and a long, well-balanced finish. This is a very good bottle that misses the extra dimension of the 1982 and 1989 versions. 2017-2040. **93**.

1985 Barolo “Villero di Castiglione Falletto”- Bruno Giacosa

I should really be trying to leave alone my last handful of bottles of the beautiful 1985 Villero from Bruno Giacosa, but it always tempts when I am down in the cellar. This most recent bottle was outstanding, but perhaps showing a tad younger than the previous example and the wine is still clearly in climbing mode and a few years away from its true apogee. The bouquet delivers a very fine blend of cherries, gentle tariness, a nice touch of beef broth, woodsmoke, roasted gamebird and a distinct topnote of anise. On the palate the wine is deep, full and rock solid at the core, with a suave attack, the sappy sweetness of fruit of a maturing Giacosa Barolo, moderate, slowly melting tannins, outstanding focus and grip and a very long, perfectly balanced finish. A classic, masculine style of Barolo with many, many years of great drinking still ahead of it. 2018-2050. **94+**.

1985 Barolo-Bartolo Mascarello

Only four years have passed since I vowed to keep my hands off of my remaining bottles of older Bartolo Mascarello wines, but my willpower in this matter is not entirely my own and there are larger forces at work! The '85 vintage from *Signor* Mascarello is gorgeous and just starting to stretch out into its plateau of peak maturity, as it offers up a pure and perfumed bouquet of cherries, bay leaf, road tar, *sous bois*, roasted game, anise, woodsmoke and a pungent topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nobly rustic in personality, with an superb core of fruit, moderate, suave tannins, tangy acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long and complex finish. This is a very fine vintage of Mascarello Barolo, and though it is starting to drink with generosity, it will probably be even better with further bottle age. 2016-2050. **94**.

1982 Barolo “Monfalletto”- Cordero di Montezemolo (La Morra)

The 1982 vintage of Monfalletto from Cordero di Montezemolo is even more open on the nose than the 1988 vintage, but interestingly, a touch more closed and youthful still on the palate. The bouquet is excellent, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of cherries, licorice, gamebirds, beautifully transparent soil tones, gentle tariness and a topnote of dried rose petals. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly chewy in personality, with a fine core of fruit, impressive complexity and grip and a long, moderately tannic and very well-balanced, old school finish. I would opt for leaving the 1982 Cordero Monfalletto in the cellar for another five years and letting a bit more of the tannins soften up, as it will be a very long-lived wine and there is really no reason not to wait a bit more! Fine juice. 2022-2065. **92+**.

1982 Barolo “Collina Rionda di Serralunga” Riserva- Bruno Giacosa

It had been ten years since I last drank a bottle of the 1982 Collina Rionda Riserva, so I was delighted to see it as part of our lineup one evening in late August of last year. The wine is every bit as magical as I remember, offering up a deep and flat out gorgeous bouquet of cherries, a touch of fresh bay leaf, menthol, a very complex base of soil tones, beef bouillon, woodsmoke, gentle tariness and gamebird. On the palate the wine is deep, full and very complex, with a sappy core of fruit, fine focus and grip, suave, beautifully-resolving tannins and a very, very long and perfectly balanced finish. One of the great Baroli of Bruno Giacosa’s long and illustrious career. 2017-2050. **96**.

1982 Barolo “Rocche di Castiglione di Falletto”- Bruno Giacosa

The 1982 Rocche di Castiglione di Falletto from Bruno Giacosa is a magical bottle of Barolo. The wine is wide open and beautifully developed aromatically, soaring from the glass in a stunning blend of cherries, roses, gentle notes of road tar, a touch of beef bouillon, a complex base of soil, fresh oregano, orange peel and a touch of sweet onion in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and sappy at the core, with great focus and grip, modest tannins and a very, very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. I had the pleasure to drink this right on the heels of a fine bottle of 1982 Santa Stefano Riserva and I was very hard-pressed to choose a favorite between the two wines! 2017-2040+. **95+**.

1982 Barolo-Bartolo Mascarello

The 1982 vintage from Bartolo Mascarello is excellent and the wine is starting to drink very nicely at age thirty-four. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a superb blend of red and black cherries, road tar, anise, roses, gamebirds, superb soil tones and a nice touch of beef bouillon in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and almost fully blossomed, with a rock solid core of pure fruit, lovely soil signature and great length and grip on the modestly tannic and vibrant finish. Really a beautiful bottle of Barolo that is just starting to peak. 2016-2045. **94**.

1980 Barbaresco- Oddero

I cannot ever recall having drunk a wine from the 1980 vintage in Piemonte, but this bottle from Oddero was actually quite good. The bouquet is fully mature and nicely complex, offering up scents of black cherries, dark berries, beef broth, forest floor and tarry undertow. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still with a bit of backend tannin, with good balance and a long, surprisingly complex finish. There is ample mid-palate depth here still, but this wine is now fully mature and wide open and offering really very tasty drinking now and for the foreseeable future. 1980! Who knew? 2016-2035. **89**.



1978 Barbaresco “Gallina di Neive”- Bruno Giacosa

Bruno Giacosa’s rendition of Barbaresco “Gallina” in the 1978 vintage is an outstanding wine that is now at its peak of maturity. The fine bouquet offers up a lovely constellation of cherries, forest floor, *pigeon*, orange peel, gentle nuttiness, herb tones and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, red fruity and complex, with a superb core of sappy fruit, lovely balance and grip, and a modestly tannic, tangy and beautifully focused, complex finish. Gallina tends to be a bit chewier than its neighbor of Santa Stefano until the wine is fully resolved, and this wine remains nicely robust in its relatively mature structure today, but is drinking with plenty of style and grace. It will continue to drop its bit of remaining tannin and get silkier on the backend with further bottle age, but it has reached the point where it is now fully blossomed and drinking beautifully. 2018-2040. **93.**

1978 Barolo “la Serra”- Marcarini

The 1978 Marcarini la Serra is a very good bottle of Barolo that is now fully mature and drinking at its apogee, but it has a touch of noble rusticity to it that caught me a bit by surprise, as I was expecting a slightly more elegant profile at nearly forty years of age. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of red and black cherries, road tar, hung game, autumnal soil tones, camphor and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a solid core, still a bit of modest backend tannin and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. This is not the most refined 1978 Barolo out there, but it is nicely resolved, sturdy and quite satisfying in its own way. 2017-2040. **91.**

1978 Barolo-Bartolo Mascarello

The 1978 vintage from Bartolo Mascarello is a slightly bigger and more robust wine than the 1982 and 1985 versions, and like the 1982, this is just starting to reach its prime. The bouquet is superb, offering up a fine aromatic constellation of black cherries, roasted venison, road tar, forest floor, fresh herb tones, dried roses and a topnote of bonfires. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly muscular in style, with a fine core, excellent backend mineral drive, modest tannins and a very long, complex finish that closes with outstanding grip and bounce. This too is only going to get better over the next couple of decades, but it is already pretty hard to keep one's hands off of the bottles in the cellar! 2016-2050. **95.**

1971 Barbaresco "Albesani di Neive"- Bruno Giacosa

The Albesani vineyard in Neive lies on the same hillside as Santa Stefano, but only about half of the vineyard shares the same southwesterly aspect as its more famous neighbor, with the northern part of Albesani having an exposition to the northwest and not in the same league as the rest of the vineyard. To the best of my knowledge, Bruno Giacosa only produced a cru bottling from Albesani in 1971, and the wine is quite good, but it is a bit more rustic *terroir* than Santa Stefano and this is still evident forty-six years out from the vintage. The wine is very good today, offering up a superb nose of cherries, gamebird, lovely spice tones, forest floor, coffee and orange peel. In fact, the bouquet is my favorite part of this wine, as the palate is not as polished as the nose suggests. The wine is full-bodied and nicely soil-driven in personality, but a bit short on elegance, with a good core, melting tannins and a long, complex and slightly rustic finish. This is a good, solid bottle of mature Barbaresco, but not one of the great wines from *Signor* Giacosa in this magical era. 2017-2040. **90.**

1971 Barbaresco "Santo Stefano di Neive"- Bruno Giacosa

I have written often about how I feel that the difference between the white label and the red label Riservas from Bruno Giacosa is not all that dramatic, and here again is another case in point, as the 1971 Santa Stefano *normale* is a simply brilliant wine. The bouquet is pure and flat out stunning, soaring from the glass in a blaze of red and black cherries, gamebird, rose petals, fresh oregano, gorgeous soil tones, red curry, a bit of bonfire and a topnote of sweet hazelnuts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with a great sappy core of fruit, modest tannins, laser-like focus and perfect balance on the very long, seamless and complex finish. Just a breathtakingly brilliant bottle of Barbaresco at its zenith. 2017-2035. **95.**

1971 Barolo- Bel Collé (Verduno)

This was the first wine I had ever tasted from Bel Collé and I was quite impressed. The wine is deep, complex and at its apogee of peak maturity today, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of black cherries, sweet balsamic tones, gamebird, road tar, a fine base of autumnal soil and a topnote of fresh oregano. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with classically-proportioned broad shoulders, a fine core, still a touch of tannin and a long, tangy and quite elegant finish. This is a lovely wine at its apogee, but still with at least a couple of decades' worth of life ahead of it and maybe more. Very tasty. 2017-2035+. **92.**

1971 Barolo "Brunate"- Marcarini (La Morra)

The 1971 Brunate from Marcarini is a gorgeous and complex wine at the peak of its powers today. The nose jumps from the glass in a complex mélange of cherries, camphor, gamebird, a touch of dried eucalyptus, beef broth, road tar and a lovely base of forest floor. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still nicely sappy at the core, with still a bit of backend tannin, fine acids and lovely focus and grip on the long, poised and wide open finish.

Fine juice that will keep cruising along at a fine altitude for many, many years to come. I should note that I have had even better bottles of this in the recent past, but this one, while still very good, was not quite up to their pristine example. 2017-2040. **92+**.

1970 Barbaresco “Santo Stefano di Neive”- Bruno Giacosa

The 1970 Santa Stefano from *Signor* Giacosa is a beautiful example of this underrated and very lovely vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a fully mature and vibrant blend of cherries, orange peel, forest floor, lovely spice tones, a touch of nutskin, woodsmoke and a nice touch of mustard seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full and *à point*, with beautiful transparency down to its soil, a fine core of red fruit, melted tannins and a very long, tangy and complex finish of exquisite balance and grip. Fine, fine juice at its apogee. 2018-2035+. **94.**

1970 Barbaresco “Rabajà” Riserva- Produttori del Barbaresco

It had been three or four years since I last drank a bottle of the 1970 Rabajà from the Produttori and the wine continues to cruise along with both vigor and great elegance. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a superb blend of desiccated cherries, woodsmoke, roasted *pigeon*, autumnal soil tones and a lovely blend of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very refined in profile, with a good core, fine soil signature, melted tannins and a long, vibrant and perfectly balanced finish. A lovely wine that continues to cruise along at its peak of maturity and shows no sign of imminent decline. Fine, fine juice. 2018-2035. **94.**

1970 Barolo- Oddero (La Morra)

The 1970 vintage of Oddero Barolo is drinking beautifully and has probably been into its plateau of peak maturity for twenty or more years already. The complex and very elegant nose offers up a gorgeous blend of dried cherries, camphor, a touch of orange peel, gamebird, oregano and a fine base of forest floor. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very transparent in personality, with a good core, excellent focus and balance, modest remaining tannins and a long, tangy and gently autumnal finish. This is really a very fine example of this high quality, sleeper Barolo vintage. 2017-2040. **92+**.

1968 Barbaresco “Santo Stefano di Neive”- Bruno Giacosa

To the best of my recollection, I have never had a bottle of 1968 Piemonte wine prior to this bottle of Santa Stefano from Bruno Giacosa, but if this superb wine is any indication of the quality of the vintage, then I will be on the lookout for other examples. This is a beautiful and fully mature example of this great vineyard, offering up a complex and classic aromatic constellation of cherries, fresh oregano, gamebird, a great base of soil, a touch of road tar, a gentle base of autumnal tones and a dollop of red curry in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still sweet at the core, with superb focus and grip, melting tannins and a very long, balanced, tangy and complex finish. Simply a stunning example of mature Santa Stefano and with absolutely nothing “off vintage” about it! 2017-2035. **94.**

1967 Barbaresco “Asili di Barbaresco” Riserva Speciale- Bruno Giacosa

This particular bottle of the '67 Asili Riserva Speciale was the last in my cellar, so naturally, it was showing the finest and warrants a new note, despite the fact that I just wrote the wine up back in the spring of 2017. The two previous bottles of the '67 Asili I have been lucky enough to drink have been beautiful, but more delicately styled and I had thought the wine was

starting to reach the far side of its plateau and would probably be best drunk up in the next couple of decades. Hence my opening up the last bottle in my cellar. Having come to this conclusion, I naturally found this most recent bottle to be the most vibrant and sappy of the three I have drunk and still with plenty of life in it! The bouquet is absolutely stunning, offering up the supreme elegance of the Asili vineyard (the Musigny of Barbaresco in my book) in its sappy and perfumed constellation of cherries, blood orange, beautifully chalky soil tones, gamebird, woodsmoke, a touch of orange peel, mustard seed, a hint of red curry and gentle autumnal notes in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very pure, with a great core of sappy red fruit, superb transparency, moderate tannins and a very long, complex and tangy finish of exquisite focus and balance. Simply a brilliant wine! 2018-2040. 98.



1967 Barbaresco “Martinenga” Riserva- Produttori del Barbaresco

The 1967 vintage was the only year that the Produttori ever produced a wine from the beautiful vintage of Martinenga, as the Marchese di Gresy, who owns the entire vineyard, left the cooperative soon thereafter. This is still a lovely wine with plenty of life in it, as it offers up a deep, complex and nicely autumnal bouquet of dried cherries, licorice, road tar, venison, forest floor and a topnote of sweet onion skin. On the palate the wine is deep, full and still quite vigorous, with a good core, lovely focus and balance, bright, well-integrated acids and a long, complex and tertiary finish. Fine juice- such a shame this wine was only made in this single

vintage from the Produttori, as I like the style of this bottling more than the wines made at the estate since that time. 2016-2030+. **91.**

1967 Barbaresco “Rabajà” Riserva- Produttori del Barbaresco

The 1967 Rabajà from the Produttori is a beautiful and fully mature example of the vintage. The bouquet is far more transparent in personality than the '67 Martinenga, wafting from the glass in an utterly refined constellation of cherries, orange peel, sweet onion skin, gamebird, beautiful autumnal soil tones, fresh herbs and a nice touch of roses in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very soil-driven in personality, with bright acids, fine focus and grip, melted tannins and a very long, complex and seamless finish. This is not a powerful wine by any stretch of the imagination, but a beautiful middleweight that remains long on intensity of flavor and complexity. 2016-2030. **94.**

1967 Barolo “Riserva”- Giacomo Borgogno y Figli (Cuneo)

The 1967 Barolo “Riserva” from Borgogno is a good, solid example of the vintage that shows the sturdy style of the house in this era. The bouquet is complex and still fairly youthful, offering up scents of cherries, licorice, road tar, herb tones, forest floor and a touch of blood orange in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a good core, fine focus and balance and still a touch of backend tannin perking up the long and gently autumnal finish. This is quite elegant in profile for the Borgogno wines of the sixties, and while it is not the most complex example of the fine '67 vintage, there is a lot of pleasure to be found here. 2017-2035+. **89.**

1964 Gattinara- Travaglini

These days, Travaglini makes good, solid wines that seem to trade primarily on their uniquely misshapen bottle, but apparently back in the 1960s, this was one of the reference point estates for Gattinara. The 1964 is clearly the finest wine I have ever had the pleasure to taste from Travaglini and it is still drinking beautifully at age fifty, wafting from the glass in a complex nose of dried, dark berries, tree bark, bonfires, *sous bois*, a bit of road tar and a topnote of weathered leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with lovely focus and balance, still plenty of depth at the core, melting tannins and a long, tangy and quite refined finish. At age fifty, the 1964 Travaglini Gattinara shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. Superb juice. 2016- 2035. **93.**

1964 Barolo- Francesco Rinaldi e Figli

It has been a few years since I last drank a bottle of the 1964 Barolo from Francesco Rinaldi and the wine continues to drink beautifully, with time seemingly not having touched it since I last opened a bottle. The bouquet offers up a classic nose of black cherries, sweet dark berries, road tar, spit-roasted game, singed soil tones and sweet, smoky overtones that vaguely suggest a barbeque. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a great core of fruit, fine soil signature, melting tannins and a long, very well-balanced and tangy finish. Fine, fine juice. 2017-2040. **94.**



1961 Barolo- Cappellano (bottled by Troglia)

Troglia was a small-scale négociant back in this era and is said to have bought a single cask of Cappellano's 1961 Barolo to bottle under their own label, in the most uniquely-shaped old bottle I have ever seen. The wild bottle is only 670 milliliters in size, so do not open it for too large of a crowd! Troglia obviously did a nice job bottling, as the wine continues to drink very nicely today, offering up a deep and tertiary bouquet of dried cherries, sweet onion skin, camphor, autumnal soil tones and a topnote of walnuts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a good core, melted tannins and very good balance and grip on the long, nobly rustic finish. I have never had a chance to compare this bottling to the one done by the Cappellano family themselves, but based on this very good showing, I would be happy to drink other old Barolo bottlings from Troglia in the future. 2017-2035. **90.**

1945 Barolo- Fontanafredda

Prior to this bottle, the oldest vintage of Fontanafredda that I had ever tasted was the 1961, which was quite good, but not in the same league as this magnificent old Barolo. It seems pretty clear that things changed at this historic property sometime during the 1950s, and though good wines were still produced here at least through the decade of the 1960s, its golden age was further back. This 1945 Barolo from Fontanafredda is simply magnificent, offering up a beautifully resolved and very transparent bouquet of cherries, a touch of road tar, rose petals, a stunningly complex base of autumnal soil tones, , camphor and a lovely topnote of spiced meats. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a long, tangy and beautifully balanced finish. The tannins have all but gone on the backend here, but with balance this fine, the wine still has decades and decades of life ahead of it! 2017-2050. **94.**

1938 Barolo- Fontanafredda

The 1938 Fontanafredda is another absolutely stellar old Barolo. The bouquet is pure, tertiary and still vibrant, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of black cherries, a touch of meatiness, bonfire, anise, beef bouillon, road tar and autumnal soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still rock solid at the core, with fine focus and balance, still a touch of backend, sturdy tannin and a long, nobly rustic finish. This is not quite as refined as the superb 1945 version, but this is a delightful bottle in its own right, with plenty of stuffing and complexity and years and years of life still ahead of it! 2017-2040. **92.**

1935 Barolo- Fontanafredda

Surprisingly, the 1935 Fontanafredda is every bit as youthful as the 1945 version and may well outlast that beautiful wine by a few years! The bouquet is very pure, very deep and gorgeously complex, offering up a fine constellation of cherries, grilled meats, fennel seed, a very complex base of soil tones, a touch of orange peel, oregano and a topnote of balsam bough. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively pure on the attack, with great depth at the core for a wine of this age. The finish is very, very long, still shows a bit of tannin and is focused, complex and gently tangy. This is a simply stunning old Barolo! I had no idea how great the wines were from Fontanafredda in this era, but this estate was, after all , the birthplace of Barolo as we know it back in the 1870s! 2017-2055. **95.**

**RECENTLY TASTED RHÔNE WINES
INCLUDING LOOKS AT THE 2016 AND 2015 VINTAGES**



The beautiful, steep, terraced vineyards of St. Joseph that tower over the center of town in Tournon.

In the second half of October of last year, I took a small tour group with me on visits to a few favorite estates in the Rhône Valley and Burgundy. We had a great time together over the course of twelve days and it allowed me also to visit a handful of estates in the Rhône that I had never been to before, despite knowing and drinking their wines for many years. As the purpose of our tour was not solely to spend time in the cellars, we only visited five domaines during our stay in the Rhône Valley (while also managing to dine at celestial levels at Restaurant Pic in Valence), but at each cellar visit we had good, deep tastings organized by the proprietors and it struck me that this would make a good foundation for another feature on the wines of the region. I often wish that I lived in France and could cover more regions by tasting in the cellars, but I spend an awful lot of time on the road as it is and cannot get to every place whose wines I love with the frequency that they deserve, so having the opportunity to spend some time in October in the Rhône Valley was a gift this past year. Our itinerary here included cellar visits at Château Mont-Redon in Châteauneuf du Pape, Domaine Pierre Gonon in Mauves, Domaine Philippe and Vincent Jaboulet in Mercurol and Domaine Barge and Domaine Rostaing in Ampuis. It was not a thorough visit by any stretch of the imagination, but it hit several of my very favorite estates in

the region and allowed me to catch up a bit on viticultural practices at these estates and take a first look at some of the 2016 vintage wines from these houses, as well as a fine selection of other recent vintages.

When I got back to New York at the end of November (after a quick turnaround from the October trip and another three weeks in Burgundy), I reached out to a few importers for samples of their current releases from the Rhône to flesh out this article a bit more, with an eye on trying to get around to importers whose wines I did not cover in my last feature on the region two or three issues ago. As readers know, my coverage of the Rhône Valley is a bit selective, as there are still a lot of wines produced in this region that I simply do not like, as I am waiting for the hangover from the high octane 1990s and 2000s to finally clear up here. I have the distinct impression that we are in the process of seeing a recovery of the more classical style of Rhône wines here (with the limits allowed by global warming) and that the future is very promising (spend a little time speaking with the young and dynamic Julien Barge at Domaine Gilles Barge and it is awful hard not to be optimistic about the future in this region!), but there are still not enough classically-inclined producers here for me to go burying myself in the region for three or four weeks for cellar tastings, as I do in Burgundy. That said, I could have easily spent several more days here in October and visited a lot more of my favorite producers than we had time for, but I at least had a chance to dip my beak in the water again and will find time (somehow), to fit more frequent visits to the region into my travel schedule in the future. As we started our trip in Châteauneuf du Pape and worked north, I have listed the domaine visits from the trip in the order that they unfolded in mid-October. However, given my penchant for geographical ordering of tasting notes in these articles, I have also separated the tasting notes into southern and northern Rhône sections and appended my notes on wines tasted back in my office in New York from the south after my section on my visit to Mont-Redon, and notes on samples of northern Rhône wines tasted here in New York after the features on the cellar visits to Domaines Gonon, Jaboulet, Rostaing and Barge. It is probably not the most useful organization of the article, but geography has always appealed to me.

The vintage that was often on display in the cellars of the Rhône during my October visits was the 2016 vintage, and it looks to be outstanding in quality. Much of the wine market's fascination with recent vintages in the Rhône has focused, not surprisingly, on the ripe and powerful wines from 2015, but I was absolutely delighted with the potential of the 2016s I tasted in the cellars here in the fall. The vintage, as is often the case, is a bit different in the northern and southern halves of the Rhône, with the south finding a completely easy growing season and plenty of ripeness from the heat of August. In the northern half, things were quite a bit different, for the spring was cold and very rainy, so that everything was delayed getting out of the blocks and the vines were two to three weeks behind schedule by the first weeks of May. This was exacerbated by a strong bout of hail on the hill of Hermitage in April, which severely cut back yields in the *lieux à dits* that were hit. The months of June and July were fine in the north, albeit very dry, but August was blazingly hot and a great many vines shut down from the combination of hydric stress and very high temperatures for most of the month. At this point, 2016 was not looking promising at all in the north! But, much needed rain arrived on the first of September and alleviated the hydric stress and the maturation process was able to get kick-started again. Temperatures also descended to seasonal levels in September and one of the most beautiful Indian Summers in recent memory descended on the northern Rhône up through the month of

October, allowing all of the lagging maturity in the vineyards to catch up beautifully and growers were able to pick grapes in a leisurely fashion that allowed each parcel to ripen perfectly.

In the southern half of the Rhône, the spring of 2016 was far less rainy and budbreak and flowering both took place at their normal times and were quite uneventful and successful. So a big and healthy crop was expected from the outset and this is exactly what the region received. Hydric stress was less evident (though not completely absent) during the drier mid-summer months here and the heat of August was not as pronounced in the south as it was in the northern half of the region. Several *vignerons* noted that the hot days of August were coupled with relatively cool evenings, which allowed for a bit more freshness in the finished wines than in other equally torrid summers such as 2003 or 2009. As my only visit to the south was at Château Mont-Redon and we did not taste any 2016 reds here, I cannot comment on how the wines are shaping up, but in general, producers here seem even more upbeat about the potential of 2016 over the preceding year. There is enough optimism from comments about 2016 that I have heard that I will make it a point to try and taste a range of 2016 southern reds over the coming year and perhaps write a feature on the 2016 southern Rhône down the road, if I can find enough lower octane wines to get enthusiastic about to fill up an article.

While not tasting any 2016 reds yet at Mont-Redon, I did taste a good range of 2016s at Domaines Rostaing and Gonon on my trip and the wines showed outstanding potential. I also tasted a couple of 2016s out of cask at Domaine Barge, but as the wines were due for a racking and a bit reduced at the time of our visit, I did not take notes on the 2016s here and will look forward to seeing the wines out of bottle in the future. At this early date, the 2016s I did taste look to be just a tad lower in octane and less powerful than the 2015s and I expect that the 2016s will deliver greater precision and transparency when they are mature *vis à vis* the more highly-touted 2015s. It will be interesting to chart the courses of the two vintages over the coming decades, as we may see a replay of differing styles and equally high quality that was evident in the 1990 and 1991 vintages in the north. Needless to say, I am very excited about the potential of the 2016s in the northern Rhône and am very much looking forward to tasting a much wider range of these wines over the coming year or two!

Back here in New York, it has been primarily wines from the 2015 vintage in the northern Rhône that I have tasted to flesh out this report and I continue to be quite impressed by the quality of this vintage. Ripe, powerful years here are not normally the ones that I gravitate to reflexively, as the cooler and utterly refined vintages such as 2013 are really much more up my alley stylistically these days, but I do have to say that the 2015s continue generally to impress, as they possess greater freshness and slightly lower octanes than the equally powerful 2010s in the region. That said, I am at least equally impressed with the 2014s that I have tasted from the north, which are often from very short yields, but which offer up excellent potential and are less overtly muscular than their 2015 counterparts. And of course, if one can still find them, the 2013s from the northern Rhône are my favorite recent vintage, as I have indicated in a couple of articles on the vintage in the last few years, as they offer truly stunning transparency and purity of fruit, coupled to the seamless balance and vibrant personalities that only the greatest vintages in this region can produce. It is still early days for the 2016s, but perhaps they will be able to approach this same sense of refinement and soil signature as the 2013s deliver and they may well compete favorably with 2013 somewhere down the road. So, it is very easy to see that the

northern Rhône has been on quite a tear in the last few years and there are an awful lot of outstanding wines available in the market right now from the classically-inclined producers in the region.

The Southern Rhône

Château Mont-Redon (Châteauneuf du Pape)

I wrote a full-length feature on Château Mont-Redon, one of the oldest and largest estates in the northern end of Châteauneuf du Pape, a few years back, so I will not go into a ton of background detail here on this fine producer. I refer readers to that article, which appeared in Issue Thirty-Two for a completely detailed historical treatment of this fine estate. Mont-Redon now has over one hundred hectares of vines planted on the one hundred and sixty-three hectare estate, which has been in the hands of the Abeille and Fabre families now for several generations. When I wrote my domaine profile on the estate back in the spring of 2011, the property was co-directed by the brothers Jean and François Abeille, as well as their younger cousin, Didier Fabre. Today, with the Abeille brothers now into their retirement, the day to day direction of this important property is now solely in the hands of Didier Fabre. Covering all of the responsibilities that used to be shared by the three gentlemen certainly keeps Didier very busy these days, but he found time (just off a plane from a trip to the US and, no doubt, still plenty jet-lagged) to sit down with us for an hour of tasting at the end of our visit to the property in mid-October.



The beautiful red grape vineyards at Château Mont-Redon-note the concentration of “les galets roulés”.

The superb quality of the *terroir* at Mont-Redon has been recognized throughout history, and in fact, along with Château Rayas, it was one of the few “grand crus” in the region prior to the adoption of the Appellation Contrôlée system in the 1920s. The estate sits up on a plateau to the northwest of the village of Châteauneuf du Pape, near the boundary with the commune of Orange and quite close to Château Beaucastel. Historical records show vines having been planted here since 1334, but the vineyards had fallen into neglect over the centuries, and when the current family took over the property in 1923, there only remained two hectares of producing vines on this vast estate, as much of the preceding vineyard land had been devastated by phylloxera at the end of the nineteenth century and not replanted. At this time, Mont-Redon was used primarily as a hunting retreat in the early twentieth century. In 1923, Henri Plantin inherited Mont-Redon and began wholesale efforts to reconstitute the vineyards of the estate, clearing abandoned fields and expanding land under vine. Monsieur Plantin was the great grandfather of the current proprietors of the estate, the brothers Abeille and their cousin, Didier Fabre. Here at Mont-Redon, the family crafts one of the top red wines in the Châteauneuf du Pape appellation, and do it in a very low key manner, without any reliance on luxury cuvées to garner attention. Mont-Redon is also famous for the quality of its white wine from the appellation and was one of the first domaines to become well-known for the excellence of their Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc. The property has a significant percentage of white, chalky soils on the plateau that are perfectly suited to the cultivation of white wine grapes. In addition to producing excellent examples of red and white Châteauneuf du Pape, the Abeille and Fabre families have expanded the lineup at Mont-Redon in more recent times by also purchasing thirty hectares of vines in the Côtes du Rhône appellation in 1980 and a twenty hectare estate in Lirac in 1997. From both estates the family produces very fine red, white and dry rosé bottlings.

As we started out our tasting in the cellars here with the director of hospitality at the domaine, prior to the arrival of Monsieur Fabre, I am not sure if the selection of vintages presented would have been the same if I had been the one making the choices. Mont-Redon is a big estate and they sell a significant percentage of their production to the frequent visitors to the property, and I assume that most of these folks are in search of the most highly-rated recent vintages in Châteauneuf du Pape, which inexplicably to me, remain the hottest growing seasons in the region. So, we were served wines from some of the recent “top years” like 2014 and 2007, which were a bit high in octane for my palate, but I fully understand why our host had selected them for inclusion in the tasting. I would have been happier to taste a few more of the “off vintages” of recent times, which I find far more satisfactory than Châteauneuf du Pape from the ripest recent years, but having not made any specific requests prior to the visit, we had to be content with what was prepared for us ahead of time.

Vins Blancs

2016 Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc- Château Mont-Redon

Mont-Redon was one of the very first estates to start bottling a white Châteauneuf du Pape and today they are the largest producer of white wines in the appellation. The white grapes are planted in sections of vineyard land that have a lot of chalk in the soils, which are ideal for these varieties. The 2016 is a roughly a blend of thirty-five percent each of Grenache Blanc and Clairette, with the remaining thirty percent composed of Roussanne, Picpoul and Bourboulenc. The wine is still young and quite crisp, offering up a bouquet of pear, honeysuckle, coriander seed and lovely, chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows a bit of

backend alcohol, but with good focus and bright acids. 2016 was a drought vintage and the wine is a bit higher in alcohol as a result, but it should mellow out a bit with some bottle age. Still, this is not a top vintage of Mont-Redon Blanc, which in most vintages has a lot more cut and bounce. 2018-2025. **86+**.

2006 Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc- Château Mont-Redon

The 2006 Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc from Mont-Redon is now at its peak of drinkability at age eleven and was a superb aperitif back at the hotel. The lovely bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of pear, beeswax, lemon peel, chalky soil tones and a topnote of honeysuckle. On the palate the wine is pure, full and beautifully balanced, with fine focus and grip and a long, complex and zesty finish. This is drinking with plenty of style, but still has many years of life ahead of it. 2018-2025. **90**.

Vins Rouges et Rosé

2016 Lirac Rosé- Château Mont-Redon

The 2016 Lirac Rosé from Château Mont-Redon is lovely. This wine is made from a blend of the red grapes of Syrah and Grenache, with the juice bled from the tanks to make the Rosé after a short maceration on the skins. The soils in Lirac share the round stones (*les galets roulés*) found in Châteauneuf du Pape. The 2016 Rosé delivers a bright bouquet of melon, strawberries, stony soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is bright, medium-full and juicy, with good length and grip on the nicely balanced finish. 2018-2020. **88**.

2015 Lirac Rouge- Château Mont-Redon

This is one of the top values in the Mont-Redon lineup and the 2015 *rouge* showed beautifully. This again hails from soils quite similar to Châteauneuf du Pape, with plenty of *les galets roulés* in the vineyards. The wine is a blend of seventy percent Grenache, twenty percent Syrah and ten percent Mourvèdre. The bouquet of the 2015 jumps from the glass in a complex blend of raspberries, black cherries, roasted meats, bonfire and a touch of chocolate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely round on the attack, with a good core, modest tannins and impressive length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice that is drinking nicely out of the blocks, but will easily age a decade in the cellar. A fine value! 2018-2028. **90**.

2014 Châteauneuf du Pape- Château Mont-Redon

The 2014 Châteauneuf du Pape was still quite youthful and rather difficult to taste at the time of our visit. The wine is listed at 14.5 percent alcohol, but seems a bit higher than this to my palate. The nose is starting to blossom nicely, offering up scents of black cherries, roasted meats, pepper, a fine base of soil, a touch of fruitcake and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and quite powerful in personality, with plenty of depth at the core, ripe tannins and very good length and grip on the slightly hot finish. This will seem less alcoholic on the backend with some extended bottle age, but will always be a pretty ripe vintage of this wine and probably never one of my favorites from the estate. 2022-2045+. **87+**.

2013 Châteauneuf du Pape- Château Mont-Redon

The 2013 Châteauneuf du Pape from Mont-Redon is from a more classically-styled vintage than the 2014 and is an outstanding young wine. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex mix of black raspberries, a touch of fruitcake, woodsmoke, roasted venison, coffee and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a fine core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, chewy finish. A classic bottle of Châteauneuf du Pape in the making. 2023-2060. **92**.

2007 Châteauneuf du Pape- Château Mont-Redon

2007 was another very hot summer in Châteauneuf du Pape, and though this is purported to be a great vintage in the region, I prefer years such as 2013 when the growing season is not so torrid. This is very good for a 2007, but a bit overripe to my tastes, as it delivers a jammy bouquet of raspberries, spiced meats, fruitcake and stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is full, powerful and again, quite jammy, with better complexity than the nose suggests, a plush core, well-integrated tannins and a long, slightly heady finish. This too is probably a bit above its purported 14.5 percent alcohol, but it carries its alcohol better than the 2014 vintage. 2018-2045. **89.**

1995 Châteauneuf du Pape- Château Mont-Redon

Monsieur Fabre selected a bottle of the 1995 to follow up our corked bottle of 2001 in the lineup (which was too bad, as I love the 2001 vintage in Châteauneuf). This is an outstanding vintage at Mont-Redon and at age twenty-two, the wine is at its apogee of peak drinkability and offers up excellent complexity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a fine constellation of black fruit, hung game, woodsmoke, acorns, Christmas tree spices and autumnal soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with plenty of mid-palate stuffing, melted tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex finish. Fine, fine juice with decades of life still ahead of it. 2018-2045. **93.**

Ventoux

2016 Ventoux Blanc- Domaine de Fondrèche

The 2016 Ventoux Blanc from Domaine de Fondrèche is composed of a blend of thirty percent each of grenache blanc, roussanne and clairette, with the final ten percent made up of vermentino. The wine is barrel-fermented and then aged in tank for six months prior to bottling. The 2016 version delivers a fine bouquet of pear, apple, hazelnut, a hint of green olive salty soil tones and white flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, fullish and nicely balanced, with a good core, fine salty soil signature, good focus and grip and an impressively long, fairly complex finish. This is good juice. 2018-2023. **88.**

2016 Ventoux Rosé- Domaine de Fondrèche

The Ventoux Rosé from Domaine de Fondrèche is produced from a blend of fifty percent cinsault and twenty-five percent each of syrah and grenache. The wine is fermented in stainless steel and raised in cask, with the 2016 version offering up a superb bouquet of wild strawberries, melon, chalky soil tones, wild fennel, a nice touch of salinity and a discreet topnote of roses. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and impressively complex, with a fine core, lovely delineation and bounce and a long, classy finish. This is quite a serious example of Rosé! 2018-2023. **91.**

2015 Ventoux- Domaine de Fondrèche

Domaine de Fondrèche was founded by Nanou Barthélemy in 1993 and she was joined by her son, Sébastien Vincenti in 1995. Sébastien has now run the domaine for several years, converting the viticulture over to organic precepts and managing to harvest all thirty-eight hectares of vines by hand. The wines are fermented with indigenous yeasts and the regular bottling of Ventoux rouge is a blend of fifty percent grenache, forty percent syrah and ten percent mourvèdre. The 2015 version offers up a ripe and complex nose of black raspberry, roasted game, *garrigue*, fine soil tones, a touch of licorice and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and robust in personality, with a good core, ripe tannins and a long, chewy and nascently complex finish. This is listed at fourteen percent octane and is probably just

a touch higher in the torrid summer of 2015, but the wine is very well-balanced and should age quite nicely. It could do with a few years in the cellar to blossom. 2020-2040. **89+**.

2015 Vins de Pays de Vaucluse “Nature”- Domaine de Fondrèche

This *Vins de Pays* bottling is composed of a blend of thirty percent each of grenache, syrah and mourvèdre, with ten percent cinsault, and the wine is bottled with sulfur. The vineyards for this bottling hail from some of the sandier soils on the estate and the goal is to make a wine that is immediately enjoyable, as is the case with this lovely 2015. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of cassis, roasted meats, a bit of coffee grounds, chicory and a nice topnote of spices. On the palate the wine is suave, full-bodied and quite open in personality, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and grip, just a bit of backend tannin and impressive length on the complex finish. This has stuffing and breed and is drinking very nicely out of the blocks. 2018-2025. **88**.

2015 Ventoux “les Traverses”- Paul Jaboulet Âiné

The 2015 Ventoux “les Traverses” from Paul Jaboulet Âiné is composed of a blend of eighty percent grenache and twenty percent syrah and comes in listed at fourteen percent octane. The wine offers up a fine and spicy nose of raspberries, *garrigue*, pepper, a bit of spices meats and soil tones. On the palate the wine is ripe, full-bodied and robust, with a good core, a bit of backend tannin and just a touch of heat poking out on the long finish. In the hot summer of 2015, I have to imagine that this is a bit north of fourteen percent, but it carries its alcohol pretty well and remains fairly well-balanced and tasty. 2018-2025. **87**.



2014 Ventoux- Domaine de Fondrèche

The 2014 Ventoux from Domaine de Fondrèche is starting to show the first signs of secondary development on the nose, as it wafts from the glass in a complex blend of black fruit, hung game, a bit of bonfire, *garrigue*, wild fennel, chicory and the first autumnal shadings in its fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a fine core, softening tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish that closes with lovely energy and grip. I really like this vintage of Domaine de Fondrèche, which is starting to drink with plenty of style, but still has the structure to continue to age gracefully for many years. 2018-2040. **90.**

2013 Côtes de Ventoux “Persia”- Domaine de Fondrèche

The *cépages* of the “Persia” bottling from Domaine de Fondrèche is a bit different from the regular bottling of Ventoux, as the blend here is ninety percent syrah and ten percent mourvèdre, with the wine having a longer *elevage* prior to bottling. The 2013 Persia is an excellent wine, offering up a youthfully precise and blossoming bouquet of cassis, roasted meats, pepper, black olive, a touch of *garrigue*, woodsmoke and a fine base of stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish that closes with fine notes of pepper and olive. This is an excellent wine that is approachable today, but will be even better with a bit more time in the cellar. Impressive juice! 2020-2040. **91.**

2012 Ventoux “Il Était Une Fois”- Domaine de Fondrèche

This bottling is composed of eighty percent grenache from seventy-five year-old vines, mixed with ten percent each of syrah and mourvèdre. The twelve month *elevage* was quite unique for the wine, with the grenache being raised in concrete eggs and both the syrah and mourvèdre raised in new oak barrels. The wine is a bit higher in octane than these other bottlings from Domaine de Fondrèche, coming in at 14.5 percent, but it carries its alcohol quite well and is not hot. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up notes of baked raspberries, hung game, *garrigue*, a bit of pepper, bonfire and plenty of lavender in the upper register. On the palate the wine is robust, full-bodied and quite complex, with excellent depth at the core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and impressive focus and grip on the long and gently heady finish. This is usually a bit above my comfort level for alcohol, but the wine really is well-balanced and shows no perceptible signs of backend heat. 2018-2030+. **90.**

Other Recently-Tasted Châteauneuf du Pape and Southern Rhône Wines

2016 Côtes-du-Rhône Blanc “Adèle- Domaine Éric Texier

The 2016 Côtes-du-Rhône Blanc “Adèle from Éric Texier is composed primarily from clairette and is grown in the northern half of the Rhône, so it is not a big wine by any stretch of the imagination, coming in at a most civilized twelve percent octane in 2016. The bouquet is pure and vibrant, offering up scents of pear, fallen apple, a nice shading of lemongrass, granite minerality and a touch of almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, fullish and wide open and ready to go, with a good core, nice focus and grip and a long, easy to enjoy finish. 2018-2022. **87+.**

2016 Côtes-du-Rhône- Domaine de la Biscarelle

This is one of the most impressive bottles of Côtes-du-Rhône that I have tasted outside of the purview of Éric Texier in a long, long time. Domaine de la Biscarelle is not an old domaine by the standards of the region, having been founded in 1984 by Gérard Bouyer, who passed on the reins of the family estate to his daughter and son-in-law, Christelle and Jérôme Grieco in

2009. The domaine owns five hectares of vines in Châteauneuf, on the northern side of the appellation, and they treat their Côtes-du-Rhône with the same seriousness, with whole clusters used here as well, so the wine really needs some time in decanter to blossom once it has opened. But, once it has done so, it is outstanding, offering up a lovely and quite classic bouquet of red and black raspberries, *garrigue*, meaty tones, plenty of pepper, good soil signature and just a touch of fruitcake in the upper register. On the palate, the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a rock solid core, fine focus and grip, moderate, well-integrated tannins and a long and impressively complex finish. The 2016 is 13.5 percent octane and will age very well indeed. Impressive juice! 2018-2030. **89.**

2016 “Début L’une Histoire” Vins de France- C & J Grieco

The 2016 “Début L’une Histoire” from Christelle and Jérôme Grieco is essentially a Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages bottling, but as it is comprised solely of cinsault, it is excluded from the appellation and has to be sold as a *Vins de France*. The 2016 version was fermented with whole clusters in cement tanks and raised in the same. It offers up a superb nose of dark berries, hung game, woodsmoke, Christmas spices, a fine base of stony soil tones and a nice touch of French roast. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, structured and impressively solid at the core, with great precision, ripe, chewy tannins and outstanding length and grip on the complex and very serious finish. Like all of the Griecos’ wines, this needs extended aeration to blossom right now, but will age beautifully. This is a stunning value, as it is probably better than ninety percent of the Châteauneufs out there these days! 2019-2030+. **90.**

2015 Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages- Domaine de la Biscarelle

The 2015 Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages from Christelle and Jérôme Grieco of Domaine de la Biscarelle is excellent, and truly remarkable for keeping its octane down to 13.5 percent in this torrid summer. The *cépages* is fifty-five percent grenache, twenty percent each of syrah and carignan and five percent cinsault. It is fermented and raised in cement tanks, with all whole clusters utilized. The wine takes plenty of air to blossom, as this is built for the cellar, but with enough time in decanter, offers up a complex and smoky bouquet of dark berries, black raspberries, *garrigue*, roasted meats, coffee, bonfire and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full and nicely soil-driven, with a rock solid core, ripe, chewy tannins and excellent focus and balance on the long and nascently complex finish. Stylistically, this reminds me a lot of Lucien Barrot’s Châteauneufs from the late ‘70s and early ‘80s. A very impressive Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages! 2020-2035+. **90.**

2015 “Le Grand Saint Paul” Vins de France- C & J Grieco

The Le Grand Saint Paul from Christelle and Jérôme Grieco is another wine that could be sold as Côtes-du-Rhône-Villages, as this *lieu à dit* lies in Orange within the appellation, but the Griecos have decided to market it without its appellation on the label. This cuvée is a blend of forty percent each of grenache and mourvèdre, mixed with twenty percent syrah. It is fermented and raised entirely in cement tanks and is whole cluster, like all of the couple’s wines. The 2015 Le Grand Saint Paul is fairly ripe at fourteen percent, but pure and soil-driven in personality, as it offers up a superb bouquet of black raspberries, fruitcake, bonfire, hung game, stony soil tones and a lovely topnote of *garrigue*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and impeccably balanced, with a superb core, great transparency, ripe, well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex finish. With air, this is quite tasty already, but will be even better with a few more years in the cellar. This too, is a stellar value, as this is top flight Châteauneuf du Pape in reality! 2018-2035+. **91.**

2015 Cairanne “Cuvée Tradition”- Domaine les Hautes Cances

The 2015 Cairanne “Cuvée Tradition” from Domaine les Hautes Cances is plenty ripe, being listed at 14.5 percent and is probably a bit higher than that. The nose offers up a slightly jammy blend of raspberries, spiced meats, sandalwood, a nice touch of minerality and a topnote of *garrigue*. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, solid at the core and slightly hot, with moderate tannins and good length and grip on the fairly complex finish. I suppose this is pretty well-balanced for its octane, but this could have been so much better at 13.5 percent or so. 2018-2025. **85.**



October vines amongst the stones at Château de Beaucastel.

Châteauneuf du Pape

2015 Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc- Domaine Éric Texier

The 2015 Châteauneuf du Pape Blanc from Éric Texier is outstanding, which is so often the case from Monsieur Texier, who consistently makes one of the finest examples in the appellation. The wine delivers a vibrant bouquet of lemon, pear, chalky soil tones, a touch of coriander seed, fresh almond, white flowers and a gentle base of chalky oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, excellent soil signature, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This wine comes in at 13.5 percent octane, which is impressively moderate in the heat of the summer of 2015, and the wine will age long and gracefully. *Chapeau!* 2018-2030+. **92+.**

2015 Châteauneuf du Pape “les Anglaises”- Domaine de la Biscarelle

The 2015 Châteauneuf du Pape “les Anglaises” from Domaine de la Biscarelle is composed almost entirely of grenache, with two or three percent mourvèdre included in the blend. The *lieu à dit* of les Anglaises, from which the cuvée takes its name, faces northeast, so this is a cooler exposition, which accounts for the wine only reaching fourteen percent in the heat of the summer of 2015. The wine is fermented and aged solely in cement tanks and includes one hundred percent whole clusters. The bouquet is very inviting, offering up scents of red and black raspberries, fruitcake, bonfire, *garrigue* and spices meats. On the palate the wine is pure, plush on the attack and full-bodied, with a fine core, very good soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, youthfully complex and very nicely balanced finish. Though this is listed at fourteen percent, there is just a touch of backend heat here that suggests the true octane is a bit higher. 2022-2055. **91.**

2015 Châteauneuf du Pape- Château Jas de Bressy

The 2015 Châteauneuf du Pape from Château Jas de Bressy has a nice touch of red fruit on the nose, offering up scents of raspberries, fruitcake, *garrigue*, hung game, bonfire and a good base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with only a touch of *sur maturité* to the flavors on the backend, firm, ripe tannins and good mineral drive on the long and nascently complex finish. This is not my favorite vintage in Châteauneuf du Pape, as it is very ripe, but this wine seems to have pretty good balance for the vintage and seems likely to age quite nicely. It is not as overtly plush as many examples out of the blocks and will need some time in the cellar to soften, but I think it will come out quite well on the other end. It is listed at fourteen percent alcohol, which probably puts it up in the 14.5 range, but in the context of 2015s, that is not too bad. 2023-2050. **88+?**

2015 Châteauneuf du Pape- Fines Roches

The 2015 Châteauneuf du Pape from Fines Roches is composed of a blend of one-third each of grenache, syrah and mourvèdre. The wine is listed at 13.5 percent octane and is definitely cooler than some of the 2015s that I have tasted, as it offers up a promising bouquet of black cherries, fruitcake, roasted game, chicory, woodsmoke and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with a good core, fine focus and grip, ripe, nicely integrated tannins and a long, complex finish. This is a good bottle in the making, and though I would still peg its real alcohol as just north of fourteen percent, it carries it well and should age long and gracefully. It is far more elegant in profile out of the blocks than the Château Jas de Bressy. 2022-2055. **91.**

2014 Châteauneuf du Pape- Domaine de la Biscarelle

The regular bottling of Châteauneuf du Pape from Domaine de la Biscarelle is a classic blended bottling, which is predominantly grenache (from fifty to hundred year-old vines), mixed with smaller percentages of syrah, cinsault, mourvèdre and terret noir. Like all of the Griecos' wines, it is entirely whole cluster and fermented and raised in cement tanks. The 2014 version is absolutely superb, offering up a nascently complex bouquet of dark berries, balsam bough, pepper, roasted meats, a touch of *garrigue*, complex soil tones, wild fennel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and impeccably balanced, with a superb core, great soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a very long, tangy and complex finish. This is an utterly classic example of Châteauneuf that recall the great wines made in the region in vintages like 1978, 1981 and 1983. Find this wine! 2022-2055+. **93+.**

2013 Châteauneuf du Pape- Domaine de Saje (Jérôme Mathieu)

This was the first wine I have ever tasted from Jérôme Mathieu, who used to work alongside of his brother André in their family domaine, but who agreed to split up the estate in 2016, to simplify inheritance issues and their children starting to come of age. The 2013 Châteauneuf du Pape was still made by both brothers, with the production just split down the middle and Jérôme labeling his share of the production under his new estate name of Domaine de Saje. The wine is approximately eighty-five percent grenache, but with all of the parcels here a field blend that incorporate all the other allowed grapes in the appellation, so the other fifteen percent is composed of small percentages of twelve other varieties! The grapes are co-fermented in cement and the wine aged in old *foudres*. The 2013 Domaine de Saje comes in at fourteen percent octane and offers up a classic bouquet of black cherries, pepper, grilled meats, *garrigue*, incipient notes of oak leaves and bonfires in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely peppery in profile, with a fine core, impressive soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, youthful and quite classic finish. This needs time to blossom, but is “old school” in the best sense of the phrase and likely to be an outstanding bottle for twenty-five years or more, once it has opened up properly. 2020-2045+. **92.**

2001 Châteauneuf du Pape- Château Rayas

The 2001 vintage of Château Rayas is one of the most youthful examples of this vintage in Châteauneuf du Pape that I have tasted in recent times and the wine still needs another five years of cellaring to really start to blossom. The youthful nose delivers scents of cherry, raspberry, fruitcake, Christmas spices, pepper, soil and a topnote of bonfires. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and soil-driven, with a rock solid core, moderate tannins and fine length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This will be an outstanding vintage of Rayas with a bit more bottle age, but even with extended decanting, the wine is still too young and bound up in its structure for primetime drinking. 2021-2060. **93+.**

Crozes-Hermitage and Hermitage

Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet (Mercurol)

Philippe Jaboulet and his son, Vincent, started their own domaine in 2006, after the large family wine business, Paul Jaboulet Aîné was sold to the Frey family from Bordeaux. Philippe and Vincent now farm twenty hectares of vines, with seventeen of these located in the appellation of Crozes-Hermitage, as the property they purchased to start their own domaine in 2006 included twelve hectares in Crozes, as well as the current winery and cellars. Beyond Crozes-Hermitage, the additional hectares of vines the domaine farms are in the appellations of Hermitage and Cornas. Philippe Jaboulet spent more than thirty years of his career as the head winemaker and vineyard manager for the famous family *négociant* firm prior to its sale, and now is semi-retired and quite content to see his son Vincent taking charge of the viticulture and winemaking at their new family domaine. After being such an integral part of such a large operation, it is quite clear that both father and son Jaboulet are very, very happy to have their own small domaine, where they can handle all aspects of the winegrowing process and return to the family’s roots as one of the top small estates in the northern Rhône. The Jaboulets have decided to use the ancient spelling of Hermitage, “Ermitage” for their wines from this great hillside vineyard, to distinguish them from the old family *négociant* business’s wines and to underscore their commitment to the traditional style of wines that made the region famous.

I had written about the wines from this domaine back in October of last year, as I had been sent a full range of samples by their New York importer and had been extremely impressed with both the excellence of the quality and the traditional style of the wines. The domaine now has one hectare of vines in Hermitage, in the *lieu à dit* of les Dionnières, which came from the old family holdings of Paul Jaboulet Âiné when Philippe and Vincent set up their own domaine. These vines are forty years of age. The Jaboulets also purchased a one hectare parcel of vines in Cornas as soon as they established their family domaine in 2006, and brought along one and a half hectares of very old vines in the appellation of Crozes-Hermitage that used to be the vineyard source for the “Thalabert” bottling from Paul Jaboulet and which was the most famous cuvée in the appellation for decades. This cuvée has now been renamed “Nouvelère” by Philippe and Vincent Jaboulet at their domaine and, to my palate, is the finest bottling of Crozes currently produced in the region. These syrah vines range from fifty to eighty years of age. Though the domaine currently uses fifty percent new oak for the *elevage* of its Cornas and Ermitage bottlings, the Jaboulets’ use of new wood comes across as very discreet to my palate. As I really have no idea how new wood was used for the Hermitage “la Chapelle” bottling back in the days when Philippe Jaboulet was in charge of the winemaking here, I do not know if this is any different from his practices during his time at the large family *négociant*, when he was crafting one of the very finest examples of Hermitage on the hill, but the Jaboulets are clearly making one of the finest examples of Hermitage in the region today and this is a domaine for lovers of classically-styled northern Rhône wines to get to know.



Vincent and Philippe Jaboulet in their tasting room in Mercurol.

Vins Blancs

2016 Viognier (IGP)- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

As viognier is not allowed as part of the appellation of Crozes-Hermitage Blanc, this wine is only classified as a *Vin de Table*. However, it is a very pretty example, delivering a fine bouquet of pear, tangerine, a potpourri of floral tones and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and bouncy, with a good core and lovely length and backend interplay of fruit, acid and minerality. A fine value. 2018-2019. **88.**

2016 Crozes-Hermitage Blanc- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

The Jaboulet's Crozes-Hermitage Blanc is made entirely from Marsanne, with eighty percent of the blend fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks and twenty percent in old casks, with this percentage of the blend not going through malolactic fermentation. The 2016 is excellent, offering up a bright and classy nose of white fruit, beeswax, a touch of green olive and salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a rock solid core, fine youthful complexity and a long, well-balanced and zesty finish. Fine juice that will age very well indeed. 2018-2030. **91.**

2012 Ermitage Blanc- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

The 2012 Ermitage Blanc from Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet is composed entirely of Roussanne and hails from a seventy *ares* parcel of vines in the section of the Hermitage hill known as *Maison Blanche*. The wine is barrel-fermented and aged in half new oak and half one year-old barrels prior to bottling. It ages extremely well and the 2012 version is just starting to blossom, offering up a deep and complex bouquet of pear, yellow fruit, a touch of hazelnut, lovely soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with bright acids, excellent focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and perfectly balanced finish. At five years of age, the Jaboulets' Ermitage Blanc is just starting to blossom and will continue to cruise along for several decades to come. 2018-2040. **94+.**

Vins Rouges

2014 Crozes-Hermitage- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

The regular bottling of Crozes-Hermitage from the Jaboulets is their workhorse wine, as this bottling hails from their largest vineyard holdings. The wine is made entirely of syrah, with twenty percent of the *cuvée* barrel-fermented and the rest raised in stainless steel. The wine is made to drink well right at an early age and the 2014 version is just singing today, delivering a complex bouquet of raspberries, grilled meats, a touch of chocolate, a lovely base of soil and a touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and wide open, with a good core, just a touch of backend tannin, fine balance and a long, complex and focused finish. Fine juice. 2018-2030. **90.**

2013 Crozes-Hermitage "Nouvelère"- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

As mentioned above, the Nouvelère bottling of Crozes from the Jaboulets hail from their 1.5 hectare parcel of very old vines, which was part of their inheritance from the family *négociant* business back in 2006. The 2013 Nouvelère is a simply stunning young wine, wafting from the glass in a complex aromatic blend of cassis, black raspberries, grilled meats, chocolate, woodsmoke, a refined base of dark soil tones and a touch of nuttiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full and complex, with outstanding depth in the mid-palate, great focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and a long, beautifully balanced finish. This is built for the cellar and deserves at least a few years' worth of bottle age before starting to drink it. Utterly transcendent Crozes! 2020-2050+. **93.**

2013 Cornas- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

The domaine's 1.3 hectares of vines in Cornas all hail from vineyards at the top of the slopes in the appellation, on hard granite, with the vines ranging from twenty to forty years of age. The wine is raised entirely in cask, fifty percent of which are new, with bottling occurring after two years of *élevage*. The 2013 Cornas is the new release from the estate and it is a classic in the making, delivering a fine aromatic constellation of black raspberries, pepper, black olive, stony minerality and roasted game. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite tightly-knit, with a fine core, excellent soil signature, ripe, firm tannins and outstanding focus and balance on the very long finish. All this wine needs is time in the cellar to blossom! 2027-2075. **93+**.

2012 Ermitage- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

The 2012 Ermitage from the Jaboulets is a great, great wine in the making. This bottling is still fermented in old oak vats and raised in fifty percent new oak barrels. The 2012 Ermitage offers up a beautiful and still quite youthful nose of cassis, black raspberries, meaty tones, a touch of lavender and eucalyptus, stony soil tones, a hint of hay and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full and still quite primary in personality, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely balance, ripe, firm tannins and great length and grip on the focused and nascently complex finish. This is still a puppy and will need a good decade more in the cellar to start to stir, but it will be a great, great bottle of Hermitage in the fullness of time! 2027-2075. **95**.

2006 Crozes-Hermitage "Nouvelère"- Domaine Philippe et Vincent Jaboulet

2006 was the very first vintage of Nouvelère produced by the domaine and at age eleven, the wine is drinking beautifully. Messieurs Jaboulet were quick to point out that 2006 was a good, solid year, but far from exceptional and the new vintage of Nouvelère will develop into an even better wine than the 2006 with sufficient bottle age. The 2006 offers up a complex bouquet of baked raspberries, coffee, forest floor, spiced meats, pepper and a topnote of bonfire. On the palate the wine is pure, full and complex, with lovely focus and grip, still a touch of backend tannin and a long, complex finish. Lovely juice. 2018-2035. **92**.

Other Recently Tasted Crozes-Hermitage, St. Julien and Brézème

2016 Brézème Blanc "Roussanne"- Domaine Éric Texier

The 2016 Brézème Roussanne from Éric Texier is excellent, offering up a pure and nascently complex nose of pear, coriander seed, salty soil tones, dried flowers, a hint of butter and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and beautifully detailed, with a good core, fine soil signature, sound acids and lovely length and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. This is a suave middleweight with excellent intensity of flavor and plenty of backend lift. 2018-2025. **90**.

2016 Crozes-Hermitage "Equinoxe"- Dom. Equis (Maxime Graillet et Thomas Schmittel)

The Equinoxe bottling of Crozes from Maxime Graillet et Thomas Schmittel is bottled under screwcap and was a touch reductive when first opened and needed some coaxing to open up. The nose on the 2016 is still very primary, offering up scents of cassis, bitter chocolate, woodsmoke and a very discreet touch of grilled meats. On the palate the wine is fullish and made for early consumption, with moderate depth at the core, gentle tannins and good length and grip on the fairly complex finish. Given that syrah is so inclined to reduction, the use of a screwcap is not necessarily the closure I would have chosen for this wine, but there is good juice underneath

and for near-term drinking, this is not bad. Think of Beaujolais-styled wine made in Crozes. 2018-2025? **87.**

2016 Crozes-Hermitage- Vincent Paris Sélection

The Crozes-Hermitage from Vincent Paris is made from fruit he purchased from a long-time organic farmer in the appellation, with the vines averaging thirty years of age. He de-stems the fruit for this bottling and raised it entirely in tank. The 2016 is a lovely example of this top flight vintage, offering up a deep and nicely ripe nose of black raspberries, black cherries, dark soil tones, a bit of hung game and a topnote of bonfire. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, bright and quite wide open in personality, with a good core, fine soil signature, bright acids and fine length and grip on the well-balanced and complex finish. There is a nice touch of backend tannin here that will carry the wine very nicely down the road, but this is already very easy to drink and quite a serious example of Crozes. 2018-2030+. **90.**

2015 Brézème- Domaine Éric Texier

The 2015 Brézème rouge from Éric Texier is a fairly big rendition of this lovely syrah, with the muscle and broad shoulders of 2015, coupled to fine depth and purity of fruit. The wine takes (and deserves) some time to open up and is really built for the cellar, but with extended aeration offers up a fine bouquet of cassis, blackberries, roasted meats, a fine base of soil, a touch of raw cocoa, gentle peppery tones, woodsmoke and a touch of hazelnut in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and more expressive than the nose suggests, with a very good core of fruit, fine focus and grip, tangy acids and a long, moderately tannic finish. This is still quite primary and really needs at least a couple of years to blossom, but if a sense of urgency strikes and one wishes to drink it now, give it plenty of time in decanter. Monsieur Texier actually recommends opening in a day in advance, returning the cork to the bottle and drinking it the next day if wanting to consume it now. Fine potential. 2020-2035. **90+.**

2015 Crozes-Hermitage- Domaines des Entrefaux (Charles et François Tardy)

The Tardy family's vines for their Crozes are all located in the terraced vineyards of Mercurol, which is the heart of this appellation. The grapes are de-stemmed and raised in a mix of one-third each of tank, *foudre* and older barrels. The 2015 Crozes is excellent, coming in at thirteen percent octane and offering up a ripe and precise bouquet of black raspberries, dark berries, hung game, dark chocolate, woodsmoke and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, ripe and nicely plush on the attack, with a good core, ripe, gently chewy tannins and a long, well-balanced and still quite primary finish. This has the ripeness of fruit of the 2015 vintage, but it is nicely harnessed and the wine should blossom nicely with some bottle age, but right now is a bit adolescent in its puppy fat fruit. 2018-2030. **88+.**

2015 Crozes-Hermitage “les Jalets”- Paul Jaboulet Âiné

The 2015 Crozes-Hermitage “les Jalets” from Paul Jaboulet Âiné hails from vineyards planted in the hillsides of the village of Mercurol, rather than in some of the flatter vineyard land in the appellation. This is a blended bottling of thirty percent domaine-grown fruit and the remainder purchased, with the 2015 version coming in at thirteen percent octane and raised in older, fifteen thousand liter barrels. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a ripe and complex blend of cassis, fine meatiness, a touch of tapenade, chocolate, pepper and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly primary, with a good mid-palate core, moderate tannins and good length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is a fine example of Crozes. 2018-2030+. **89+.**

2015 Crozes-Hermitage “Domaine de Thalabert”- Paul Jaboulet Âiné

The 2015 Crozes-Hermitage “Domaine de Thalabert” bottling from Paul Jaboulet Âiné is a touch riper than their les Jalets bottling, coming in at 13.5 percent on the label (versus thirteen), but is nicely precise in its fruit expression and has nice mineral undertow. The cuvée is made entirely from sixty to eighty year-old vines these days and aged in twenty percent new oak. The 2015 version is excellent, offering up a nascently complex bouquet of cassis, black raspberries, roasted meats, pepper, bonfire, a nice touch of cedar, new leather and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthful, with a profile that shows a touch of *sur maturité* in its flavors, but no backend heat on the long, ripely tannic and nicely focused finish. This is a young and promising wine that has plenty of mid-palate stuffing and the backend mineral drive to be outstanding in the fullness of time, but it is a young wine that emphatically deserves some time in the cellar to blossom. 2023-2060+. **91.**

2015 St. Julien en St. Alban- Domaine Éric Texier

The 2015 St. Julien en St. Alban from Éric Texier is an excellent bottle of syrah, offering up a pure and wide open bouquet of cassis, pepper, roasted meats, gentle spice tones, black olive and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, good soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, complex finish. These vineyards are located on the west side of the river and do not have the same mineral drive as those found in Brézème across the river, but this is still very good juice. 2018-2030. **89.**



2014 Crozes-Hermitage- E. Guigal

This is the first vintage of Crozes-Hermitage from Guigal that I have tasted since the 2009 version, and the 2014 version is quite good. The wine comes in at thirteen percent octane and offers up a nicely red fruity streak in its aromatic constellation of raspberry, pepper, bonfire, spices meats and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, suave and nicely stylized, with good, but not great depth at the core, moderate tannins and a bit of wood still sticking out on the backend waiting for further integration. This is a well-made wine, but there does not seem to be quite as much stuffing as would be ideal for its wood component, so the wine is a touch angular at the present time. But, it is not a bad drink now and should be better with another year or two to better absorb its oak. 2018-2028. **88.**

2013 Brézème Vieilles Vignes “Domaine de Pergaud”- Domaine Éric Texier

The 2013 Domaine de Pergaud” old vine *petite serine* bottling from Éric Texier is simply stunning, with the limestone soils here making a nice contrast with the granite sols of the St. Julien St. Alban bottling below. The 2013 version of this iconic Brézème bottling offers up a beautifully refined and complex nose of dark berries, black raspberries, pepper, chalky soil tones, roasted gamebird, a touch of espresso and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and tangy, with lovely intensity of flavor, superb soil signature, ripe, seamless tannins and a very long, vibrant and complex finish. At five years of age, this is still a fairly young wine and several more years in the cellar are certain to be rewarded, but it is going to be hard to keep one’s hands off of bottles, as the wine is very tasty already! 2020-2040. **92+.**

2013 St. Julien en St. Alban “Domaine de Pergaud”- Domaine Éric Texier

The Domaine de Pergaud bottling of St. Julien en St. Alban from Monsieur Texier is made from the seventy year-old, *petite serine* rows of vines which he has in the village. If you need any evidence that the ancient *petite serine* syrah is different from the modern clones, look no further. The 2013 bottling from Monsieur Texier is absolutely superb, offering up all of the inherent elegance one finds in the 2013 vintage in the northern Rhône, as it wafts from the glass in a fine blend of cassis, black raspberries, pepper, hung game, lovely soil tones, black olive and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, refined and impeccably balanced, with a fine core of fruit, excellent transparency, fine-grained tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. Lovely juice. 2018-2035. **91+.**

2007 Brézème Vieilles Vignes “Domaine de Pergaud”- Domaine Éric Texier

The 2007 vintage of old vine Brézème from Éric Texier is drinking beautifully at age ten and is now fully into its apogee. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a superb blend of blackberries, cassis, pepper, coffee bean, woodsmoke and an outstanding base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with an utterly suave attack, a fine core and impressive soil transparency, melted tannins and a long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. I love this bottling from Monsieur Texier and wish I drank it with more frequency. 2017-2025. **93.**

Hermitage

2015 Hermitage- Domaine Yann Chave

I know Yann Chave’s wines primarily for his excellent bottlings of Crozes-Hermitage, as he has more than sixteen hectares of vines in that appellation, but he farms just over a hectare of vines on the hill of Hermitage as well, in two *lieux à dits*: Baumes and Préléat. The vines are

thirty years of age and the wine is raised in six hundred liter casks. The 2015 Hermitage from Yann Chave is excellent, offering up a ripe and precise bouquet of cassis, pepper, roasted meats, a fine base of stony soil, coffee grounds, woodsmoke and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core, firm, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and beautifully balanced finish. This is young and properly structured, but all of the constituent components are in place to be an outstanding bottle of Hermitage with sufficient bottle age. Fine juice. 2025-2075. **93.**

2015 Hermitage “la Maison Bleu”- Paul Jaboulet Âiné

This was the first vintage I have tasted of the Hermitage “la Maison Bleu” bottling from Paul Jaboulet Âiné, which hails primarily from the *lieu à dit* of Rocoules on the hill of Hermitage. The soils here are more sandy than in many of the other parcels on the hill, allowing for a slightly more feminine and accessible expression of Hermitage, though with vines that range from forty to sixty-five years of age, there is also plenty of stuffing for long-term aging as well. Caroline Frey raises this bottling in twenty percent new oak. The 2015 Maison Bleu is excellent, delivering a deep, vibrant and quite complex bouquet of black raspberries, smoked meats, pepper, lovely soil tones, dark chocolate, a discrete base of new oak and a whisper of balsam bough in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and beautifully balanced, with a plush core, plenty of soil signature, well-integrated, suave tannins, precise focus and excellent length and grip on the complex and very energetic finish. This is superb Hermitage. 2025-2075. **93.**

2012 Hermitage- E. Guigal

The 2012 vintage of Hermitage from Guigal is really a very good example of the vintage, offering up impressive depth and complexity on both the nose and palate. The refined and blossoming bouquet offers up scents of cassis, smoked meats, pepper, a touch of lavender, fine soil tones, heather and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a blossoming personality, a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, ripely tannic and classy finish. This is not quite as concentrated in the mid-palate as some other top examples of Hermitage, which may have to do with its additional micro-oxygenation during its sojourn in new casks, but it has complexity, breed and dimension and is aging very gracefully. Good juice. 2020-2040+. **92.**

1995 Hermitage- Domaine Jean-Louis Chave

I bought a case of Chave Hermitage in every top vintage between 1988 and 1997, but given how much I loved these wines, the only ones that still remain un-drunk in my cellar are the 1988 and 1995, as they proved a bit sturdy out of the blocks and did not allow the same early accessibility that led so many good 1990s and 1991s (not to mention the utterly seductive 1997) to the dining table far before their time. But, though I drank most of these wines before they were really at their apogees, I have fond memories of each and every one! This most recent bottle of the 1995 Chave Hermitage was showing utterly classical in profile and starting to really blossom completely on the palate, offering up a pure and complex bouquet of cassis, pepper, a hint of red plum, leather, roasted game, a terrific base of stony soil tones and topnotes of violets and lavender. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really opens up very nicely with a bit of time in decanter, with a superb core, outstanding focus and grip and a long, modestly tannic and tangy finish. I loved the less-extracted style of Chave Hermitage back in this era and the 1995 is one of the last of that genre. 2017-2050. **96.**

1989 Hermitage- Vidal-Fleury

I cannot recall having ever tasted an example of Hermitage from Vidal-Fleury, as I always think of this house as specializing in Côte-Rôtie, so this bottle, which was served double blind, was quite a surprise when it was unveiled. However, that said, the 1989 Hermitage from Vidal-Fleury is not a wine that is going to make me search out more examples of this appellation from the *négociant*, as this is pretty modest juice. The bouquet is my favorite part of the wine today, offering up scents of cassis, dark berries, smoked meats, a good base of soil, tree bark and a bit of spice elements in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and quite four-square, with a solid core, still a bit of chewy backend tannin and a fairly long, chunky and stillborn finish. Given that this is a great vintage on the hill of Hermitage, I have a hard time understanding this wine. 2017-2035. **86.**

Saint Joseph

Domaine Pierre Gonon (Mauves)

Pierre Gonon, who runs the family domaine with his brother Jean, is one of the true superstars in the northern Rhône, with the family's examples from Saint Joseph every bit as refined and complex as the most famous names to be found in Côte-Rôtie and Hermitage. Pierre greeted us on the threshold of the domaine on a beautifully warm and sunny October afternoon in his shorts and climbing shoes, which no doubt are *de rigueur* most of the growing season in the very steep hillside vineyards of Saint Joseph that the Gonon family farms. The two brothers took over for their father (also named Pierre) in 1999 and have moved the domaine into certified biodynamic farming in the last decade or so, further improving the quality of their family's wines. The Gonon brothers now farm ten hectares of vines (eight hectares planted to Syrah and two hectares to white grape varieties), all in the steep, granite hillside vineyards in the villages of Saint Joseph, Mauves and Tournon, which were the foundation of the original appellation when it was established in 1956. In 1971, the area permissible to be included in the Saint Joseph appellation was expanded to include many potential sites on the flatlands, producing dramatically different expressions of Saint Joseph, which no one will suggest are remotely of the same quality as the wines produced from the original steep, terraced vineyards. In 2005, the Gonon family was able to buy the vineyards of Raymond Trollat, who was the single finest winemaker in the appellation during his long career, spanning from the 1970s through the 2004 vintage. These old vines have further added to the Gonon family's vineyard treasury, and in top vintages, the Gonon brothers will now produce a special "old vine" bottling of Saint Joseph from Monsieur Trollat's former vineyard. The last time that they have produced this cuvée was in the 2010 vintage, though there is speculation that they may bottle one again from either the 2015 or 2016 vintages, but this was still undecided at the time of my October visit.

The winemaking at Domaine Gonon is very traditional, with fermentations taking place in either cement or old oak vats, with indigenous yeasts and punch-downs of the floating caps still done by foot. All of the wines are then raised in older, ten to fifteen year-old smaller barrels prior to bottling. The Gonons' Île de Péray bottling is probably the greatest red wine value to be found anywhere in the northern Rhône these days, as this is made from their younger vines in their steep, terraced vineyards in the Saint Joseph appellation and is really an excellent example of Saint Joseph, despite it being de-classified down to a *Vin de Table*. I should mention that collectors often try to focus on the Vieilles Vignes bottling of Saint Joseph rouge here from the

old Trollat family parcel, but I have always found the regular bottling of the red wine *chez Gonon* every bit as beautiful and profound as the old vine bottling. The older vines have tended to produce a more structured wine that will probably last longer in bottle than the “regular” Saint Joseph, but I am not yet convinced that it is inherently superior to the non-old vine cuvée. Simply said, both wines are brilliant. Perhaps, the most interesting to my mind, are the vintages such as 2011, when the old vines from Raymond Trollat simply are blended into the regular cuvée! The red wines here are deep, serious northern Rhône and demand time in the cellar to blossom properly, so that today, it is only a vintage such as the slightly more forward 2011 that is really drinking well, and more structured years in the last decade are still in need of further bottle age to blossom properly. So, do not waste any of your bottles of the Gonon brothers beautiful red wines by opening them too soon! The domaine’s white Saint Joseph cuvée is also a brilliant and very ageworthy wine as well, and it should not be overlooked in the rush to try and latch onto a few bottles of the domaine’s incomparable red wines. This is one of the greatest estates of the northern Rhône today, with both the reds and the whites here of equally high quality and excellent potential for long-term cellaring.

Vins Blancs

2016 Saint Joseph “les Oliviers” Blanc- Domaine Pierre Gonon

The Saint Joseph bottling at Domaine Gonon is produced from a blend of twenty percent Roussanne and eighty percent Marsanne. The 2016 is still in barrel and is going to be a gorgeous vintage for this wine, as it offers up a complex bouquet of pear, fresh pineapple, honeysuckle, beeswax and salty soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and very elegant in profile, with a lovely core, fine focus and grip and a long, vibrant and beautifully balanced finish. 2020-2040. **92+**.

2015 Saint Joseph “les Oliviers” Blanc- Domaine Pierre Gonon

The 2015 vintage of les Oliviers blanc from the Gonon brothers is an excellent wine. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a bright and complex blend of pear, fresh almond, white flowers, salty soil tones, a touch of straw and a topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very long on the finish, with sound framing acids, a plump core of fruit and very good grip and focus. Good juice. 2018-2030. **91**.

2011 Saint Joseph “les Oliviers” Blanc- Domaine Pierre Gonon

The cooler growing season of 2011 has given the Saint Joseph Blanc from Domaine Gonon a bit more inner tension than the more plush 2015 version. This is now fully into its apogee of peak drinkability, offering up a complex bouquet of walnuts, a touch of orange, fresh peach, salty soil tones and a nice dollop of butter in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and focused, with a fine core of fruit, good soil signature and lovely backend energy on the long and complex finish. Fine, fine wine. 2018-2030. **92**.

Vins Rouges

2016 Île de Péray- Domaine Pierre Gonon

The Île de Péray bottling from the Gonon brothers is actually all produced from their vineyards in Saint Joseph, but it is made from their younger vines that they vinify separately and de-classify to a *Vin de Table* bottling, so as not to take away from the potential longevity of their St. Joseph rouge bottlings. This wine is fermented in cement, rather than oak vats. The 2016 Île de Péray is going to be excellent, as the wine delivers a fine and sappy nose of black raspberries, chocolate, pepper, a touch of fresh apricot, coffee and black olive. On the palate the wine is deep,

full-bodied and very sappy at the core, with lovely structure and grip, modest tannins and a long, nascently complex finish. 2019-2040. **89.**

2016 Saint Joseph Rouge- Domaine Pierre Gonon

The 2016 Saint Joseph rouge was still in cask at the time of our visit and showing excellent potential. The bouquet is pure and very promising, wafting from the glass in a blend of black raspberries, sweet dark berries, coffee, dark soil tones, black olive, pepper and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pure on the attack, with a good core, moderate tannins and great focus and grip on the long and classy finish. Fine juice in the making. 2022-2050+. **93.**



Pierre Gonon., outside of his domaine in the village of Mauves.

2015 Saint Joseph Rouge- Domaine Pierre Gonon

2015 was a very hot growing season, but one would never know this from the precision of the Saint Joseph from the Gonon brothers! This is a very pure and potentially great wine in the making, as it delivers a complex nose of cassis, black raspberries, stony minerality, black olive, roasted game and bitter chocolate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully precise, with a superb core, excellent focus and balance and a very long, very classy, ripe tannic and quite youthful finish. This will need a fair bit of time in the bottle to blossom, but it is going to be outstanding. 2023-2050+. **94.**

2011 Saint Joseph Rouge- Domaine Pierre Gonon

The 2011 Saint Joseph from Domaine Gonon is simply outstanding. Pierre observes that “this is not from what one would consider a great vintage, as it was a bit cool in 2011, but the wine is developing very nicely.” I’ll say! This is one of the vintages where the old vine parcels from Monsieur Trollat were blended into the regular bottling, giving the wine truly stunning depth on both the nose and palate. The superb bouquet delivers scents of black raspberries, gamebird, dark soil tones, black olives, still a touch of Syrah’s medicinal overtones and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully transparent down to its stony soil signature, with a fine core of fruit, outstanding intensity of flavor and complexity and a long, moderately tannic and tangy finish. We liked this so much at the domaine that we drank a bottle at Maison Pic that evening! 2018-2035. **93.**

2009 Saint Joseph Rouge- Domaine Pierre Gonon

2009 was another ripe year in the northern Rhône, but the Gonon’s Saint Joseph shows a fine spine of minerality in this generally fruit-driven vintage. The bouquet is deep and complex, albeit not as precise as the stunning 2011, offering up scents of cassis, black cherries, pepper, dark soil tones, coffee, black olive and a touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and powerful in style, with a good core, plenty of chewy, ripe tannins and fine length and grip on the focused and still quite youthful finish. This needs several more years in the cellar to really start to blossom. 2022-2050+. **93.**

Other Recently Tasted St. Joseph, Cornas and St. Péray

2016 Saint Péray “les Pins” Blanc- Domaine Bernard Gripa

As we were visiting Domaine Pierre Gonon in St. Joseph on the following afternoon, we decided to drink the wines of their next door neighbor, Domaine Bernard Gripa, for dinner on the evening before. The appellation of Saint Péray lies directly across the Rhône River from the city of Valence, and these can be some of the best white wines in the Rhône. This wine is made of a blend of Roussanne and Marsanne and the Gripas’ bottling is lovely in 2016, delivering a fine and vibrant nose of lemon, pear, white soil tones and acacia blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile, with a good core, bright acids and a long, poised and complex finish. Fine juice. 2018-2025. **91.**

2015 Saint Joseph “les Vessettes” Blanc- Domaine de la Roche Paradis

The 2015 Saint Joseph Blanc from Domaine de la Roche Paradis is composed entirely of marsanne. It is quite aromatically expressive, already as well as a bit new oaky in personality, as it offers up scents of baked apple and peach, hazelnut, orange peel, soil, marzipan and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and complex, but pretty soft and a bit evolved already for being only three years of age. There is good depth at the core here, and reasonable complexity, but the wine is fairly low in acidity, a touch hot and seems likely to want drinking up in the next year or two. There are some good elements here, but this is a wine that seems to have fallen prey to the heat of the summer and is going to need drinking up almost immediately. 2018-2020. **86.**

2016 Saint Joseph “les Côtes”- Domaine Vincent Paris

Vincent Paris’ vines in Saint Joseph are in the village of Ardoix, which is about sixteen kilometers north of the heart of the appellation in Tournon and Mauves and a bit inland from the Rhône River. The vines sit at three hundred meters above sea level and are between ten and twenty years of age, so not particularly old, but Monsieur Paris prunes them very short to rein in

vigor and allow for good concentration in the berries. The 2016 is an excellent wine, offering up a bright and complex nose of cassis, pepper, black olive, grilled meats, good minerality and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and soil-driven in personality, with a very good core, fine-grained tannins, good acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This is certainly approachable today, but will be even better with a few years in the cellar to allow the tannins to fall away. Very classy Saint Joseph. 2018-2035+. 92.

2015 Saint Joseph- Domaine Laurent Betton

The Saint Joseph from Laurent Betton includes ten percent whole clusters and eighty percent of the cuvée is raised in used barrels (one to five years old), with the other twenty percent raised in tank. The 2015 bottling is listed at 12.5 percent octane and offers up a superb, old school bouquet of black cherries, bonfire, spit-roasted game, a bit of pepper, complex soil tones and a hint of *garrigue* in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and moderately chewy, with a good core, fine soil signature and a long, gently rustic and very well-balanced finish. This is good juice that is approachable today, but will be far more interesting with a few years of bottle age. 2018-2035. 90+.

2015 Saint Joseph “Nomade”- Christophe Curtat

Christophe Curtat came later in life to the *métier* of *vigneron*, having first fallen in love as a wine drinker and collector in his previous career, prior to shifting gears and starting out in St. Joseph in his early forties in 2005. He now farms six hectares of vines in St. Joseph (and one hectare in Crozes-Hermitage), with the lion's share of his Saint Joseph vines on the steep, terraced vineyards that are the true heart of the appellation. His 2015 Saint Joseph includes twenty-five percent whole clusters and was raised in twenty percent new oak. The wine is excellent in 2015, offering up a deep and youthful bouquet of cassis, pepper, black olive, stony soil tones, woodsmoke and just a bit of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with a rock solid core, fine focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex finish. This is pretty ripe at 13.5 percent octane, but shows impressive backend mineral drive and no signs of *sur maturité* on either the nose or palate. A fine example that needs a bit of bottle age to really blossom. 2020-2035+. 89+.

2015 Saint Joseph “Chassonot” - François Grenier

François Grenier's bottling of Saint Joseph “Chassonot” is what I would term a modern-styled example of the appellation, with the wine raised entirely in four hundred liter oak barrels, with one-third of them new in each vintage, and the wine undergoing its malolactic fermentation in the casks. The 2015 version is plenty ripe (no surprise in this torrid summer), coming in listed at 14.5 percent alcohol and is probably a bit higher than that. The wine offers up a deep and ripe bouquet of cassis, black raspberries, dark chocolate, tapenade, pepper and spicy oak. On the palate the wine is powerful, sappy and broad-shouldered, with a rock solid core, firm, ripe tannins and a long, heady and fairly well-balanced finish. This is very well done in its style, but it is not my style, as I love the fine underlying minerality of top flight Saint Joseph and it is not evident here, perhaps because of the malo in barrel? 2018-2035. 88.

2015 Saint Joseph- Domaine Bernard Gripa

The 2015 Saint Joseph rouge from Bernard Gripa is still on the young side, but starting to already drink very nicely indeed. The wine presents a fine, complex bouquet of cassis, black raspberries, bitter chocolate, smoked meats, pepper and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full and quite pure on the attack, with a good core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and

impressive length and grip on the still quite youthful finish. This is already very tasty, but will be even better with four or five years' worth of bottle age. 2018-2035. **92.**

2015 Saint Joseph “Cuvée du Papy”- Domaine du Monteillet (Stéphane Montez)

The 2015 Cuvée du Papy from Stéphane Montez, which is made from old vines in the steepest parcels of vines that the domaine owns in the appellation, is an outstanding young wine. The bouquet is deep, pure and nicely reserved in profile, offering up scents of black raspberries, cassis, pepper, dark chocolate, a bit of hung game, black olive and a fine base of stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is ripe, full-bodied and youthful, with a sappy core, fine mineral drive, ripe, well-measured tannins and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is still a young wine, and though it is approachable today with a bit of decanting time, it really deserves to be tucked away in the cellar for at least two or three years and allow some of its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2020-2035+. **92.**

2015 Saint Joseph “la Madonne”- Domaine de la Roche Paradis

The 2015 Saint Joseph “la Madonne” from Domaine de la Roche Paradis comes in impressively cool for the vintage, tipping the scales at a very civilized thirteen percent and offering up excellent depth on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a fine, youthful blend of cassis, black raspberry, pepper, hung game, stony soil tones and black olive. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely soil-driven, with good focus and grip, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, youthful finish. This is not showing a ton of complexity right now, but it is still a fairly youthful wine and this may arrive with a bit of bottle age. The purity here is quite impressive, even if it does not develop first class complexity down the road. 2020-2040. **88+.**

2014 Saint Joseph “Nomade”- Christophe Curtat

The 2014 Saint Joseph from Christophe Curtat is a touch less ripe than the 2015 version and absolutely classic in aromatic and flavor profile. The outstanding bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of dark berries, black olives, pepper, roasted meats, dark soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and complex, with outstanding transparency, a fine core, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and soil-driven finish. I really like the additional and very traditional complexity that the twenty-five percent whole clusters bring to the wine here. This is certainly very easy to drink today, but this is a classic bottle of Saint Joseph and will be even better with a bit of bottle age. 2020-2040. **91.**

2014 Saint Joseph “Chemin Faisant”- la Ferme des Sept Lunes (Jean Delobre)

Jean Delobre farms his five and a half hectares of vines biodynamically and has been producing wines here only since the 2001 vintage, as previously, he sold everything off to a local cooperative. He prefers to bottle his wines with little or no sulfur, but is not steadfast in this regard and will give them a little SO₂ if he feels it will keep them more stable. Traditionally, the Chemin Faisant bottling is Monsieur Delobre's non-sulfur cuvée year in and year out and his most popular wine with clients. The 2014 Chemin Faisant is a very nice wine, but seems a tad more anonymous syrah in style than the regular bottling of Saint Joseph from 2013 (reviewed below), and perhaps this is a sign that its no sulfur regimen is already taking a toll? The bouquet is deep, offering up scents of black fruit, hung game, a bit of leather, pepper and hints of *sous bois*. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, wide open and quite tasty, with a solid core, modest tannin, a touch of backend volatile acidity and good length on the fairly complex finish. This is good juice, but the 2013 regular bottling just exudes Saint Joseph character and this wine does not. I like this, but it is further along its evolutionary arc already than the 2013 bottling and is

really in need of drinking up over the next few years. It will provide pleasure during that time, but it will have a short shelf life. 2018-2020. **88.**

2013 Saint Joseph- la Ferme des Sept Lunes (Jean Delobre)

Jean Delobre's 2013 regular cuvée of Saint Joseph comes in at a cool twelve percent octane and just exudes minerality on both the nose and palate. The family's vineyards are in the central section of the appellation of Saint Joseph, which is not the historically steep terraces found to the south, but based on this fine wine, clearly there is excellent potential here as well. The refined bouquet of the 2013 delivers scents of cassis, pepper, smoked meats, black olive, woodsmoke and a complex base of stony soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and well-balanced, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine focus and complexity and a long, modestly tannic and tangy finish. There is just a touch of natural wine wildness and VA starting to perk up on the finish here, which makes me think that it was not given too much SO2 and will be best drunk in the fairly near future, but the wine is really lovely right now and should stay that way for at least the next handful of years. It seems decidedly more structurally sound today than the 2014 Chemin Faisant. 2018-2025. **89.**



2015 Cornas- Domaine Equis (Maxime Graillet et Thomas Schmittel)

The 2015 Cornas from Maxime Graillet was completely destemmed and raised in older Burgundy casks sourced from DRC. The wine comes in at 13.5 percent alcohol in 2015 (a good level in this very hot summer) and offers up a fine, youthful nose of pepper, black raspberries, hung game, black olive, plenty of smokiness and a fine base of stony soil tones. On the palate the

wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with a fine core, good soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and very good length and grip on the nascently complex and peppery finish. This is a pretty polished young Cornas, but it has soil signature and classic fruit elements that augur well for its future evolution, and though one might quibble with its lack of any stems (which would have added more complexity down the road), it is going to be a very good bottle when it is mature. 2027-2060. **92.**

2009 Cornas- Domaine Marcel Juge

Monsieur Juge has been in formal retirement now for many years, but still made a tiny amount of wine for himself and a few savvy clients up until last year. His 2009 Cornas is beautifully classical in profile, coming in at thirteen percent octane and offering up a superb, youthful bouquet of raspberries, pepper, a complex base of stony soil, a bit of syrah's youthful medicinal tones and blossoming notes of roasted game. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a fine core, ripe, suave tannins and a very long, youthful and very traditional finish. This will be outstanding Cornas in the fullness of time. 2023-2055+. **93+.**

1991 Cornas "les Vieilles Fontaines"- Domaine Alain Voge

Alain Voge was at the peak of his career in the late 1980s and early 1990s and his "les Vieilles Fontaine" cuvée was one of the greatest wines produced in Cornas in this era. These are his oldest vines, which were probably around seventy-five or eighty years of age back in 1991. The wine was decanted more than two hours prior to serving and still needed to open up a bit in the glass when it was first poured, but once it blossomed, it was a truly beautiful wine. The bouquet offers up a superb *mélange* of raspberries, red currants, smoked meats, a touch of lavender, stony minerality, pepper and a beautiful topnote of exotic spices. With extended breathing, a distinct topnote of hay arrives. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with fine focus and grip, melted tannins and a very long, complex and beautifully balanced finish. 2017-2040. **94.**

Vin de Pays Syrah

2016 Syrah- Vincent Paris Sélection (Collines Rhodaniennes)

The Vincent Paris Sélection Syrah is produced from young vines in Crozes-Hermitage, and Monsieur Paris completely de-stems this wine and raised it entirely in tank. The 2016 version is excellent, offering up a bright and vibrant bouquet of black raspberries, a bit of grilled game, pepper, black olive and a fine base of gently autumnal soil. On the palate the wine is fullish, tangy and focused, with a good core, moderate tannins and a long, complex finish. I really like the octane here, as this is listed at 12.5 percent alcohol. This is really very good for a *Vins de Pays* level bottling! 2018-2026. **89.**

2015 Syrah "Les Jardins" - François Grenier (Ardèche)

The 2015 Ardèche Syrah from François Grenier is raised mostly in vat, with fifteen percent of the blend raised in barrels. The 2015 is a touch reductive when first opened, but with a little air blossoms nicely to delivers scents of cassis, black olive, pepper and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, suave and quite open in personality, with plenty of depth at the core, good focus and grip, modest tannins and a long, well-balanced finish. This is not overly complex, but hits all the right notes and is a very tasty and well-made glass of syrah. 2018-2025. **87.**

2013 Syrah “la Rosine”- Stéphane Ogier (Collines Rhodaniennes)

This syrah from Stéphane Ogier is made from some of the vineyard land, away from the river, that lies outside of the AOCs of the northern Rhône and falls under the flag of Collines Rhodaniennes. The vines are twenty to thirty years-old and planted on granite. The grapes are destemmed and the wine sees no new oak during its *élevage*. The 2013 la Rosine offers up a fine nose of cassis, black pepper, smoked meats, stony soil tones and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and nicely transparent, with a solid core, good focus and grip, tangy acids and a long, nascently complex finish. This is nicely low in octane, coming in at 12.5 percent and shares the elegance of the vintage with its more illustrious neighbor of Côte-Rôtie. This is a very good bottle of middleweight syrah. 2018-2028. **89.**

2013 Syrah de Seyssuel “l’Âme Soeur”- Stéphane Ogier (Collines Rhodaniennes)

The syrah vineyards that go into the l’Âme Soeur bottling from Monsieur Ogier are also away from the river, in the Collines Rhodaniennes, but rather than granite, they are planted on terraces of mica-schist. The grapes are completely destemmed and the *élevage* includes twenty percent new oak. The 2013 l’Âme Soeur is another very tasty bottle in the making, with its new wood showing a fair bit at this young age, but with plenty of underlying stuffing to carry the oak. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a smoky blend of cassis, pepper, grilled meats, coffee, soil and lead pencil new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and youthfully complex, with a good core, nice underlying soil tones, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, tangy finish. This is a fine bottle that is drinking quite well already, but will be even better with another year or two to more fully absorb its wood and allow the tannins to soften a bit more. 2018-2030. **90.**

Domaine René et Pierre Rostaing (Côte-Rôtie)

We arrived in Ampuis on a beautiful sunny morning and had a fine visit with Pierre Rostaing, who has taken over the full-time management of the domaine from his father, René. Domaine René Rostaing is one of Côte-Rôtie’s finest classical producers, and yet after a decade or two in the limelight, beginning in the latter half of the 1980s, his wines have slipped a bit below the radar of most traditionally-minded Rhône wine lovers in recent times, though the quality here is second to none. By all accounts, René Rostaing was very happy when his international prominence dropped a bit, as he was frequently bothered by visitors at the bell during his long run of celebrity and was often hard-pressed to find enough time to attend to all of his responsibilities in the vineyards and cellars. With the baton having been passed on to the very able hands of his son Pierre Rostaing, the domaine is poised for another generation of Côte-Rôtie excellence. We tasted the 2016s here out of barrel, which will be a watershed vintage for the domaine, as it will mark the first time that they have commercially expanded their single vineyard bottlings beyond their historical lineup of cuvées from the Côte Blonde and La Landonne vineyards. Given the superb quality of the 2016 vintage, as well as fairly reasonable yields, Pierre Rostaing is very, very likely to augment these two single vineyard wines with two more: a bottling from the vineyard of La Viallière (which originally hailed from René Rostaing’s father-in-law, Albert Dervieux and which was only bottled on its own on one or two occasions in the past, primarily for the Rostaing family cellar, with the last one produced in 1995) and a bottling from the famous vineyard of Côte Brune as well, which has never been bottled on its own *chez* Rostaing. All four potential single vineyard bottlings from 2016 were showing brilliant potential at the time of my visit in October and I do hope that Pierre decides to go ahead and bottle the La Viallière and Côte Brune on their own!

In addition to the stunning roster of 2016 Côte-Rôtie bottlings that we tasted- and one should not forget to mention just how good the blended Côte-Rôtie cuvée called Ampodium is these days- we also tasted a few of the Rostaings' 2015s out of bottle at the end of our visit in October. These bottles of the 2015s had been opened the day before and to my palate, had faded a bit, so I did not take notes on these wines at the domaine, hoping I might be able to taste fresh bottles back here in New York. Happily, the domaine's fine importer in the US stepped in with samples of the 2015s that I was able to taste in my office in January and the notes on this equally excellent vintage *chez* Rostaing follow as well here. It will be interesting to follow the vintages of 2016 and 2015 side by side down through the coming years, as both are utterly brilliant in quality, but quite different stylistically. The 2015s are very powerful wines by the standards of this great domaine, and they will start out life with plenty of structure and musculature that will need to be outwaited with extended cellaring. However, once they are ready to drink, they will be stunning wines, as they are very precise, vibrant and pure and show absolutely no elements of *sur maturité*. The 2016 are more classically proportioned and will probably end up being the more elegant wines when ready to drink, but both vintages are stellar *chez* Rostaing. I should also not fail to mention how much I have always liked the Les Lézardes bottling from Domaine Rostaing, which is produced from two parcels of syrah that are planted in Ampuis, but lie just outside of the official limitations of the Côte-Rôtie appellation. It is sold as a simple *Vin de Table*, but is always an excellent value and the 2016 was showing very good potential at the time of my visit. The Rostaing family also makes wine in the Languedoc, which they first began producing in the 1997 vintage and which they sell under the Péche Noble label. I had never crossed paths with any of the Péche Noble wines prior to my visit to the cellars in Ampuis and was quite impressed with what I tasted. Though I had been selling the wines from the Rostaing family since the 1985 vintage, I had never before had the pleasure to visit their cellars in Ampuis and I was absolutely delighted to finally be able to do so this past October.

Languedoc Wines From the Rostaing Family

2015 Péche Noble Blanc (Languedoc)

The Péche Noble Blanc is composed of a blend of Grenache Blanc, Viognier and fifty percent Vermentino, which is far more likely to be found in Italy than in the Languedoc. The resulting wine is very good in 2015, offering up a bouquet of lime peel, green olive, dried flowers and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and wide open, with good purity on the attack and nice length on the finish. 2018-2020. **88.**

2015 Péche Noble Rouge (Languedoc)

The 2015 Péche Noble Rouge is a blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre. The wine is lovely on the nose, wafting from the glass in a blend of raspberries, red currants, *garrigue*, pepper and a fine base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a good core, moderate tannins and a long, peppery and well-balanced finish. This could do with a few years in the cellar to allow the tannins to soften up a bit more. 2020-2040. **89+.**

2016 Les Lézardes Syrah- Domaine Rostaing

As I noted above, the Les Lézardes bottling from Domaine Rostaing hails from two small vineyard parcels that are located within the town of Ampuis, but which fall just outside of the limits for the appellation of Côte-Rôtie, so the wine is sold as a *Vin de Table*. This makes it one of the real bargains in the northern Rhône and the 2016 version is going to be excellent. The nose offers up a classic Syrah mix of cassis, pepper, dark chocolate, game, woodsmoke and soil tones.

On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely soil-driven, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins and impressive length and grip on the nascently complex finish. Fine juice in the making. 2021-2040+. **90.**

2016 Côte-Rôtie “Ampodium”- Domaine Rostaing

The Ampodium bottling from the Rostaing family is their blended version of Côte-Rôtie, which hails from several different vineyard parcels owned by the family. The 2016 Ampodium is a classic bottle in the making, as it offers up a deep and pure bouquet of black raspberries, pepper, black olive, game, dark soil tones and a topnote of hazelnuts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and already very suave on the attack, with a good core, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the beautifully balanced finish. All this needs is some time in the cellar to fully blossom. 2023-2055. **92+.**



Pierre Rostaing in the chais at the family domaine in Ampuis.

2016 Côte-Rôtie “La Landonne”- Domaine Rostaing

Along with Maison Guigal, Domaine Rostaing is the most famous producer of this vineyard, which they have bottled on its own since 1977. Today, the family farms just under 1.6 hectares in this great *terroir*. The 2016 La Landonne *chez* Rostaing is going to be a superb bottle, as it delivers a fine aromatic constellation of pepper, cassis, roasted meats, woodsmoke, superb soil signature and gentle medicinal overtones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and

rock solid in the mid-palate, with excellent focus and purity, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a very long, vibrant and youthfully complex finish. 2030-2075+. **94+.**

2016 Côte-Rôtie “La Viallière”- Domaine Rostaing

After more than twenty years of the Rostaing family blending their parcel in the vineyard of la Viallière into their Ampodium, bottling, 2016 seems poised for this wine to once again stand on its own *chez* Rostaing. The Rostaings now farm 1.2 hectares of vines in this great vineyard, with two-thirds of this acreage having been purchased and planted by René Rostaing in the early 1980s. The other third of their holdings hail from his father-in-law, Albert Dervieux, which came to the domaine upon the retirement of Monsieur Dervieux in 1990. All of the vines in the former-Dervieux parcel in la Viallière are more than one hundred years of age! The 2016 la Viallière is a classic in the making, but it is a bit more structured out of the blocks than the La Landonne and will need more time in the cellar to blossom. The bouquet is a fine, youthful mix of cassis, black raspberries, grilled meat, pepper, a touch of youthful stems, espresso and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and chewy, with a great core, firm, ripe tannins and lovely backend mineral drive on the very long and promising finish. This will be a great bottle of Côte-Rôtie in the fullness of time. 2031-2075+. **95.**

2016 Côte-Rôtie “Côte Blonde”- Domaine Rostaing

Traditionally, this has always been my personal favorite in the Rostaings’ cellars, but it may have a bit of competition from some of these other single vineyard bottlings in 2016. The Côte Blonde is going to be superb in this vintage, as it offers up a pure and complex bouquet of cassis, black raspberries, hazelnuts, gamebird, a beautiful base of soil tones, smoke, espresso, pepper and a distinct topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full and very pure, with a fine core, impressive nascent complexity, fine-grained tannins and outstanding length and grip on the vibrant finish. A great, great wine in the making! 2031-2075+. **95.**

2016 Côte-Rôtie “Côte Brune”- Domaine Rostaing

The Côte Brune is going to be the newest single vineyard bottling from Domaine Rostaing and it is going to be a brilliant example of Côte-Rôtie. The family now has three quarters of a hectare of vines in this vineyard, with fifty-five *ares* having come from Messieurs Dervieux and Gentaz when they retired (and all very old vines) and twenty *ares* having been purchased by René Rostaing in the late 1980s. The 2016 Côte Brune *chez* Rostaing offers up a gorgeous bouquet of black cherries, cassis, raw cocoa, venison, complex soil tones, woodsmoke, pepper, hazelnuts and a very floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with ripe, chewy tannins, fine soil signature and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. Stunning promise! 2031-2075+. **96.**

2015 Côte-Rôtie “Ampodium”- Domaine Rostaing

The 2015 Côte-Rôtie “Ampodium” from Pierre Rostaing is a superb wine in the making. The wine delivers a complex, ripe and youthful bouquet of cassis, grilled meats, pepper, lovely soil tones, youthful stems, black olive, woodsmoke and a bit of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite powerful for this cuvée, with the vintage’s character adding musculature and a rock solid core. The finish is long, ripely tannic and well-balanced, with impressive nascent complexity and fine length and grip on the powerful finish. This is going to be an excellent wine in the fullness of time, but it needs to hibernate in the cellar for several years before it will really be approachable. 2025-2065. **92.**

2015 Côte-Rôtie “La Landonne”- Domaine Rostaing

The 2015 La Landonne from Pierre Rostaing is a great classic in the making, offering up all of the power of the vintage, coupled with the customary elegance and soil signature of the Rostaing bottlings of Côte-Rôtie. The bouquet is deep, precise and still quite primary, offering up scents of black cherries, cassis, pepper, grilled meats, a great base of soil, woodsmoke, hints of the nuttiness to come with bottle age and still a touch of youthful stems. On the palate the wine is deep, focused and rock solid at the core, with plenty of muscle, great buried structural elements and a long, ripely tannic and powerful finish. This is listed at 13.5 percent octane and is probably closer to fourteen, but perfectly balanced and built for the long haul. A great classic in the making. 2030-2080+. **95.**

2015 Côte-Rôtie “Côte Blonde”- Domaine Rostaing

The 2015 Côte Blonde from Domaine Rostaing is another absolutely great wine in the making. As is customary, this is more perfumed and expressive aromatically than the La Landonne out of the blocks, but it too is quite a powerful vintage of this iconic bottling. The bouquet is deep, youthfully complex and poised to be very refined in the fullness of time, offering up scents of sweet dark berries, pepper, hazelnut, grilled *pigeon*, a bit of stems, a simply gorgeous base of soil and plenty of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and more suave on the attack than the La Landonne, but every bit as deep and structured on the backend. The wine shows an outstanding core in the mid-palate, firm, ripe tannins and a long, vibrant and still very primary and peppery finish. Stunning juice that only needs a proper stretch of time alone in the cellar to blossom! 2028-2080+. **95.**

Domaine Gilles Barge (Côte-Rôtie)

Julien Barge greeted us at the entrance to the domaine on a bright and sunny autumn afternoon towards the latter half of October and asked if we would like to visit the vineyards a bit before tasting. We spent a lovely hour in his parcel of the famous vineyard of Côte Brune, while he spoke of variations of *terroir* in the various *climats* of Côte-Rôtie, as well as his transition of the family vineyards to organic farming. His passion for viticulture came through strongly and it is clear that he believes that the more good work he does in the vineyards, the less he will need to do in the cellars to make great wines. He is one of the most enthusiastic young *vignerons* I have ever had the pleasure to meet and it seems quite clear that the wines at Domaine Barge, which have always been at a very high level, are bound to get even better as he continues to work arduously in the vineyards and his organic farming methods start to take root. Once we got back to the cellars, just up the hill from the main road in Ampuis, we sampled a couple of still quite closed young wines from the 2016 vintage out of cask, but as the wines were due for a racking and a bit reduced, I did not take precise notes on these wines. Julien Barge had also generously prepared a wide range of his wines in bottle for us to taste during our visit so after a few shut down 2016s out of barrel, we settled into a lovely range of the family's Côte-Rôtie bottling from the 2014, 2013 and 2012 vintages to end our afternoon tasting here. As I have written a full domaine profile on the Barge family and their outstanding examples of Côte-Rôtie in the recent past, I will not go into a lot of detail about their winemaking practices here and refer readers to the feature on the estate back in Issue Sixty-One.

Briefly, the Barge family now produces four different bottlings of Côte-Rôtie: their blended Cuvée du Plessy (which is predominantly from vineyards in the southern half of the appellation in the *Côte de Blonde* and is really a quintessentially silky and perfumed example of

Côte-Rôtie) and their three single vineyard bottlings, from the *climats* of Côte Brune, Côte Blonde and Le Combard. The latter is a great vineyard that had almost completely been abandoned during the nadir of Côte-Rôtie's fortunes, back in the first decades after the second world war. Julien's father, Gilles Barge, along with two other *vignerons*, had set about reclaiming this vineyard in 1990 and the three families have only just completed the project in 2015- a quarter of a century later! In addition to their four cuvées of Côte-Rôtie, Julien Barge is also making a St. Joseph Blanc bottling and a pair of Condrieu bottlings- none of which I had ever had the pleasure of tasting prior to my visit here in October. Of the two versions of Condrieu, one is a very fine, dry version of the wine that we know from the many other examples made in this style in the market today. The other Barge cuvée of Condrieu, which Julien calls "les Origines", is made in a semi-sweet style that Julien notes was the ancient style of Condrieu made in the nineteenth century. Both examples of Condrieu, despite their quite different styles, were very, very good in 2016. Julien does a very good job of ensuring that the alcohol levels do not get too high with his dry Condrieu, as I noted the 2016 was only thirteen percent- quite low by contemporary standards in the appellation and far more satisfactory to my palate as a result of its well-controlled octane. Julien Barge is doing great work in this very important and historical Côte-Rôtie domaine and the future looks very bright, as he is poised to build upon the outstanding work that his grandfather Pierre and his father Gilles Barge have done here during their long and illustrious careers.

2016 St. Joseph Blanc- Julien Barge

Julien Barge's example of St. Joseph Blanc is produced entirely from the Marsanne grape. The 2016 was showing very nicely at the time of our visit, offering up a bright bouquet of pear, spring flowers, salty soil tones and a nice touch of fresh almond. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, focused and vibrant, with excellent acidity and a long, well-balanced and zesty finish. 2018-2025. **90.**

2016 Condrieu- Julien Barge

Julien noted that this wine had only been bottled one month ago and would be better once it had a chance to settle in from the bottling and snap back into harmony, but to my palate, it was showing very well already. This is only thirteen percent and has a lovely vein of freshness and vibrancy running through it as a result, with the bouquet offering up scents of white peach, pear, coriander seed, acacia blossoms and white soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with bright acids, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and energetic finish. A fine, fine example. 2018-2025. **92.**

2016 Condrieu "les Origines"- Julien Barge

The les Origines bottling is finished with some residual sugar still in it, so the wine is like a Demi-Sec bottling of Vouvray in terms of its sweetness, but with lovely lift from bright acids and good mineral drive as well. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a fine blend of pear, peach, a touch of pineapple, musky floral tones and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and vibrant, with good focus and balance and a gently sweet finish that never strays in the direction of being cloying, due to excellent acidity. This is really tasty and would be a very novel and intriguing pairing with *foie gras* at the table. 2018-2025. **91.**



Julien Barge in one of his beloved parcels in the vineyard of Côte Brune.

Côte-Rôtie

2014 Côte-Rôtie “Cuvée du Plessy”- Domaine Gilles Barge

The 2014 Cuvée du Plessy is a lovely young wine, but it is still five to six years away from starting to drink well. The bouquet offers up superb promise in its aromatic constellation of raspberries, pepper, gamebirds, coffee and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with lovely nascent complexity, good depth at the core, suave tannins and fine focus and grip on the poised and classy finish. 2022-2060+. **92+**.

2014 Côte-Rôtie “Le Combard”- Domaine Gilles Barge

The 2014 Le Combard is an excellent wine in the making. The bouquet is very black fruity, offering up scents of cassis and dark berries, pepper, coffee, dark soil tones, *pigeon*, woodsmoke and a touch of youthful stemminess in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with fine depth at the core, excellent structure for long-term aging and a focused, complex and ripely tannic finish. Just give this excellent wine time to develop in the bottle. 2024-2060+. **92+**.

2014 Côte-Rôtie “Côte Brune”- Domaine Gilles Barge

The 2014 Côte-Rôtie “Côte Brune” from Julien Barge is going to be a great wine with enough time in the cellar. The nose jumps from the glass in a complex mélange of cassis, black olives, game, a complex base of stony soil, dark chocolate, nutskin, woodsmoke and pepper. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very suave and almost plush on the attack, with a

rock solid core, ripe, chewy tannins and superb focus and grip on the very long, nascently complex and perfectly balanced finish. Fine, fine juice. 2027-2070+. **94.**

2013 Côte-Rôtie “Cuvée du Plessy”- Domaine Gilles Barge

Julien observed that his 2013 bottlings of Côte-Rôtie were aged longer in barrel than most recent vintages, as the wines were structured and simply needed a longer *elevage* before they were ready to bottle. Consequently, this wine spent fully three years in cask before it was bottled (the norm in the cellars here is twenty-one to twenty-four months). The wine is outstanding, but more black fruity in profile than the more expressive 2014 version, as it offers up a fine nose of cassis, game, dark soil tones, pepper and a note of distant bonfire. On the palate the wine is deep, full and tightly-knit today, with a rock solid core, fine soil signature, firm, chewy tannins and excellent length on the young and well-balanced finish. This will need longer in the cellar to blossom, but it will be every bit as fine as the more flattering 2014 when it is ready to drink. 2025-2060+. **92+.**

2013 Côte-Rôtie “Coeur de Combard”- Domaine Gilles Barge

Domaine Barge has decided to label their cuvée from their newly reclaimed vineyard of Le Combard as “Coeur de Combard” in vintages that they deem “exceptional”, as is the case with the 2013. The wine was showing even better at the domaine than when I last tasted it ten months ago in New York, offering up a deep and very precise bouquet of cassis, black olives, espresso, venison, stony soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full and rock solid at the core, with impressive complexity, fine-grained ripe tannins and outstanding soil signature on the very long, perfectly balanced finish. This is very old school in style, coming in at only 12.5 percent alcohol and offering the potential for great evolution in the bottle. This is going to be the finest vintage yet from the reclaimed Le Combard vineyard, since the Barge family first start bottling it again in 2007. 2027-2075+. **94+.**

2012 Côte-Rôtie “Cuvée du Plessy”- Domaine Gilles Barge

The 2012 vintage in Côte-Rôtie is one of my favorites in recent times and the Barge family’s Cuvée du Plessy is a superb example of this top flight year. The wine has continued to blossom beautifully since I last saw a bottle, offering up the same purity and perfumed complexity in its bouquet of plums, black raspberries, black olives, gamebirds, toasted nuts, dark soil tones and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full and very pure on the attack, with a sappy core of fruit, lovely soil signature, ripe, suave tannins and excellent grip on the long and complex finish. This is really a lovely bottle of Côte-Rôtie in the making, and as is customary with this cuvée, it will not be too many more years before it start to drink with real generosity and style. That said, there is so much upside potential here that I would try to hold off drinking this wine for at least another six to eight years! 2023-2070. **93+.**

2012 Côte-Rôtie “Côte Brune”- Domaine Gilles Barge

The Barge family’s 2012 Côte Brune is a stunning young wine that is absolutely emblematic of the traditional style of Côte-Rôtie that has made this domaine famous for three generations. The bouquet is pure and nascently complex, offering up a very refined blend of cassis, black olives, roasted meats, pepper, complex minerality, plenty of smokiness and still a whisper of youthful stemminess in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with great sappiness at the core, lovely soil signature and a very, very long, ripely tannic and well-balanced finish. A great wine in the making. 2027-2080. **94+.**

Other Recently-Tasting Côte-Rôtie

2015 Côte-Rôtie “Colline de Couzou”- Domaine Patrick et Christophe Bonnefond

As I noted last summer in my note on the 2014 version, the Colline de Couzou bottling from Patrick and Christophe Bonnefond is their entry level bottling of Côte-Rôtie, which is made from their younger vines (ten to forty years of age) and hails primarily from their vineyards in the *Côte de Brune*, augmented by their hectare of vines in the southern end of the appellation in the village of Semons. The 2015 Colline de Couzou is a fine follow-up to the very good 2014, with a bit more muscle (due to the style of the vintage) on the palate and a fine nose of cassis, pepper, black olive, a bit of coffee grounds, a fine base of soil and a dollop of cedar. On the palate the wine is full, complex and very well-balanced, with a fine core, ripe, seamless tannins and fine length and grip on the focused and nascently complex finish. The younger vines here give this wine a nice veneer of early accessibility in 2015 and it is hardly a crime to be opening bottles now, but the wine will continue to improve with further bottle age. Good juice. 2018-2040+. **91.**

2015 Côte-Rôtie “Côte Rozier”- Domaine Patrick et Christophe Bonnefond

As I mentioned in my note on the 2014 over the summer, the Côte Rozier bottling from the Bonnefonds is produced from forty-five year-old syrah vines and is raised in twenty-five to thirty percent new oak.. The 2015 Côte Rozier is their first Côte-Rôtie to be shipped to the states and offers up a fine, ripe and pure bouquet of cassis, bitter chocolate, roasted meats, pepper, toasted hazelnuts, lovely soil tones, plenty of smokiness and a nice touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant in profile, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature and a long, nascently complex and moderately tannic finish. Today, the 2015 Côte Rozier is showing its new oak a bit more on the palate than on the nose, though it is well-integrated and should easily be absorbed into the fruit and soil tones here with a bit of bottle age. Fine juice. 2020-2055+. **92+.**

2015 Côte-Rôtie “les Rochains”- Domaine Patrick et Christophe Bonnefond

This is the oldest vines in the Bonnefond stable, as their family’s parcel in les Rochains was purchased in 1955 and the vines here today range from forty-five to full seventy-five years of age. Les Rochains abuts La Landonne, so this is a very well-situated *Côte de Brune* vineyard and the 2015 version is a fine wine in the making, but the youngest of these three 2015s from the Bonnefond brothers. The youthful nose offers up scents of dark berries, cassis, pepper, plenty of smokiness, dark soil tones, incipient notes of roasted venison and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine soil signature, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. 2023-2060. **93.**

2013 Côte-Rôtie “Brune et Blonde”- E. Guigal

The 2013 “Brune et Blonde” from Guigal shows plenty of the inherent elegance of this outstanding vintage in Côte-Rôtie, but it is augmented by plenty of *luxe* style smoky, spicy new oak, so it is a bit unique in profile as a result. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of cassis, pepper, smoked meats, a fine base of soil, lovely spice tones and a generous serving of nutty, spicy oak. On the palate the wine is full, suave and refined on the attack, with a good core, fine soil signature, ripe tannins and a long, complex and gently oaky finish. This is a very pretty example of Côte-Rôtie underneath the new oak, and though I like it quite well the way it is, I do not really see what the new wood brings to the equation here- especially in a vintage with the elegant profile of 2013. Everything is in good balance and this should age quite well, but I get the sense that a bit of mid-palate amplitude was sacrificed to the stay in new oak,

and I could well imagine this cuvée raised exclusively in older casks offering even more mid-palate dimension and potential for even greater complexity at full maturity. I should note that a bottle kept under argon gas for a few days good oakier and oakier. That said, this is still a very good wine. 2023-2055. **90.**



The steep vineyards of Côte-Rôtie, with the fabled vineyard of Côte Brune located just below the Guigal sign.

NEW RELEASES FROM TRANSATLANTIC BUBBLES



Inside the cellars at Champagne Georges Laval in Cumières.

Transatlantic Bubbles is a small importer based in Connecticut that represents some of the very finest small growers in all of Champagne. Amongst their stellar lineup are well-known producers such as Vincent Laval in Cumières and Benoît Marguet in Ambonnay, as well as less well-known, but equally accomplished *vignerons* such as Fabrice Goss of Champagne Alexandre Filaine in Damery, Sébastien Mouzon in Verzy and Aurélien Suenen in Cramant. The firm is run by two true Champagne lovers, Michael Carleton and Jeffrey Hellman, who until recently, ran Transatlantic Bubbles on the side as a labor of love while keeping their day jobs, but Michael has recently moved to devote his full-time energies to the venture and their superb portfolio of Champagne houses is now being more widely found in the top wine markets in the US. These gentlemen truly have a great lineup of small, grower Champagnes and I always look forward to our tastings of the new releases from their roster of top estates. Many of their producers are amongst the smallest to be found in Champagne, and though the quality of their wines was already quite well-known amongst other producers in the region prior to Transatlantic beginning to market their wines, the quantities produced at these houses were always considered simply too small to make them commercially viable for other importers in the US, so the wines were happily drunk and shared amongst the domaine's private clients and local restaurants, while

American wine importers went searching for larger estates that had significantly more bottles to sell. However, as the Champagne quality revolution has gained momentum in the last decade, small production figures have started to be less of a barrier to top growers having their wines exported from the region and smaller-scale producers such as Vincent Laval and Aurélien Suenen have found importers more interested in representing their wines, even if the petit number of cases available is not ideal. The Champagne market is all the better that these micro-estates are now finding good representation in the market and the gentlemen at Transatlantic were some of the first to realize that small production figures should not be an impediment to representation in the US market.

Non-Vintage

Champagne Corbon Brut Autrefois (Avize)

The new release of Brut Autrefois from Agnès Corbon was disgorged in the spring of 2015. Readers may recall from my visit to the domaine here back in the spring of 2015 that this Brut Autrefois is produced from their long-running solera, which was started by Claude Corbon back in the late 1990s (I believe) and which started out life as a blend of eighty-five percent chardonnay and fifteen percent pinot noir. As Agnès has been topping off the solera solely with chardonnay now for several years (the domaine bottles off fifty percent of the solera each year and adds in wine from the new vintage to replace what is sent off for secondary fermentation and aging *sur latte*), the percentage of pinot noir in the blend is probably down to around five percent these days. In any case, the wine spends fully eight years aging on its fine lees prior to disgorgement, so this was bottled in the spring of 2008. Unlike any of the other Corbon bottlings, the Brut Autrefois is the only wine that goes through malo. The new release is just lovely, offering up a pure and classy bouquet of pear, apple, fresh almond, chalky minerality, brioche and a touch of upper level smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, elegant *mousse*, still plenty of brisk acidity and excellent length on the complex and well-balanced finish. This is a terrific wine that is approachable today, but still a young wine and will be even better with a handful of years of cellaring. Like all of the Corbon wines, it is a true long distance runner. 2021-2050. 92+.

Alexandre Filaine “Cuvée Spéciale” Brut NV (Damery)

D

I love Fabrice Gass’s wines and he is one of my favorite small producers in all of Champagne. The current release of his Cuvée Spéciale is base year of 2014, with its customary *cépages* of forty-five percent pinot noir, thirty percent chardonnay and twenty-five percent pinot meunier. The finishing *dosage* this year was six grams per liter and the wine was disgorged in May of 2017. The bouquet is deep and pure, wafting from the glass in a classy blend of pear, apple, lemon, chalky minerality, gentle smokiness and the first vestiges of the *crème patissière* to come with bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary, with a lovely core, fine focus, cut and grip, elegant *mousse* and a long, racy and complex finish. A superb bottle in the making. 2020-2050. 92+.

Alexandre Filaine “Cuvée DMY” Brut NV (Damery)

Fabrice Gass received some sort of threatening letter from another winery about his use of Cuvée Confidence for this bottling, as apparently it is trademarked in some other country, and he has had to change the name of this wine to “Cuvée DMY” (for Damery) starting with this release. It remains the same wine under a different guise, aging solely under cork during its *elevage* and spending five years *sur latte* prior to disgorgement. The current release is base year 2011 and was disgorged also in May of 2017, with a *dosage* of six grams per liter. The bouquet

is deep, complex and vibrant, offering up a marvelous aromatic constellation of white peach, apple, fresh almond, bread dough, a very complex base of soil tones and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full, poised and very, very long, with a superb core, pinpoint bubbles, bright, zesty acids and outstanding length and grip on the laser-like finish. One third of the blend here is reserve wine from 2010, but this is primarily a 2011 wine and it is an extraordinary rendition of this more middling quality vintage! 2018-2040. **93+.**

2011 Alexandre Filaine “Cuvée Sensuum Vertigo” Brut NV (Damery)

This is now the fifth vintage of Sensuum Vertigo produced by Monsieur Gass and it too is an exceptional wine that transcends the quality of the vintage. The wine is superb on both the nose and palate, with the youthful bouquet offering up scents of apple, pear, chalky minerality, fresh-baked bread, gentle smokiness and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and racy, with a superb core, great focus and grip, outstanding complexity, elegant *mousse* and a very long, very pure and vibrant finish. A great bottle of 2011! 2018-2040. **94.**



Marguet Père et Fils “Shaman 13” Grand Cru Extra Brut NV (Ambonnay)

Benoît Marguet’s “Shaman 13” bottling is excellent. This is from the base year of 2013, with fifteen percent of the cuvée from the solera started here in 2010. The *cépages* of the Shaman 13 is a tad different from last year’s version, coming in at seventy-six percent pinot noir and twenty-four percent chardonnay. It is non-*dosé* this year and was disgorged in June of 2017. The

wine is excellent, offering up a complex bouquet of white peach, apple, *patissière*, a very complex base of soil and plenty of Ambonnay smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, refined *mousse*, excellent focus and grip and a long, complex and vibrant finish. Just a lovely wine. 2018-2030+. **92.**

Mouzon-Leroux et Fils “l’Atavique” Extra Brut Réserve NV (Verzy)

The new release of l’Atavique from Sébastien Mouzon is from the base year of 2013. The *cépages* of this iteration is sixty-five percent pinot noir and thirty-five percent chardonnay, with twenty percent of the cuvée made up of reserve wines from the previous two vintages. As is now Sébastien’s preferred method, twenty-five percent of the *vins clairs* are barrel-fermented and the wine was once again finished off with a *dosage* of three grams per liter. It was disgorged in January of 2017 and offers up a very refined bouquet of white peach, apple, fresh-baked bread, steely minerality and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant in profile, with a fine core, excellent focus and grip, refined *mousse* and a long, poised and nascently complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2018-2035+. **92.**

Mouzon-Leroux et Fils “l’Ascendant” Extra Brut Réserve NV (Verzy)

This is still the first release of Monsieur Mouzon’s l’Ascendant bottling, which is based on a solera that he started in 2010. As I mentioned last year, this is essentially the same wines as the fine l’Atavique bottling, with the exception that the *vins clairs* destined for the solera are one hundred percent barrel-fermented. This first release of l’Ascendant was disgorged in November of 2016 and was finished with a *dosage* of three grams per liter. It has opened up quite nicely since I last saw it in the spring of 2017, delivering a superb and very expressive bouquet of peach, pear, a complex base of soil tones, *patissière*, white flowers and just a whisper of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and zesty, with a lovely core, superb focus and balance, very refined *mousse* and a very long, pure and complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2018-2040. **93+.**

Ponson “la Petite Montagne” Premier Cru Extra Brut NV (Coulommès la Montagne)

The current release of “la Petite Montagne” non-vintage Extra Brut bottling from young Maxime Ponson is from the base year of 2012. The *cépages* of this release is slightly different that last year’s version, with the blend of the new release being thirty-two percent chardonnay, forty-five percent pinot meunier and thirty-two percent pinot noir. The wine was disgorged in June of 2017 and was showing very well in early January of 2018, offering up a bright and nascently complex nose of white peach, pear, brioche, a fine base of soil and a nice touch of dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and nicely open on the attack, with a fine core, bright acids, elegant *mousse* and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Maxime Ponson is still just getting started here and his wines are going to be even better down the road, but one has to admit that he has certainly hit the ground running! 2018-2035. **90.**

Champagne Suenen “Oiry” Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Extra Brut NV

The Oiry grand cru bottling from Monsieur Suenen is from the base year of 2014. Like all of the wines in his cellars from 2014 forwards, the *vins clairs* here were fermented with indigenous yeasts. The Oiry bottling was finished with a *dosage* of two grams per liter and disgorged in September of 2017. The wine is lovely and a quite elegant on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up scents of pear, apple, fresh-baked bread, chalky soil tones, white flowers and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, quite open and soil-driven in personality, with a good core, fine focus and grip, elegant *mousse*

and a long, complex and vibrant finish. This is more forward than Aurélien's "C + C" bottling and is already a delight to drink today. 2018-2040. **92.**

Champagne Suenen "C + C" Blanc de Blancs Grand Cru Extra Brut NV

This grand cru blend from Aurélien Suenen has been given the cuvée name of "C + C", as it is a blend of fruit from the two villages of Cramant and Chouilly, and the authorities do not allow the names of two different grand cru villages to appear on the same label. There was an inaugural release of this wine from the 2013 vintage, which I tasted in the cellars here in its formative stages back in the spring of 2015, but somehow missed it in bottle when it was released last year. This new iteration is from the base year of 2014 and was finished off with a *dosage* of three grams per liter and was disgorged in September of 2017. The wine is excellent, offering up a youthful and very promising bouquet of apple, pear, complex, limestone minerality, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, gentle smokiness and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very minerally in personality today, with a rock solid core, fine focus and grip, very elegant *mousse* and a very long, primary and vibrant finish. This is still a puppy and should be tucked away in the cellar for at least another four years, to allow it to really blossom fully. It will be outstanding with a bit of patience. 2022-2050. **93+.**

Rosé Non-Vintage

Mouzon-Leroux et Fils "l'Incadescent" Rosé Saignée Brut NV

The new release of Mouzon-Leroux et Fils "l'Incadescent" Rosé Saignée is from the base year of 2013 and was disgorged in September of 2016. This year fifty percent of the *vins clairs* for this cuvée were again barrel-fermented and the finishing *dosage* is a touch lower than last year (three grams per liter versus 3.5 for the base year 2012 version), so the continued drop in *dosage* of this cuvée has continued. As has been the case for several years, this is a really lovely and delicately styled Rosé, offering up a fine, youthful nose of white cherries, tangerine, chalky soil tones, dried flowers and a fine array of discreet spice tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and nascently complexity, with a lovely core, pinpoint bubbles and fine focus and grip on the long and very nicely balanced finish. This is approachable today, but will be far more generous on the palate with a year or two in the cellar. Fine juice, but without quite the same mid-palate dimension as the Base Year 2012 version, which of course makes perfect sense. 2018-2030+. **91+.**

Vintage-Dated Bottlings

2012 Marguet Père et Fils "les Bermonts" Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Millésime

Benoît Marguet has released four single vineyard wines from his fine array of parcels in the village of Ambonnay in the great 2012 vintage, with his "les Bermonts" produced entirely from chardonnay and finished with zero *dosage*. The wine was disgorged in September of 2017. It is truly a stunning young bottle, soaring from the glass in a vibrant blend of apple, white peach, very complex minerality, gentle smokiness, dried flowers and incipient notes of *crème patissière*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and stunning in its precision and mineral drive, with a rock solid core, great focus and grip, pinpoint bubbles and outstanding length on the poised and very promising finish. This is a stunning bottle of Blanc de Blancs in the making, but let it reach its tenth birthday before starting to drink it in earnest! 2022-2055+. **95.**

2012 Marguet Père et Fils “les Crayères” Extra Brut Millésime

The 2012 les Crayères is the only blended *lieux à dit* bottling from Monsieur Marguet in this vintage, with the *cépages* of this iteration seventy-two percent pinot noir and twenty-eight percent chardonnay. Like the other single vineyard bottlings *chez* Marguet, this received no *dosage* and was disgorged in September of 2017. This is a breathtakingly beautiful wine in the making, offering up a very youthful and vibrant nose of apple, white peach, chalky minerality, *patissière*, white flowers and gentle upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very mineral in profile, with racy acids, great focus and grip, elegant *mousse* and a very, very long, nascently complex finish. This shows just a bit of oak influence from the barrel fermentation of its *vins clairs* right now, but it is a lovely element that just adds to the complexity of the wine. Stunning juice. 2024-2065. **95.**

2012 Marguet Père et Fils “la Grande Ruelle” Blanc de Noirs Extra Brut Millésime

The 2012 vintage is the second to be bottled from la Grande Ruelle by Benoît Marguet and it is outstanding. This is composed entirely of pinot noir and was finished non-*dosé* and disgorged in September of 2017. The wine is beautiful on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up scents of white peach, *patissière*, a touch of tangerine, complex soil tones, a touch of hazelnut and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and plenty deep at the core, with fine soil signature, elegant *mousse* and just a whisper of backend oakiness adding additional complexity on the long and perfectly balanced finish. A very, very elegant expression of Ambonnay pinot noir. 2022-2055. **94.**

2012 Marguet Père et Fils “le Parc” Blanc de Blancs Extra Brut Millésime Jeroboam

The 2012 Le Parc from Benoît Marguet is another outstanding wine, which he decided to bottle solely in jeroboams in this vintage. Interestingly, this is again a Blanc de Blancs bottling in 2012, but the vineyard of Le Parc is actually home to Krug’s Clos d’Ambonnay, which is entirely pinot noir, showing that this magical *terroir* can excel with either grape variety (and would probably be pretty good planted to pinot meunier as well). The 2012 Le Parc is another stunning young wine, offering up a pure and youthful bouquet of pear, apple, complex minerality, a touch of citrus peel, white flowers and a lovely note of salinity in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, complex and utterly seamless, with a superb core, elegant *mousse* and a very long, racy and laser-like finish. Brilliant wine. 2024-2065. **95.**

2011 Alexandre Filaine “Sensuum Vertigo” Brut Millésime (Damery)

Fabrice Gass’s only vintage-dated cuvée is called Sensuum Vertigo, and he only began making this wine in the 2007 vintage. The 2011 version is just the third iteration of Sensuum Vertigo, as Monsieur Gass has made it in 2007 and 2008 previously (and there is a 2012 aging in the cellars in Damery). The 2011 Sensuum Vertigo is produced from a *cépages* of fifty-five percent pinot noir, thirty percent chardonnay and fifteen percent pinot meunier, with the finishing *dosage* having been around 5.5 grams per liter. The wine is simply outstanding and quite transcendent of the vintage, offering up a superb and youthfully complex bouquet of apple, pear, chalky minerality, fresh-baked bread and a lovely topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still plenty racy, with a great core, excellent nascent complexity, elegant *mousse* and a very, very long, vibrant and laser-like finish. A brilliant 2011 that needs at least some time in the cellar to really blossom completely. 2020-2040. **94.**

2011 Marguet Père et Fils “Ambonnay” Extra Brut Millésime

The Ambonnay bottling is now Benoît Marguet’s sole vintage-dated bottling from a blend of parcels, as the remainder of his lineup is composed of single vineyard wines. However,

as I mentioned last year in the note on the 2010, the 2009 vintage was the last where this wine included any fruit from the family's small parcel in the neighboring village of Bouzy and this is now one hundred percent Ambonnay fruit. This is an amazingly good 2011, with a blend of two-thirds pinot noir and one-third chardonnay, no *dosage* and disgorgement back in September of 2017. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a youthful mix of apple, white peach, *patissière*, chalky soil tones and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and racy, with a superb core, fine focus and grip, very refined *mousse* and a long, zesty and very, very promising finish. I would give this another three years in the cellar to really blossom. 2021-2050. 94.



And a Couple From Michael's Cellar

Laherte Frères "Ultradition" Extra Brut NV

The gents from Transatlantic Bubbles do not represent Laherte Frères for the New York market, so they do not generally taste these wines with me, and the New York distributor does not send them my way either, so I generally only have a chance to drink these beautiful wines when I am in France. Michael kindly handed me off a couple of bottles of Laherte from his cellar to round out this report, when I mentioned how much I loved Aurélien Laherte's wines these days and how seldom I now get to taste them. This bottling of Ultradition was disgorged in December of 2014 and is a blend of sixty percent pinot meunier, thirty percent chardonnay and ten percent pinot noir. It is from the base year of 2012 and I actually tasted this bottling in its

infancy during a visit to the domaine in Chavot back in the spring of 2015. It was finished with a *dosage* of four grams per liter. The wine has blossomed beautifully and now offers up a complex bouquet of apple, walnut, chalky minerality, gentle Meunier floral tones, *patissière* and a lovely upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and now wide open in personality, with a lovely core, refined *mousse* and excellent focus and grip on the long and complex finish. Fine, fine juice with plenty of life still ahead. 2018-2035. **92.**

Laherte Frères “Les Beaudiers” Rosé Saignée Extra Brut

As I leaned during my visit to the cellars in Chavot a couple of years ago, the Les Beaudiers Rosé Saignée bottling from the Laherte family is made entirely from old vine pinot meunier, with the parcels planted in 1953, 1958 and 1965. Skin contact last twelve to sixteen hours, depending on the vintage, to give the wine its fairly deep rosé color, and the *vins clairs* do not go through malo. This wine had been in Michael’s cellar for three to five years and he could not remember precisely when he cellared it, so I am not sure of the base year of the wine, but it was drinking very nicely, offering up scents of blood orange, rhubarb, rye bread, chalky soil tones and dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and quite dry in profile, with a good core, frothy *mousse* and a long, complex and zesty finish. This was probably finished with a *dosage* of four grams or so, but it seems drier than that today. Good juice, but definitely for fans of Extra Brut bottlings. 2018-2030. **91.**

Champagne Savart “l’Accomplie” Brut NV

Michael and Jeff were the first American importers for the lovely wines from Frédéric Savart in Écueil, but Monsieur Savart chose a different importer a year or two down the road. Despite the parting of ways, the gents at Transatlantic have nothing but nice things to say about Frédéric’s wines and Michael generously pulled out a bottle of the Savart cuvée of l’Accomplie from the base year of 2008 to finish up our tasting this past January. The wine is absolutely superb on the nose, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of apple, white peach, salty minerality, a touch of fresh almond, dried flowers and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is good, but not quite as refined as on the nose, as it delivers a full-bodied format with good length and grip, frothy *mousse* and very respectable complexity, but not quite the precision and elegance on the backend as is found in the bouquet. This is a good, solid bottle, but I have the sense that Frédéric Savart is making even better wines today than he was back in 2008 and the newer releases will age even better than this wine. 2018-2030. **89.**

2008 Georges Laval “Cumières” Extra Brut

As most fans of Vincent Laval’s wines already know, it is quite rare that he ever uses any *dosage* for his wines, but the 2008 Cumières bottling did include two grams per liter of *dosage*. This bottle was disgorged in February of 2012 and was drinking stunningly well at our January tasting, soaring from the glass in a complex and nicely mature aromatic blend of apple, white peach, sweet nutty tones, *patissière* and a stunning base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely *à point*, with a lovely core, fine soil signature, elegant *mousse* and a very long, focused and zesty finish. I love all of Vincent’s bottlings, but I would not mind if he routinely had a bit of *dosage* in at least one of his cuvées, as I love the balance of this 2008! 2018-2035. **93.**

MORE FROM THE SUPERB 2016 BEAUJOLAIS VINTAGE



Spring starting to feel the sap rising in the vineyards of Régnié.

The 2016 vintage is proving to be outstanding in Beaujolais, but due to the two bouts of severe hail that swept through the region in the spring and early summer, it is not created equally in each commune. This was right on the heels of some frost damage in early May, so in the vineyards that Mother Nature was not so good to, the vintage can be a shadow of the excellence found where the weather was not severe. As readers may recall from my piece on the 2015 and 2016 vintages in Beaujolais a couple of issues back, the first severe hailstorm hit at the end of May and focused on the village of Chiroubles and bits of surrounding communes, practically wiping out 2016 production in several of the most severely-affected parcels. A second and equally catastrophic round of hail hit on June 24th, again hitting parts of Chiroubles, but focused primarily on certain sectors of Fleurie and to a lesser extent, Morgon and Moulin-à-Vent. Both of these hailstorms were brutal on the vineyards that they pummeled (Fleurie lost seventy percent of its crop in the second storm), and though some were able to produce wine in the parcels affected, there is often a sense of dissipated energy in the 2016s that were hailed upon, in comparison to the parcels and communes in the region that were untouched by these two violent hailstorms. As I noted in my last piece on Beaujolais, the growing season of 2016 did not relent in serving up challenges to *vignerons* in mid-summer, as the second big hailstorm was accompanied by very

heavy rains and then warm, muggy and often rainy weather in its aftermath, which put immense mildew pressure on the vines throughout the month of June and in the first part of July. It was not a happy time to be a *vigneron* in the worst-affected communes of Beaujolais!

Happily, the fortunes of the producers in the region turned around with good weather arriving by mid-July and August and September both picture-perfect and whatever bunches had been spared by the hail and mildew, began to ripen beautifully and the *fin de saison* ended up producing a stellar crop of very high quality, albeit, often of a quite small size in parcels that had been adversely affected in the first half of the summer of 2016. As I mentioned in the feature on Beaujolais' 2015 and 2016 vintages back in September of last year, in the communes that were unaffected by the two rounds of hail, which would include St. Amour, Chénas and Juliénas in the northern half of the Crus, and Régnié, Brouilly and Côte de Brouilly in the southern half of the Cru communes, yields are good and the quality of the wines is quite outstanding. These wines offer up classic structural chassis, excellent transparency and plenty of sappy, pure fruit tones. This characteristic is also shared by the wines from the southern half of the Beaujolais region in general, where there are no Crus, but plenty of really, really fine Beaujolais and Beaujolais-Villages bottlings from the vintage of 2016. In the areas that had to bear the brunt of one or both hailstorms, the wines are not quite at the same level as those from completely unaffected vineyards, but they too can be very, very good, though the quality is obviously not quite as consistent. One has to pick and choose a bit more in these communes, as not every vineyard in Morgon (to cite just one example) was hit by the second round of hail in late June, so some wines are pure, sappy and very similar to wines from Chénas or Brouilly, and others, where they may have been hit by the hail, are a bit more structured and less pure and sappy out of the blocks. The issue is not "hail taint" in these wines, but rather less perfect ripening, as the vines devoted several weeks' worth of energy to trying to repair devastated foliage in the wake of the hail, and bunches that survived the hail had to wait for the ripening process to get going again after the storm repair efforts of the plants had run its course.

But, though some of the very finest Crus were affected by the two hailstorms, overall, the vintage is turning out to be truly outstanding and it is clearly now my favorite vintage in the region since 2011. The top 2016s are far more classic and vibrant wines than the more powerful 2015s, and though the former vintage may well produce some of the longest-lived Cru Beaujolais in a generation, it is hard not to be smitten by the sappy purity and very transparent personalities of the top 2016s. As I observed back in September, the 2017 growing season was also very difficult for some communes in Beaujolais, as many of the same Crus were once again hit by severe hail damage, so it is going to be a pair of very short crops in those particular villages, and it will make a lot of sense for Beaujolais lovers to stock up on the best 2016s over the very near-term, as there is likely to be even more severe crop shortfalls in the coming vintage. I will be spending a few days in Beaujolais in early March this year and will be better able to report on where the crop shortfalls are most likely to fall in the 2017 vintage once I get back, but right now, it makes great sense to me to advocate those who are Beaujolais fans to not miss out on the best wines of 2016, a great many of which are truly exceptional in quality. With this in mind, I am writing another feature on Beaujolais just two issues after the last one, covering more of the newly arriving 2016s and some more of the later-released 2015s. As always, there are also plenty of notes from older vintages also sprinkled in here.

Beaujolais and Beaujolais-Villages

2016 Beaujolais “Coeur de Vendanges”- Pierre-Marie Chermette

The Beaujolais “Coeur de Vendanges” cuvée from Pierre-Marie Chermette is made from his oldest vines, which are now more than a century in age. The 2016 Coeur de Vendanges is a stunning young wine, offering up a superb and quite youthful bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, a bit of gamebird, woodsmoke, a touch of chicory and a truly exceptional base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, transparent and seamlessly balanced, with a nice touch of backend tannin, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and tangy finish. Just a classic bottle of very old vine Beaujolais that is already a stellar drink, but will improve with bottle age. 2018-2040. **93.**

2016 Beaujolais “en Besset”- Domaine de Fa (Antoine et Maxime Graillet)

The 2016 Beaujolais “en Besset” from the Graillet brothers’ Domaine de Fa is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a vibrant bouquet of cherries, sweet cranberries, a fine base of soil, a touch of fresh thyme and acorn and plenty of upper register violets. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with a fine core, good underlying soil signature and just a bit of backend tannin perking up the fairly long and tangy finish. This is done in a semi-carbonic style and raised in a combination of cement and older *foudres* and is still quite youthful on the backend and will be even better with six to twelve months of bottle age. A quite serious example of Beaujolais. 2018-2028. **88.**

2016 Beaujolais-Villages- Domaine des Marrans (Mathieu Mélinand)

The Beaujolais-Villages bottling from Domaine des Marrans is produced from forty-five year-old vines in the northern Beaujolais village of Jullié, which is just a few minutes’ drive west of Juliéas. It is done in a semi-carbonic style and raised in cement tanks. The 2016 offers up a deep and youthful bouquet of red and black cherries, acorn, a fine base of soil, fresh herbs and just a touch of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and nicely balanced, with a good core, just a touch of modest tannin on the finish and impressive length and grip. This is a very good bottle of Beaujolais-Villages that seems built to age nicely and could do with a year or two to allow the tannin here to fully fall away. Good juice. 2019-2030. **88.**

2016 Beaujolais-Villages “La Roche”- Domaine du Clos du Fief (Michel et Sylvain Tête)

The Beaujolais-Villages from the Tête family also hails from vines in the village of Jullié, with its granitic slopes not all dissimilar from those of neighboring Juliéas where the family domaine is based. The 2016 Beaujolais-Villages from the Têtes is really fine, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of sweet cranberries, pomegranate, a touch of violet, lovely soil tones, hints of gamebird and fresh thyme and a topnote of chicory. On the palate the wine is medium-full, precise and vibrant, with a lovely core, fine transparency, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is terrific Beaujolais-Villages! 2018-2030. **90.**

Juliéas

2016 Juliéas- Domaine du Clos du Fief (Michel et Sylvain Tête)

The 2016 Juliéas from Michel et Sylvain Tête is an absolute classic and it is easy to see why Domaine du Clos du Fief is considered the very top producer in this village. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a very refined blend of red and black cherries, red plum, woodsmoke, a complex base of soil, incipient nuttiness, gamebird and a beautiful topnote that combines lavender and violets. On the palate the wine is very pure, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with a fine core, excellent transparency, modest tannins and a very long, tangy and nascently complex

finish. This is an absolute classic in the making that deserves some time in the cellar to really blossom, as it has outstanding structure for young Juliéna, but is so tasty out of the blocks that it is going to be hard to keep one's hands off of bottles! 2018-2035. **92+**.

Moulin-à-Vent

2016 Moulin-à-Vent “Vieilles Vignes”- Louis Boillot

As I mentioned last year, Louis Boillot has purchased a parcel in Fleurie, but it was wiped out by hail in the 2016 vintage and we will not see this wine until the 2017 is released. However, I was able to taste his 2016 examples from Moulin-à-Vent while I was visiting the domaine in Chambolle in November. The 2016 Vieilles Vignes bottling is excellent, offering up a very pure and reserved bouquet of dark berries, espresso, gamebird, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a touch of chicory in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full, long and nicely structured, with a good core, superb focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and a long, nascently complex finish. This will be outstanding, but will need some bottle age to blossom. 2020-2050+. **92+**.

2016 Moulin-à-Vent “Les Rouchaux”- Louis Boillot

The 2016 les Rouchaux is simply stunning in this vintage, and while it qualitatively may be at the same level of the fine 2015 fashioned from this vineyard, I prefer the 2016 version stylistically, as it is an absolute classic in the making and will clearly make old bones! The stunning nose jumps from the glass in a blend of cassis, dark berries, a touch of chicory again, a complex base of dark soil tones, woodsmoke, currant leaf and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with a suave attack, a rock solid core, ripe, seamless tannins and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced finish. This will age a very long time. 2022-2060+. **94**.

2016 Moulin-à-Vent “Les Brussellions”- Louis Boillot

Les Brussellions was the only parcel in Monsieur Boillot's lineup of Moulin-à-Vent vineyards that was hit by a bit of hail in 2016 and the yields here were down by forty percent as a result. The wine is very pure and precise on the nose, but also a touch peppery as a result of the hail, offering up a mix of cassis, black cherries, dark soil tones, gamebird, espresso, a bit of leather and the aforementioned peppery overtones. On the palate the wine is deep, full and complex, but a bit chewier at the present time than these other bottlings, with a fine core and very good transparency, firm tannins and a long, slightly peppery finish. This is clearly less evolved than the other three 2016 Moulin-à-Vent bottlings that I tasted in November, and I am not sure if this is always going to be a bit stern because of the hail damage, or is simply slower in its evolution right now. It will be a very good wine either way, but given my uncertainty, I have scored it in a range right now. 2022-2055. **91-93**.

2016 Moulin-à-Vent “Plantier de Favre”- Louis Boillot

The Plantier de Favre is a new bottling from Louis Boillot in 2016 and the wine is outstanding. This hails from a parcel of sixty year-old vines that lie right next door to Château des Jacques' “Clos Carquelin” and happily, this parcel was spared any hail damage. The resulting wine is a stellar new addition to the Boillot lineup, wafting from the glass in a complex aromatic constellation of cassis, sweet dark berries, espresso, currant leaf, a complex base of soil, woodsmoke and a nice touch of *pigeon*. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and already quite suave on the attack, with a rock solid core, fine-grained tannins and a very long, complex and tangy finish. A marvelous young Moulin-à-Vent. As David Crosby might say, “welcome to the party.” 2020-2060. **94**.

Fleurie

2016 Fleurie- Domaines des Hospices de Belleville (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

While the Drouhin family began producing the Hospices de Belleville wines in the 2014 vintage, to my mind, it is 2016 that is truly the first Drouhin-styled vintage here, as in 2014, it was still too early to fully feel the effect of their proprietorship and 2015 was a hot and quite atypical vintage in the region. However, the 2016s are fully under the umbrella of the Drouhin team and the wines have turned out stunning! The Fleurie is the weakest of these three bottlings, which is not too surprising, given the hail in the village, but the wine is still very strong on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a fine blend of red and black cherries, fresh thyme, a touch of pepper, great soil signature and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tangy and complex, with a good core and lovely length and grip on the gently tannic finish. The only real impression the hail of early summer has left here is in a touch less energy *vis à vis* the Brouilly and Morgon bottlings, but this is still a very lovely bottle. 2018-2030+. **91+**.

2016 Fleurie “Clos Vernay”- Domaine Lafarge-Vial

In the 2016 vintage, the Lafarges’ Bel Air bottling in Fleurie was fully wiped out from hail, but both the other Fleurie *lieux à dits* farmed by the family were not hailed upon. The 2016 Clos Vernay is a very fine and quite black fruity young wine, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of dark berries, woodsmoke, gamebird, a superb base of quite stony soil tones and a fine touch of upper register spices. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and beautifully focused, with a good core, lovely length and grip and just a touch of backend tannin perking up the finish. A fine bottle of Fleurie that will age very, very well. 2018-2035+. **92+**.

2016 Fleurie “Joie du Palais” - Domaine Lafarge-Vial

2015 was the first Lafarge vintage of Joie du Palais, which is a *lieu à dit* near La Madone in the upper elevations of Fleurie, and happily, it was spared hail damage in 2016. This is quite red fruity in personality in this vintage, offering up scents of red berries, a touch of fruitcake, an excellent base of soil, *pigeon*, orange peel and gentle spice elements. On the palate the wine is pure, full and intensely flavored, with lovely focus and grip, tangy acids and just a touch of tannin on the very long and nascently complex finish. This too is lovely. 2018-2035. **92**.

2015 Fleurie “Roche Guillon”- Domaine de Fa (Antoine et Maxime Graillet)

The 2015 Fleurie “Roche Guillon” from the Graillet brothers is a very pretty and very fresh and perfumed example of the vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of musky violets, red and black cherries, woodsmoke, gamebird, dark soil tones and a discreet touch of cedary oak floating somewhere in the background. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit chewy on the backend, with a superb core of fruit, fine soil signature and a long, nascently complex finish. This is listed at thirteen percent octane on the label, which seems more than a wee bit optimistic, but the wine is nicely fresh and soil-driven for a 2015 and is really a fine bottle of Fleurie in the making. It is of course quite drinkable today, but it is still quite primary and will be even better down the road. Impressive. 2020-2040. **92**.

2015 Fleurie- Domaine des Marrans (Mathieu Mélinand)

The village of Fleurie is the home base for Mathieu Mélinand and his bottling from this cru hails from forty-five year-old vines, is semi-carbonically macerated and aged in older Burgundy barrels. The 2015 Fleurie here is a fine example of the vintage, managing the ripeness of the year very well and offering up a youthful bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of vinesmoke, gamebird, dark soil tones, chervil and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and complex, with a rock solid core, very good balance and a

long, ripely tannic and vibrant finish. This has plenty of plush fruit on the attack, but deserves a bit of bottle age to allow the tannins of the vintage to subside a bit on the backend. Fine juice. 2020-2040. **92.**



Morgon

2016 Morgon- Domaines des Hospices de Belleville (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The Morgon is my favorite 2016 in the fine lineup of Hospices de Belleville bottlings from Maison Drouhin, as this is a superb wine in the making. The bouquet shows of a deep and youthful blend of cassis, black cherries, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, stony soil tones and a touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite solid at the core, with lovely depth and definition, moderate, suave tannins and great backend energy on the long, nascently complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is an outstanding Morgon in the making! 2020-2055. **93+.**

2016 Morgon “Corcelette”- Domaine des Marrans (Mathieu Mélinand)

The 2016 Morgon “Corcelette” from Domaine des Marrans hails from fifty-plus year-old vines and is raised in older Burgundy casks, as is the style for most of the wines from Monsieur Mélinand. The wine is still very young on both the nose and palate, but seems to show just a bit of pepperiness from the second round of hail that hit certain *lieux à dits* in the village of Morgon in 2016. The nose wafts from the glass in a deep, complex and slightly weedy nose of red and black cherries, fresh herb tones, pepper, stony soil, woodsmoke and gamebird. On the palate the

wine is deep, full-bodied, young and slightly herbaceous, but with fine depth at the core, very good soil signature and a long, tangy and modestly tannic finish. I suspect that this wine will always show just a bit of pepperiness from the hail in late June, but there is depth and dimension here as well and my gut feeling is that three to five years down the road, this is going to be a very good bottle of Morgon. 2021-2040. **89+**.

Chiroubles

2016 Chiroubles- Domaine Lafarge-Vial

The Lafarge family could not have been more unlucky with their holdings in Beaujolais in 2016, as Chiroubles and Fleurie were the focal points of the two severe hail storms that adversely affected the vintage! This wine had only been bottled a week before I tasted it at the family domaine in Volnay in November, but it was showing quite nicely, offering up an exotic nose of cherries, a touch of lavender, citrus peel, a fine base of soil and a bit of pepper in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and vibrant, with fine transparency, just a whisper of tannin and a long, tangy finish. Given how little Chiroubles was even produced in 2016, due to the intense hail damage, this wine has turned out remarkably well, but there will not be a lot of it to go around. 2018-2035. **90**.

2015 Chiroubles “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine des Marrans (Mathieu Mélinand)

The 2015 Chiroubles “Vieilles Vignes” from Mathieu Mélinand is produced from vines in excess of fifty years of age and raised in older Burgundy casks. The wine is listed at fourteen percent octane and is probably a few tenths higher, but retains fine freshness on both the nose and palate. The sappy bouquet offers up scents of black cherries, chocolate, bonfire, roasted *pigeon* and some balsamic tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite powerful for Chiroubles, with a rock solid core, a fair bit of chewy, well-integrated tannin and fine length and grip on the focused and well-balanced finish. This handles the ripeness of 2015 quite well and will be a very good drink with a few years’ worth of bottle age. 2020-2040. **90**.

Brouilly

2016 Brouilly- Domaines des Hospices de Belleville (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2016 Brouilly from the Hospices de Belleville is an outstanding example of the vintage, with all of the crunchy red fruit and transparency of the best wines of the vintage on display here. The lovely and quite complex bouquet jumps from the glass in a mix of red berries, cherries, lovely spice tones, a fine base of soil, gamebird and a topnote of bonfire. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with bouncy acidity, fine focus and grip and a very long, refined and vibrant finish. A beautiful bottle of Brouilly. 2018-2030. **92**.

2016 Brouilly “Combiaty” Vieilles Vignes- Laurent Martray

The Brouilly “Combiaty” old vine cuvée from Laurent Martray is actually made from some of his youngest vines, which are fifty years of age, as he has several parcels that are around one hundred years old! The wine is raised in older *foudres* and the 2016 offers up a superb and surprisingly black fruity bouquet of black cherries, a touch of dark berry, woodsmoke, just a whisper of acorn, discreet spice tones, a fine base of dark soil and a touch of anise in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off impressive mid-palate depth, with lovely focus and grip, a nice touch of backend tannin and a long, complex and beautifully

structured finish. I am accustomed to most examples of Brouilly being made for early quaffing, but this wine is a proper Cru Beaujolais that is built for the cellar and should age long and very gracefully. Fine, fine juice that is approachable today, but really deserves at least a couple of years in the cellar to really blossom. I should mention that it is sealed with a synthetic cork and I do not recognize the brand and have not sense of how well it will hold up with extended cellaring, but given how good the wine is underneath, it seems crazy to me not to have sealed this under a proper, natural cork. 2020-2040. **92.**

Côte de Brouilly

2016 Côte de Brouilly- Domaine Lafarge-Vial

The 2016 vintage is the first for Chantal and Frédéric Lafarge in Côte de Brouilly and the wine has turned out beautifully. These vines are fifty years of age and have turned out an absolutely classic example of this fine appellation, with the bouquet delivering scents of cherries, sweet cranberries, orange peel, stony minerality, spice tones and incipient smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a nice touch of sappiness at the core, modest tannins and excellent length and grip on the tangy and complex finish. A fine, fine new addition to the Lafarge-Vial roster! 2018-2045. **94.**

**THE 2015, 2014, 2013 AND 2012 WHITE BURGUNDY VINTAGES:
IS IT TIME TO START DRINKING THESE LOVELY WINES?**



The village of Chassagne-Montrachet, as seen across the premier cru vineyard of Maltroie.

I do not normally drink a lot of young white Burgundy, for as I have written in the past, I come from a generation that intimately knew white Burgundy before the age of premo and I developed a palate for truly mature wines from this region a long time ago. However, given that premature oxidation remains such a nemesis to aged white Burgundy, now more than twenty years out from the first affected vintage of 1994 (and this despite the extraordinary steps by the Burgundians to try and understand and cure this scourge), most of the white Burgundy that I do drink these days is far younger than would have been the case a couple of decades ago. I have to confess right at the start that I do not care for young white Burgundy anywhere near as much as I do for fully mature examples of these great terroirs and, as a result, drink far, far less white Burgundy today than I did back in its golden age. However, necessity often requires drinking younger wines these days and is, in fact, the far more prudent course of action if one is still going to partake in these lovely wines and not risk the very real problem of dumping oxidized bottles down the sink six to eight years out from the vintage. As I have observed many times before, the problem of premature oxidation is universally shared by white Burgundy-producing domaines and I do not ascribe at all to the theory that certain producers are more immune to the incidence

of premox than any other. Variations that are reported in places such as Don Cornwell's fine white Burgundy wiki I attribute solely to statistical anomalies brought about by sample sizes that are too small to be a truly accurate reflection of the issue.

In my experience, the ameliorative measures that have been taken by Burgundians in the years since the problem of premox first became quite evident early in the new millennium, as the 1995 whites started to crash into oxidation and the 1996s showed signs of severe foundational problems as well (and eventually also oxidized en masse), have not really had a dramatic effect on the issue of premox, though in some cases, it seems to have warded off the onset of the problem by a year or two longer in bottle. Techniques such as bottling more reductively, allowing a bit of oxidation to take place early on in the fermentation process (hoping to remove the most likely elements in the wine to oxidize later in bottle), using larger diameter corks to seal the wines, returning to basket presses from the pneumatic ones, rinsing corks solely in hot water, using paraffin instead of silicone to coat the corks (amongst other techniques), have not seemed to really make any serious inroads against premox. They have all been good attempts to try and eliminate possible causes of the problem, but to date they do not seem to have met with any meaningful success. I have heard a few winemakers tell me that the quality of the bottles themselves could be a possible cause for premature oxidation (bottle molds at the present time are reportedly used for far longer than was the case in the years prior to premox, and the possible degradation of the molds with longer usage could be a contributory factor to premox), with the idea being that the poorly-molded bottles of today have pock marks on the interior of the necks that affects the ability of the cork and the glass to provide an air-tight interface and variations of oxygen ingress have been the result of these less well-manufactured bottles. The theory sounds as plausible to me as any I have heard that has not already been pursued (such as corks, presses and oxidation introduction in the cellars) and which have proven not to have alleviated the problem, so I hope that current research into premature oxidation is looking at degradation in the bottle supply as a possible cause.

But, my gut feeling these days is that premature oxidation is probably just another manifestation of global warming and is somehow linked to what certain elements of the world's population are doing to the planet to warm it up and make it less habitable in general. The causes of global warming have been going on for several decades now (and are not dramatically ahead of the timeframe in which premox arrived to sully the white wine universe), so it seems a reasonable supposition that premox could be simply another symptom of climate change. Is premature oxidation just part of the collateral damage of the environmental crisis we find ourselves in the midst of today? If this is indeed the case, it seems likely that the premox will remain pervasive in dry white wines such as white Burgundy, white Bordeaux, Savennières and Alsace wines, to name just a few of the most obvious victims, until climate change is halted. As long as the interests responsible for global warming feel that their actions are justified on some level, we are certainly not likely to see any change for the better (the inertia of this issue in the last quarter century is quite discouraging), and our planet will continue to warm, weather patterns will continue to distort and premox seems very likely to become part of the permanent wine landscape (and perhaps the least of our future problems within the vast issue of climate change). So it may well be time to get fully accustomed to drinking dry white wines in their youth and stop hoping for a cure to the problem.

The following report focuses on the four most recent white Burgundy vintages that have found their way into the market: 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012. Of these four years, the 2014 vintage is my favorite, and back before the age of premo, 2014 would have been classified as a great classic vintage for white Burgundy that should be allowed to age long and gracefully in the bottle before drinking. Of course, as that is no longer possible, the question becomes when is the right time to start drinking up the majority of this vintage. Given that premo seems to really start to accelerate its casualty rates these days about six years out from a given vintage, the window for drinking a white Burgundy vintage that is as zesty and structured as 2014 is a difficult question. In the old days, the rule of thumb would have been to start drinking 2014 villages level wines around age five, the finest premier crus ten years out from the vintage and the top grand crus from age twelve onwards. Those timelines are obviously ancient history today, but the 2014s that I have tasted for this report are still not ready to drink and a bit primary and snappy at the present time, so my inclination would be to still give them another year before starting to drink them with abandon. And, I would not leave more than ten percent of my cellar cache of 2014 white Burgundies around to see their eighth birthdays, so I would drink them with serious exertion once 2019 arrives and plan to finish up the vintage by the end of 2021 or so. The 2015s are generally more fleshy and forward than their 2014 counterparts and I see no reason to risk any (but the most structured) of them by waiting, as a majority of the vintage are already pretty tasty and wide open in personality. Maybe more tensile wines such as Arnaud Ente's or Alex Moreau's 2015s will demand some cellaring, but most white Burgundies from this vintage are probably going to offer as much enjoyment over the next few years as they will at age five or seven. I have already had quite a few premoed 2012s, so this is a vintage that should be drunk up over the near-term, as the wines are now six years old and entering the premo danger zone. The 2013 whites are presently my favorite vintage for drinking right now, as they do not have quite the same cut and mineral precision of the 2014s (nor the same core density) and have evolved just a touch faster as a result. They are presently quite delicious young white Burgundies and offer up a lot of pleasure in their youthful guise and this is my "go to vintage" of young white Burgundy for current drinking.

The notes that follow have been accrued over the last half dozen months and represent wines that I have drunk off of wine lists (primarily in Burgundy itself during my trips there), or were opened to taste at the domaines themselves when tasting through the 2016s. Those examples have been augmented by several growers' lineups from 2014 or 2015 that have been sent to me to taste here in New York from domaines, many of whom I do not currently visit during my five or six weeks in Burgundy each year. I have been loath to add primarily new white Burgundy-producing estates to my roster of visits for each trip to the region, due to the aforementioned problems of premature oxidation and my greater love for aged white Burgundies over younger ones. Given that in our current era of global warming, most white Burgs are going to be dead and gone by age ten, I lean towards adding primarily new red wine producers to my cellar visiting schedule when I am in the region and have some open slots on the schedule, based on the hope that red Burgundies will somehow continue to age a bit more classically in this age of climate change, given that my overall preference is for drinking mature wines from any region and color group. Given this bias, there are a lot of very, very good white Burgundy producers who do not get covered with the regularity that they deserve in these pages, and a few importers are trying to get me to slot some of their very good estates in my tasting trip itineraries in the future. So, there are several new producers (at least to me) whose wines I had the pleasure to

write up for this report and can recommend very highly, and based on how well these wines have shown, I will do my best to try and start making cellar visits to these estates as well.

I should mention (as I have not done so in a couple of years), that the windows of expected drinkability that are incorporated into each tasting note below continue to frame the wine as if premature oxidation did not exist and project how long the wine will last if a lucky bottle escapes the long reach of premo. The reason I continue to do this, despite the fact that at least ninety percent of bottles will never reach these dates of maturity, is that the range listed is also useful to give some idea of where the wine is in its traditional evolutionary arc in the bottle, in terms of acids, aromatic and flavor development and structural accessibility at the time it was tasted. And as long as premo remains a bottle by bottle phenomenon, there is a chance that a small handful of bottles will actually make it to their true peaks of maturity. There are no notes on bottles that I have tasted in recent times which were already premoed, as I do not bother to take notes on these wines, reasoning that this is a flawed bottle and not representative of the wine in general, and I do not wish to add to the statistical inaccuracies that still fuel much of the discussion of premature oxidation. But, as I mentioned above, I have already started to see a fair bit of premo in 2012s and think it is time to at least think about drinking up this vintage of white Burgundy. In general terms, I do not tend to see all that many bottles of prematurely oxidized white Burgundies these days, as I do not hold onto bottles past their sixth or seventh birthdays anymore and seldom cross paths with bottles that are into their higher risk period of premo likelihood, which I continue to peg at eight years out from the vintage and beyond.

The following notes are arranged geographically from north to south, and then within each geographical range, chronologically. Within each vintage subset, the wines are listed alphabetically in ascending order of appellation, so village wines from a given vintage appear first, followed by premier crus and then grand crus. I have tucked in a few notes on sound examples of 2010s and 2011s in the article as well, as the wines were drinking very well recently and the notes might as well appear here, with their younger brethren, rather than hang around until I have a chance to write an article on the white Burgundies from these two vintages.

Chablis

2015 Chablis- Domaine Jean-Marc Brocard (served from half bottle)

The domaine's wines are usually quite good, but this 2015 Chablis *villages* was a bit lacking in both depth and complexity. The correct, but uninspired bouquet offers up scents of apple, lime, citrus peel and a touch of flinty minerality. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and wide open, with a bit of mid-palate dilution, little complexity and a bright, but fairly short and simple finish. Just okay. 2017-2025. **86.**

2013 Chablis "Vaulorent"- Domaine William Fèvre

The 2013 Vaulorent from Domaine Fèvre is drinking very nicely indeed, with the slightly more fruit-driven style of this vintage in Chablis in evidence here on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex and wide open blend of lime, green apple, beeswax, flinty minerality, dried flowers and a touch of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, pure and à point, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, vibrant and complex finish. Usually this bottling will show a bit more backend mineral drive, but

this is the style of the vintage in Chablis and the wine is an excellent success in this style. 2018-2030+. **93.**

2013 Chablis “Butteaux”- Domaine Raveneau

Domaine Raveneau 2013 Butteaux is just starting to drink well. The bouquet is starting to blossom, offering up scents of lemon, apple, beeswax a touch of oyster shell, chalky soil tones and a topnote of citrus oil. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and focused, with impressive complexity and lovely cut and grip on the long finish. This has more classical minerality than is typical of the average 2013 Chablis. Lovely wine. 2017-2035+. **93+.**

2013 Chablis “Grenouilles”- Domaine Louis Michel et Fils

The 2013 Grenouilles from Domaine Louis Michel is a wide open and fairly fruit-driven example of this grand cru, but with plenty of complexity and enjoyment to be had at the present time. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of lime, pear, a nice touch of flinty minerality, citrus peel, dried flowers and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and loaded with fruit, with fine mid-palate intensity, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the vibrant finish. This does not have quite the customary soil signature of most vintages of Grenouilles here, but the wine is drinking very nicely and delivers plenty of fruit complexity. 2018-2030. **92.**

2013 Chablis “les Clos”- Domaine Louis Michel et Fils

Not surprisingly, there is more underlying mineral drive in the 2013 les Clos than the Grenouilles from Domaine Michel. This wine is just starting to blossom and hit its stride today, offering up a deep and complex nose of tart orange, lemon, green apple, chalky minerality, a nice touch of flintiness as well and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full, long and complex, with an outstanding core, fine focus and backend mineral drive and a long, zesty and perfectly balanced finish. Fine, fine juice. 2018-2040. **94.**

Regional

2015 Bourgogne “Chaumes des Perrières”- Domaine Raymond Dupont-Fahn

The 2015 Chaumes de Perrières from Raymond Dupont is a very good example of its level, offering up a quite Meursault-like nose of pear, iodine, chalky soil, a touch of hazelnut and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and nicely ripe, with good backend minerality, solid acids and good length and grip on the very tasty finish. Good juice. 2018-2025. **89.**

2015 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

Alex Moreau’s entry level wine is very well-made and always a fine value. The 2015 version offers up a lovely nose of lemon, pear, chalky soil tones, floral tones and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and juicy, with good framing acids and impressive length on the bright and bouncy finish. 2017-2023. **88.**

2014 Bourgogne Vézelay “le Clos” Blanc- Domaine Elise Villiers

The 2014 Bourgogne Vézelay “le Clos” Blanc from Elise Villiers is a lively and mineral wine that shows its close proximity to Chablis in its vibrant bouquet of lime, green apple, chalky soil tones, citrus peel and a touch of lemongrass in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and snappy, with a good core, racy acids and excellent length and grip on the complex finish. There is plenty of *nervosité* here and a fine sense of balance that really works well at the table. A fine, fine example. 2018-2028. **89.**

Côte de Nuits

2015 Morey St. Denis Blanc- Domaine Dujac

The 2015 Domaine Dujac Morey Blanc is drinking very nicely out of the blocks, offering up a succulent nose of white peach, almond, a touch of crab apple, chalky soil tones, bee pollen and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full, open and vibrant, with lovely depth at the core, good framing acids and lovely length and grip on the classy finish. This will probably not make old bones, but in this day and age, that is preferable in any case. 2018-2025+. **90.**



The hill of Corton in the background, as seen leaving the village of Alox-Corton on the Route des Grands Crus.

Pernand-Vergelesses and Corton-Charlemagne

2015 Pernand-Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

As I have mentioned before, the premier cru vineyard of Sous Frétilles is really a terrific *terroir* and if one is looking for a “baby Corton-Charlemagne”, this fine bottling certainly approaches that rubric. The Domaine Clos de la Chapelle makes one of the top examples of this premier cru and the 2015 version is drinking beautifully, offering up a deep and complex nose of pear, apple, a touch of iodine, a fine base of chalky minerality, almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite open already, with a very good core, fine soil signature, bright acids and a long, ripe and pure finish. This wine seems to be showing even better structure than a bottle I wrote about a year ago and clearly I have underestimated its potential longevity a bit. A lovely bottle. 2018-2030. **91+.**

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The 2014 vintage of Sous Frétilles from Clos de la Chapelle is a tad less evolved than its 2015 sibling, but it probably has even a touch more potential. The youthful nose is pure and bright, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of pear, a touch of tangerine, fresh almond, acacia blossoms, beautiful limestone soil tones, discreet notes of iodine and a very judicious framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and very elegant in profile, with a fine core, zesty acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and beautifully balanced finish. This is a tad leaner than the 2015 version, but even finer. 2019-2030+. **92.**

2014 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The Drouhin family makes one of the finest examples of Corton-Charlemagne in all of Burgundy and their 2014 version is still a young wine and will continue to improve with further bottle age, but it is already a very impressive glass of wine. The bouquet soars from the glass in a superb blend of pear, lemon, chalky minerality, spring flowers, hints of *crème patissière* and a deft framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid in the mid-palate, with great depth and focus, bright acidity and a very, very long, complex and elegant finish. 2018-2040. **95.**

Savigny-lès Beaune

2015 Savigny-lès Beaune Blanc- Domaine Serrigny

The 2015 Savigny-lès Beaune Blanc from Domaine Serrigny is one of the few wines in their lineup that does not come from old vines, as the majority here were planted in 1989 and 2008. Marie-Laure Serrigny allows her wines to see no new oak, so the Savigny Blanc is raised in older casks for twelve months before being racked into tank to finish its *elevage*. The 2015 version is excellent, offering a deep and precise bouquet of apple, pear, chalky soil tones, beeswax, hazelnuts and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and complex, with fine depth at the core, sound framing acids and impressive length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. The amplitude of the 2015 vintage is quite evident on the palate here, but the wine has lovely structure and stays light on its feet. A fine example! 2018-2025+. **90.**

Beaune

2015 Beaune “les Reversées” Blanc- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The Beaune “les Reversées” Blanc from Domaine Clos de la Chapelle is a perfect example of a 2015 white Burgundy that is wide open and drinking with plenty of style at a young age. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a fine blend of pear, apple, fresh almond, just a whisper of honeycomb, lovely soil tones and a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied and generous, with a lovely core, fine soil signature, sound acids and a long, complex and classy finish. This is nicely broad and complex, but there is not a lot in reserve today. I suspect that this vintage of Reversées Blanc from Clos de la Chapelle will not make old bones, but it will provide plenty of pleasure over the next handful of years. 2018-2025+. **89+.**

2015 Beaune “Clos des Mouches” Blanc- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The 2015 Clos des Mouches Blanc is an excellent wine that shares the forward and accessible nature of the vintage, making it already quite a fine drink at what is a young age for this bottling. The complex bouquet wafts from the glass in a beautiful mélange of pear, apple,

almond cream, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely plush on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, bright, framing acids and fine length and grip on the focused and zesty finish. 2017-2030. **92+**.

2014 Beaune “les Reversées” Blanc- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The 2014 vintage of les Reversées Blanc from Clos de la Chapelle is showing even better potential than the last time I tasted it and is a classic example of this beautiful vintage. The bouquet is deep, pure and nascently complex, offering up a precise and perfumed blend of pear, delicious apple, spring flowers, lovely soil tones, just a whisper of fresh almond and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and still quite tightly-knit, with a fine core, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the long and nascently complex finish. This may well be the finest vintage to date of this bottling from Clos de la Chapelle, but it needs just a bit more time to uncoil and show its layers of complexity. Like many top 2014 whites, this is still just a touch monolithic at the present time. Clearly, I underrated this out of the blocks! 2020-2040. **91+**.

2013 Beaune “les Reversées” Blanc- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The 2013 vintage of Clos de la Chapelle les Reversées Blanc is drinking very nicely today and has a fine girdle of acidity to continue to carry it on into the future. The bright and vibrant bouquet offers up scents of lemon, pear, fresh almond, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full, zesty and focused, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature, very good focus and grip and a long, complex finish. This is ready to go and has that lovely, slightly lean 2013 profile that nicely accentuates the underlying minerality. 2018-2030. **90**.

Meursault

2015 Meursault “les Gruyaches”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet

Les Gruyaches is a *lieu à dit* tucked on the Puligny border, just below Charmes *Dessous*, and Monsieur Fichet works a parcel of just under thirty *ares* of old vines planted in 1930. The 2015 les Gruyaches is a lovely wine, offering up a bright bouquet of apple, white peach, almond, chalky soil tones, a bit of salinity, incipient notes of geranium and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush at the core, with good framing acids, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex finish. These are pretty rich topsoils and this is a more fruit-driven wine as a result, with the fruit tones taking on a lovely combination of Meursault and Puligny that is quite befitting a wine from this locale. 2018-2030+. **89**.

2015 Meursault “le Tesson”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet

The 2015 Meursault “le Tesson” from Jean-Philippe Fichet is an excellent example of this fine *terroir*, wafting from the glass in a complex aromatic constellation of apple, pear, lime zest, chalky minerality, vanillin oak, a touch of iodine and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, crisp and full-bodied, with excellent mid-palate depth, a lovely girdle of acidity and fine focus and grip on the long and complex finish. This has more *nervosité* than the 2015 Gruyaches. I really like the backend energy here. 2018-2032. **90+**.

2015 Meursault “les Chevalières”- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet

The 2015 les Chevalières from Monsieur Fichet is another very fine bottle of Meursault in the making, with great delicacy and refined complexity evident on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of pear, passion fruit, chalky minerality, lime zest,

almonds and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and tightly-knit out of the blocks, with a fine core, excellent acidity and a very long, vibrant and complex finish. This is the youngest of these three fine *lieux à dits* bottlings and could use a year or two in the cellar to really start to blossom, but it is an excellent wine and will probably just edge out these other two Fichet bottlings in the fullness of time. 2020-2035+. **91.**

2015 Meursault “Clos des Bouchères”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2015 Clos des Bouchères from Domaine Roulot is drinking very nicely already and is wide open in personality, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, peach, almond, spring flowers, lovely chalky soil signature and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite broad on the attack, with a good core, fine minerality on the backend and sound framing acids perking up the long and complex finish. There is a touch of nutskin as the final closing note on the finish that suggest drinking sooner will be a good strategy for this bottle. 2018-2030. **92.**



2011 Meursault “Charmes”- Domaine Guy Roulot

Jean-Marc Roulot was one of the earliest practitioners of bottling more reductively to try and offset the effects of premature oxidation, and he has had some success with this technique. However, this bottle of 2011 Charmes also showed the potential problem with this approach to premo, as at age seven, the wine seems to be in a state of permanent reduction and is not developing anywhere near the customary level of complexity that is typical of this cuvée. The

wine seems stillborn on both the nose and palate from its reductive state at bottling, with the nose offering up scents of apple, hazelnut, chalk, spring flowers, a touch of vanillin oak and plenty of iodine-like notes from reduction. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and well-balanced, but also simple and lacking in developmental complexity, with solid grip and plenty of backend length, but no signs of starting to blossom. There is no signs of decline from premo here, but the wine is sadly simple today and seems locked into this position. 2018-2030. **89.**

2011 Meursault “Genevrières”- Domaine des Comtes Lafon

The 2011 Genevrières from Dominique Lafon is starting to get very fragile at age seven, as premo seems to be starting with this particular bottle. The wine is showing some overt signs of oxidation in its bouquet of fallen apples, nutskin, chalky soil tones, butter and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, gently structured, long and zesty, with sound structural elements, but flavors that are already starting to shade towards the oxidative. Drink up. 2018-2021. **87.**

2010 Meursault “Petit Charrons”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

This bottle falls a bit outside of the purview of this article, but as it was drinking so beautifully, I figured I might as well add the note here! It also adds a data point of a wine closing in on its eighth birthday and still fresh as a daisy. The bouquet of the 2010 Petit Charrons from Monsieur Ente is complex, vibrant and just hitting its apogee, as it offers up scents of passion fruit, pear, iodine, complex minerality, hazelnut and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very complex, with gorgeous backend minerality, bright acids and a very long, zesty and perfectly balanced finish. 2018-2030+. **94.**

Auxey-Duresses

2015 Auxey-Duresses Blanc- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet

The 2015 Auxey-Duresses Blanc from Jean-Philippe Fichet is wide open and already drinking beautifully. The wine offers up a very elegant bouquet of apple, pear, spring flowers, a great base of limestone minerality and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and exceptionally mineral-driven on the backend, with fine focus and grip, bright acids and lovely complexity on the long and vibrant finish. Lovely juice! 2018-2025+. **90.**

2014 Auxey-Duresses Blanc- Domaine Jean-Philippe Fichet

Monsieur Fichet’s 2014 version of Auxey-Duresses Blanc is a touch less ripe than the fine 2015 (13 versus 13.5 percent) and even more defined by its superb underlying minerality as a result. The bouquet is bright and still nicely youthful in its constellation of pear, lime, a touch of beeswax, white flowers, fresh almond and complex limestone minerality. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and still tightly-knit, with a rock solid core, great transparency and focus and a very long, snappy and vibrant finish. This does not have the generosity of the 2015 version, but I love its precision and far greater expression of minerality, and with a year or two in the cellar, this will be even better than the very good 2015 Auxey Blanc. 2019-2030+. **90+.**

Puligny-Montrachet

2015 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot

The 2015 Puligny-Montrachet from Domaine Bachelet-Monnot is really a very pretty and elegant example of the vintage, with all of the floral upper register beauty of the finest wines of this village. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of white peach, apple, a gardenful of white flowers, a nice touch of fresh almond, a good base of soil and a gentle

framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is nicely ripe, full and well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, good focus and grip and a long, vibrant finish. This is still a tad on the young side on the palate and is not quite as expressive as the bouquet today, but give it six to twelve more months in bottle and the palate should catch up nicely. 2019-2030+. **89+**.

2015 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Jacques Carillon

The 2015 Puligny *villages* from Domaine Carillon is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a bright and energetic nose of apple, white peach, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely pure on the attack, with a plump core, good soil signature and fine framing acids on the long and already succulent finish. Unlike the 2015 premier crus *chez* Carillon, the Puligny AC will drink well from the outset. 2018-2035+. **90**.

2015 Puligny-Montrachet “Champs Canet”- Domaine Jacques Carillon

It had been a year since I last tasted the 2015s from Jacques Carillon and the wines showed very nicely and quite as expected. The Champs Canet offers up a lovely nose of apple, white peach, pastry cream, beeswax, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and a bit closed down from its spring bottling, with a fine core, very good acids for the vintage and impressive length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This needs a few years to blossom. 2021-2045+. **92**.

2015 Puligny-Montrachet “les Folatières”- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot

The 2015 Folatières from Domaine Bachelet-Monnot is an elegant aromatic example of the vintage, offering up a pure and gently reductive bouquet of pear, delicious apple, a hint of iodine, chalky minerality, fresh almond and a gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit broader-shouldered than the precise nose suggests, with a lovely core of fruit, fine soil signature, bright acids and fine length and grip on the still quite primary finish. This is a lovely bottle of Folatières in the making that needs another year for the palate to catch up with the expressiveness of the nose. 2019-2035+. **91**.

2015 Puligny-Montrachet “les Perrières”- Domaine Jacques Carillon

The 2015 Perrières from Monsieur Carillon is a bit more refined on the nose than the Champs Canet, wafting from the glass in a stylish and deep aromatic constellation of apple, pear, citrus zest, chalky minerality, incipient notes of almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and light on its feet, with a rock solid core, fine mineral drive and very impressive cut and grip on the youthfully reserved and very well-balanced finish. Fine juice in the making. 2022-2045+. **92+**.

2015 Puligny-Montrachet “les Referts”- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot

The Referts bottling from the Bachelet brothers hails from forty year-old vines and the 2015 version is outstanding, delivering lovely purity in its classy bouquet of white peach, pear, spring flowers, a touch of pastry cream, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and still quite youthful, with a lovely core, fine transparency and a long, youthful and zesty finish. This needs a few years in the cellar to blossom on the palate, but will be an excellent bottle once it has had a chance to open up properly. 2020-2040. **92**.

2015 Puligny-Montrachet “les Referts”- Domaine Jacques Carillon

The 2015 Referts *chez* Carillon offers up the finest aromatics of these three premier crus, but it is also more powerfully built and adolescent on the palate. The first class bouquet delivers scents of pear, apple, beeswax, a lovely base of chalk, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite broad-shouldered, with great intensity at the core, bright

acids and a very long, very youthful and adolescent finish. This is far more closed after its *mise* than I anticipated a year ago and needs at least four years in the cellar to blossom and should be excellent in due course. 2022-2050. **92+**.

2015 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Jacques Carillon

The 2015 Domaine Carillon Bienvenues was showing beautifully in the cellars in November of 2017, offering up a very refined, very pure and very closed bouquet of spring flowers, apple, pear, *crème patissière*, limestone minerality, vanillin oak and a vibrant topnote of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very precise and racy for a 2015, with a great core, laser-like focus and lovely length and grip on the poised and beautifully balanced finish. Just add patience, as this too is showing more structured than I anticipated a year ago. 2022-2055+. **96**.



Jacques Carillon outside of his cellar door in the center of Puligny-Montrachet.

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “Folatières”- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The 2014 Puligny “Folatières” from Maison Drouhin is another premier cru that is drinking very nicely at the present time. The wine offers up a complex nose of peach, apple, nutty overtones, limestone soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a good core, lovey bounce and a long, snappy and very well-balanced finish. Fine juice. 2018-2035. **91**.

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “Clos de la Garenne”- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The Drouhins’ 2014 Clos de la Garenne is starting to drink very nicely right now and is a half-step ahead of many of the premier crus in this lovely vintage in terms of evolution in bottle. The bouquet is wide open and really attractive, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of white peach, apple, chalky soil tones, a touch of beeswax, lemon zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a touch broad-shouldered, with a good core, fine focus and grip, bright acids and a long, nascently complex and bouncy finish. Fine juice. 2018-2030+. **92.**

2014 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Jacques Carillon

The 2014 Bienvenues from Jacques Carillon is still a young wine in need of at least a few more years in the cellar to start to blossom properly, but if the long reach of premax will leave it be for at least a few years, it will be magical. The youthful bouquet offers up a gorgeous blend of delicious apples, pears, complex, limestone minerality, a touch of iodine, vanillin oak and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and racy, with outstanding mid-palate depth, bright acids and a very long, nascently complex and perfectly balanced finish. 2020-2050. **96.**

2013 Puligny-Montrachet “les Perrières”- Domaine Jacques Carillon

The 2013 Perrières from Monsieur Carillon is starting to drink with breed and elegance, as it blossoms nicely from behind its girdle of acidity at age four. The bouquet delivers scents of pear, pink grapefruit, complex, chalky minerality, a touch of citrus peel, just a hint of the *crème patissière* and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely zesty, with a lovely core, fine soil signature, crisp acids and a long, complex and nicely blossoming finish. This is not one of the most forward examples of 2013, but it is a very high quality wine that is already pretty easy to drink, though it will continue to blossom over the next handful of years and it is far from obligatory to start drinking this wine now. 2018-2035. **93.**

Chassagne-Montrachet

2015 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot

Marc and Alex Bachelet started this domaine only in 2005, having put together parcels from both their father and uncle’s vineyard patrimony as their foundation for the estate. Today, they also lease several plots to round out their lineup. The Chassagne *villages* bottling is aged in about twenty-five percent new oak and the 2015 version is a lovely and classic example of the commune, offering up a pure bouquet of apple, pear, spring flowers, a lovely base of soil and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and nicely focused, with fine depth in the mid-palate, bright framing acids and very good length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is nicely open structurally, but still has additional layers to offer to those who defer gratification for a couple of years. Good juice. 2018-2030+. **90.**

2015 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

This wine has a touch more tropical fruit tones on both the nose and palate than the 2015 St. Aubin “Remilly” in the Moreau cellars this year, which was tasted just ahead of it. The 2015 Chassagne AC offers up scents of pear, tangerine, lovely soil tones, almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full, crisp and nicely pure on the attack, with good mid-palate depth and a long, zesty and very expressive finish. This is a wine that is wide open and drinking very well at this early age and will make a lot of friends early. 2017-2027. **91.**

2015 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean”- Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

The premier cru of Clos St. Jean was once planted entirely to pinot noir and it is still one of the finest vineyards in all of Chassagne for red wine, but it is also produces a very nice example of chardonnay and Alex Moreau makes one of its finest white wine expressions. The 2015 here wafts from the glass in an esthery, complex mix of apple, pear, a touch of bee pollen, incipient notes of pastry cream, soil, vanillin oak and a floral topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and deep at the core, with superb cut and grip and a long, focused and complex finish. 2018-2035+. **92.**

2015 Chassagne-Montrachet “Maltroie”- Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

The 2015 Maltroie from Alex Moreau is an outstanding, wine, with a more primary and less developed bouquet than the Clos St. Jean, featuring scents of white peach, apple, a touch of fresh almond, superb soil tones, gentle smokiness and a suave base of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, deep and still quite primary, with its full-bodied format offering up beautiful balance and focus, nascent complexity and a long, zesty and youthful finish. 2019-2035+. **92+.**

2015 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot”- Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

The 2015 Morgeot from Domaine Moreau is a gorgeous wine that will drink well fairly early, offering up a very refined nose of lemon, pear, salty soil tones, fresh almond, spring flowers, vanillin oak and a topnote of lemon oil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, lovely transparency and superb cut and grip on the very long and zesty finish. I would still give it a year or two to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge, but it is already very tasty! 2019-2040. **94.**

2013 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chenevottes” Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

The 2013 vintage of white Burgundy is starting to really drink nicely and the Chenevottes from Alex Moreau was in fine form the last time I drank a bottle. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a superb blend of pear, lemon, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a lovely core, impressive complexity and a long, racy finish. There is energy to burn here and plenty of breed and finesse as well. 2017-2030+. **92+.**

2013 Chassagne-Montrachet “Caillerets”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

This was paired with the Domaine Moreau 2013 Grand Ruchottes, and for the first fifteen minutes that the wine was open, it struggled a bit to keep pace. However, once it reached cruising altitude, the wine was outstanding, delivering a complex and very elegant bouquet of pear, apple, a touch of peppermint, chalky soil tones, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and zesty, with a lovely core of fruit, fine soil signature, great purity and a very long, complex and racy finish. This is wide open and really hitting on all cylinders today. 2017-2035. **93+.**

2013 Chassagne-Montrachet “Ruchottes”- Domaine Ramonet

The 2013 Ruchottes from Domaine Ramonet is a lovely wine, but it is one of the more backward 2013 premier crus that I have tasted in the last year and it is still in need of a few more years of bottle age before it will properly blossom. With a bit of coaxing, the bouquet delivers a vibrant blend of apple, lemon, a touch of spearmint, chalky minerality, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a good core, fine soil signature and a long, tensile and beautifully focused finish. In a perfect world, this would still see another couple of years in the cellar before the next bottle is opened. 2020-2045+. **93+.**

2013 Chassagne-Montrachet “Grands Ruchottes”- Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

This is Alex Moreau’s top premier cru bottling and it is drinking beautifully in the 2013 vintage. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex blend of pear, lemon, a touch of grapefruit, limestone minerality, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and racy, with laser-like focus, a fine core and a very long, vibrant and complex finish. This is just staring to drink with style and grace and still has a long life ahead of it, but it is no crime to be drinking bottles today! 2017-2035+. **95.**

Saint Aubin

2015 St. Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot

The 2015 Remilly from the Bachelet brothers is a quite classic example of this fine *terroir*, offering up a bright and classy bouquet of pear, apple, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, apple blossoms, chalky soil tones and a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is crisp, full and complex, with a fine core, lovely mineral undertow, good acids for the vintage and a long, ripe and very well-balanced finish. This has the structure to age very nicely, but like so many 2015s, it is awfully tasty already and it is going to be hard not to drink this in the blush of youth. 2018-2030+. **91.**

2015 St. Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Bernard Moreau et Fils

This was the first wine I ever tasted from Alex Moreau, as his 2000 vintage of en Remilly really jumped out at a comparative tasting and spurred me on to visit the estate. The 2015 version is excellent, wafting from the glass in a fine aromatic blend of pear, apple, a nice touch of fresh almond, chalky minerality, spring flowers and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is full, crisp and complex, with fine purity on the attack, a fine core and a long, wide open and vibrant finish that is drinking with distinction already. 2017-2027. **91.**

2014 St. Aubin “les Pincées”- Domaine Hubert Lamy

The 2014 St. Aubin “les Pincées” from Olivier Lamy is still on the youthful side and would not mind another year of bottle age, but with a little coaxing in decanter, it opens up nicely. The bouquet is pure and bright, offering up scents of apple, lemon, iodine, chalky soil tones and a lovely topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a good core, fine soil signature, lovely focus and grip and a long, vibrant finish. Good juice. 2018-2030. **90.**

2014 St. Aubin “Clos des Chantennières” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Hubert Lamy

Olivier Lamy’s 2014 Clos des Chantennières is showing beautifully and is really starting to drink with generosity. The bouquet is a classic blend of apple pear, chalky soil tones, a touch of *crème patissière* and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and zesty, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and wide open finish. While many 2014s still have a bit of a sense of reserve the Clos des Chantennières is really in a good place right now. 2018-2030. **92.**

Maranges

2015 Maranges “la Fussière” Blanc- Domaine Bachelet-Monnot

I have to confess that I need to step up my game in Maranges, as I was not even aware that there were premier crus in this village! Perhaps the excellent quality of these Bachelet-Monnot wines will be the impetus I need to finally visit the commune. The 2015 la Fussière Blanc is one of these premier crus and offers up a lovely bouquet of white peach, apple, a lovely

base of soil, a touch of fresh almond and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full and nascently complex, with a fine core, lovely focus and balanced, a fine spine of acidity and good bounce and grip on the refined finish. This is really good! 2018-2030. **90.**



Côte Chalonnaise

2015 Rully Blanc- Maison Joseph Drouhin

The 2015 Rully Blanc from Maison Drouhin is a very pretty wine that is drinking with generosity already, offering up a bright bouquet of apple, pineapple, gentle notes of butter and a nice underpinning of minerality. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and succulent, with good focus and length on the well-balanced finish. 2017-2025. **89.**

2015 Rully “Clos la Folie”- Domaine de la Folie

Domaine de la Folie is located in the town of Chagny in the far northern end of the appellation of Rully, where limestone predominates in the soils. Since 2010, Clémence Noël-Bouton has taken over the day to day direction of this estate from her father, Jérôme, and she is very ably assisted by her husband, Baptiste. Their Clos la Folie bottling is raised in stainless steel and the 2015 offers up a lovely nose of apple, lime, wet stone minerality, spring flowers, a touch of citrus peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and juicy in personality, with a fine core, good framing acids and a long, wide open and complex finish. Good juice. 2018-2025. **89+.**

2015 Rully “Clos St. Jacques” Monopole- Domaine de la Folie

The Clos St. Jacques monopole of Domaine de la Folie faces due east and was planted in 1952, making these lovely old vines some of the most venerable in the appellation. The 2015 Clos St. Jacques jumps from the glass in a complex aromatic blend of apple, nectarine, beeswax, a refined base of limestone soil tones, spring flowers and a bit of almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied and complex, with excellent mid-palate depth, fine focus and grip and impressive backend minerality on the long and classy finish. This is really, really good Rully! 2018-2030. **91+**.

RECENTLY-TASTED SAUTERNES AND BARSAC FEBRUARY 2018



The Meslier family's lovely Château Raymond-Lafon in Sauternes.

It has been several years since I last wrote a feature on the beautiful wines of Sauternes and Barsac, though as the notes below will attest, I still drink these wines with quite a bit of frequency and should find time to include notes on them more often in the newsletter. Like many sweet wines, Sauternes is a bit out of fashion these days and the wines last longer on the shelves of the market than was the case back in my early retail days in the 1980s, when the wines were bought and cellared by a great many collectors and always the closing wine at many a great wine dinner that I attended in my formative days in the wine trade. In fact, I drank and served Sauternes and Barsac so often back in this era that the wines inspired me to learn to how to properly prepare fresh fruit tarts in the classic French style, as I found that the combination with Sauternes was second to none and I now make a very good fruit tart due primarily to my early love of these dessert wines. However, I have seen their sales slump a bit in more recent times and they do not routinely finish up great wine meals today the way they did in the 1980s and 1990s and I am very sorry to see these beautiful wines not get the same wide audience that they commanded back in my earliest days in the wine trade. Part of this is just the inevitable movement of the wine market from one region or wine style to another over the passage of time, but I think that dessert wines in general have also suffered from the emphasis on preventing drinking and driving in many western countries in the last quarter century, which has prompted

both guests and hosts of wine dinners outside of the major cities to steer clear of serving dessert wines as part of the menu, reasoning that coffee with the dessert course is now the more prudent option in today's day and age if guests will be driving home afterwards.

The other possible explanation for Sauternes' modest fall from grace in the minds of many wine lovers in the market today may have more to do with the Bordeaux region in general's shifting place in the world of fine wine. As I have mentioned frequently, I am of the last generation to really cut my teeth on the wines of Bordeaux, which in my early days of cellar building were the cornerstone of almost all well-stocked wine collections. At that time, the region was known for producing the very finest values in the world of long-lived, cellaring wines, and classic claret was the foundation of a vast majority of great cellars. This is not the case today, for which I would suggest that the escalation of prices for classed growth Bordeaux is partly to blame, with also the significant shift away from the classical style at so many properties in the late 1980s and 1990s, also adversely affecting the hard-earned market share of the *Bordelais* that so dominated wine collecting world of the twentieth century up through the end of the decade of the 1980s. These days, it is pretty rare to encounter someone who is not of my generation who is truly passionate about the wines of Bordeaux, and this generational shift away from the wines of Bordeaux in general has also made its presence felt keenly with the wines of Sauternes and Barsac. It is a pity, as these lovely dessert wines have not dramatically followed their best known red wine counterparts on the Gironde in marching dramatically upwards in price and most still continue to offer very, very good value in the market. This is particularly true when one considers how much more expensive it is for the proprietors to produce a bottle of Sauternes than it is a red wine from the region, even if one is predisposed to waste a pile of money (at least in my opinion) hiring Michel Rolland or another like-minded modern consultant to shape the style of your red wine.

The thoughtful owners of top properties in Sauternes and Barsac have been quite active in trying to make inroads against the younger segment of the wine market's turn away from Bordeaux by trying to come up with alternative serving options for their wines, with an emphasis placed for several years now on the suitability of Sauternes with a wide variety of Asian and Latin American cuisines. I have not found this to be the case for my own palate, as I do not find that these cuisines really pair particularly well with Sauternes, but I do not blame the *Sauternais* for trying. For me, they remain wines that reach their finest expressions at the end of the meal, with the cheese course and dessert, particularly if the dessert is a fruit-based preparation. I love orchestrated wine dinners that bring out the Sauternes or Barsac to go with the cheese course and then continue their service with the dessert to follow, and I still think that the most efficacious way for Sauternes producers to get more younger wine drinkers to discover their wines is to focus on how well these wines pair with cheese. The old proverb of Sauternes with a blue cheese such as Roquefort is still certainly applicable, but I find that these beautiful sweet wines pair with such a wide variety of cheeses that I see no reason to limit them by emphasizing their applicability to the blue-veined varieties. I should also mention that an opened bottle of Sauternes holds up in the fridge remarkably well and there is absolutely no need to drink a bottle in one or two sittings, as the bottle of 1990 Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey reported on below continued to drink beautifully over the course of three weeks in my refrigerator as I was working on this article. Yet another good reason to open a bottle of Sauternes tonight!

I recently had the pleasure to be invited to a luncheon here in New York with Bernice Lurton, the indefatigable proprietor of Château Climens, and it was during this lunch that I thought I had seen a way to reach a broader segment of the younger wine-drinking market with the message about the great quality and good values presented by Sauternes and Barsac. For, though we had a lovely range of wines from Climens (amongst some red wines of Bordeaux as well), I was struck with Madame Lurton's decision to show mostly young vintages of her property's wines. If I recall correctly, she brought along the celestial 2007 Climens, along with the 2005 and 2002 vintages for our luncheon, with one of the guests in attendance bringing a more mature vintage out of their cellar to share with the group. And while the younger vintages of Climens were perfectly pleasant to drink, none were even remotely close to ready and I kept thinking that this would not be all that interesting for anyone who was new to the wines of Climens, for they would not really see what all the excitement was about. But, if Madame Lurton had brought a lineup of 1989, 1988 and 1986 to show, or something along these lines, perhaps those who were not already converts to Climens would have found a reason to start adding these wines to their own cellars. This is not a criticism, but I think that if the *Sauternais* wish to show more young wine lovers the beauty of their wines, then they need to start organizing more tastings where they are showing seriously mature examples that will spur on younger wine enthusiasts to start putting these wines in their cellars and serving them at their own wine events. For as great as the 2007 Climens is going to be in the fullness of time, it is not now in a stage of evolution where it is more than of academic interest to those who already know and love Climens. However, serve a bottle of the 1986 or 1975 today and that is a completely different matter!

2010 Château Climens (Barsac)

I had not tasted the final blended version of the 2010 Climens, as the last time I saw this wine was in its constituent components at the château back in the spring of 2011. As readers may recall, I was not wild about this vintage in the Sauternes and Barsac region, finding that the torrid heat and drought conditions of the summer of 2010 were not ideal for great Sauternes production. The 2010 Climens had shown promise back in the spring of 2011, but was also a bit atypically broad-shouldered and powerful in style and likely to lack some of the charm and elegance that makes this property many people's absolute favorite in the region. The finished wine has turned out quite well, offering up fine depth and refinement as well, with the bouquet a blend of orange blossoms, pineapple, tangerine, honey, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and very elegant for the vintage, with a fine core, bright acids and very good length and grip on the powerful finish. This is still slightly "blunt" in profile, which may be a reflection of its adolescence, or it may end up always being part of the calling card of the 2010 vintage, but this is a very, very successful example of this difficult year. 2025-2075. **93.**

2007 Château Climens (Barsac)

The 2007 vintage produced an absolutely classic crop of Sauternes and Barsac and the '07 Climens is a stellar young wine. Here, we have all of the racy precision and chalky undertow that makes Climens so popular, as the wine jumps from the glass in a lovely and quite complex constellation of apricot, coconut, tangerine, honey, chalky soil tones, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with lovely harmony and backend

energy, laser-like focus and a very long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. A great vintage of Climens in the making. 2020-2075+. **94+**.

2005 Château Climens (Barsac)

The estate reports that the 2005 vintage of Climens is the “richest vintage” every produced here, which I assume means that it has the highest level of residual sugar in the history of the estate. It was raised in fifty percent new wood. The wine is good, but I am not in love with the vintage style here, as this wine is very fruit-driven for Climens and misses the underlying signature of chalky soil tones that makes this Barsac property so special. The nose is a blend of honey, apricot, orange, a touch of leather and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and relatively low acid for Climens, with a long, plush and easy-going finish. This is more impressive than enlightening. Maybe more nuance and complexity will emerge with bottle age? 2025-2075. **87+?**



2002 Château Climens (Barsac)

The 2002 vintage of Climens is a good, solid wine that is maturing nicely, but it does not possess the pristine cleanliness on either the nose or the palate that is customary with this property’s wines in truly great vintages. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of apricot, tangerine, honey, an early hint of tea leaves and a touch of spice. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit four-square, with good acids, quite modest soil tones and a bit of backend

heat poking out on the long, but still quite primary finish. This is an okay bottle, but there are often several more layers of nuance and energy in top vintages of Climens. 2017-2040. **89.**

2001 Château Raymond-Lafon (Sauternes)

The Meslier family's Château Raymond-Lafon was very successful in 2001 and the wine is now starting to drink very nicely indeed. The nose wafts from the glass in a deep and refined blend of apricot, tangerine, honey, toasted coconut, a fine base of limestone soil and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still fairly youthful in profile, with fine mid-palate depth, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the long and complex finish. A lovely vintage of this outstanding property. 2018-2050. **93+.**

2001 Château Rieussec (Sauternes)

The 2001 Château Rieussec has reached a very good point in its evolution to start drinking the wine. The bouquet is fresh, wide open and quite beautiful in its constellation of toasted coconut, apricot, orange zest, honey, a lovely base of chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full, deep and focused, with blossoming complexity, lovely acids and fine length and grip on the suave, refined and zesty finish. Good juice. 2015-2050. **93.**

1997 Château Suduiraut (Sauternes)

The 1997 Suduiraut has reached a really lovely plateau in its evolution and is drinking splendidly at age nineteen. The bouquet is deep, pure and shows lovely secondary layers of complexity in its mélange of honey, fresh apricot, oranges, crème brûlée, soil tones and a gentle framing of buttery oak. With air distinctive notes of clove and marmalade blossomed as well on the nose. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and focused, with a fine core of fruit, lovely, zesty acidity and impressive length and grip on the *à point* finish. Just a lovely, classic vintage of Suduiraut that is just reaching its apogee, but which will continue to drink splendidly for at least a couple of decades. 2016-2040+. **92.**

1990 Château Climens (Barsac)

Château Climens had such a magical run of vintages in the decade of the 1980s, but the 1990 has never been my favorite from this stretch at the property, as it always has seemed to lack just a bit of cut and Climens elegance *vis à vis* wines such as the 1988 or 1989. This most recent bottle was fairly evolved for its age and offered up scents of honeyed apples, a touch of pineapple coulis, orange zest, honey and a fairly discreet base of Climens soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full and a bit four-square, with a good core and decent length and grip on the backend, but a rather chunky finish that is not emblematic of this fine property in a top vintage. Maybe there are better bottles out there? 2015-2030+? **87?**

1990 Château de Fargues (Sauternes)

The 1990 Château de Fargues is now at its apogee of peak maturity and drinking with plenty of style and complexity. The bouquet delivers a fine aromatic combination of apricot, orange peel, butterscotch, chalky soil tones, a delicate touch of nuttiness and incipient notes of the cherry to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully complex, with lovely focus and grip, a fine core and a very long, very elegant and vibrant finish. Just a lovely vintage of de Fargues. 2016-2040. **94.**

1990 Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey (Sauternes)

The 1990 vintage of Lafaurie-Peyraguey has aged very nicely and is now at its apogee of peak drinkability. The color is now getting quite deep amber and the nose offers up a lovely,

honeyed constellation of apricot, orange, *crème brûlée*, nutty overtones, a touch of cherry, honey and a lovely base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and *à point*, with good acids and focus, a lovely core and a long, complex finish that closes with bounce and grip. Good juice. 2018-2050. **92.**

1990 Château Suduiraut (Sauternes)

I am not sure if this bottle of the 1990 Suduiraut was representative, as the wine did not show up to my expectations, though prior to its being opened, there was nothing about it that looked amiss. The bouquet is deep and complex, with plenty of tertiary elements, but also a bit of acetone sullyng its aromatic constellation of caramelized apple, orange peel, honey and soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit four-square, with good length, but a bit of overt bitterness poking out on the finish. Is this the wine today, or just an off bottle? ???

1989 Château Coutet “Cuvée Madame” (Sauternes)

The 1989 “Cuvée Madame” from Château Coutet is a lovely wine and has retained really lovely acidity for a wine from this vintage. The complex and classy nose delivers a fine blend of honeyed orange and apricot, new leather, *crème brûlée*, chalky soil tones and buttery new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and vibrant, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a very long, well-balanced and classy finish. I quite like the girdle of acidity this wine has retained through the years, which will continue to carry it nicely for another couple of decades, at least. 2015-2035. **93.**

1989 Château Rieussec (Sauternes)

The 1989 Rieussec is drinking very well indeed at age twenty-seven, but it is already well into its plateau and is not likely to be one of the more long-distance vintages from this era at the estate. The nose is quite honeyed in its blend of apricot, orange, chalky soil tones, butterscotch, toasted coconut, incipient notes of walnuts and plenty of the aforementioned honey. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and already getting quite tertiary in profile, with crisp framing acids and very good length and grip on the fully mature, but still vibrant finish. This is a very good time to be drinking this vintage of Rieussec. 2016-2026+? **92.**

1988 Château d’Yquem (Sauternes)

This particular bottle of ’88 Yquem was drunk at a big event at Château Cheval Blanc a few years ago and I wondered at the time if it was a slightly advanced bottle. The wine was already fairly dark in color for the vintage and offered up an almost tertiary bouquet of orange peel, *crème brûlée*, honey, apricot, almonds, a lovely and complex base of soil tones and buttery new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and surprisingly evolved for Yquem from a good, racy vintage like 1988, with a deep core, modest acids and very good length and grip on the finish. This was so stunning in its youth that I have to believe that this bottle was somehow a bit forward. 2012-2045. **90+?**

1986 Château Climens (Barsac)

I have drunk an awful lot of 1986 Climens over the years and this remains one of my favorite vintages ever from this lovely Barsac estate. The wine is now starting to show a lovely veneer of maturity on both the nose and palate, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of toasted coconut, pineapple, a hint of *crème brûlée*, a complex base of chalky soil tones, gentle floral aspects and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a lovely core, outstanding delineation and complexity and a long, vibrant and still quite racy finish. A superb Climens. 2015-2050. **95.**

1986 Château Guiraud (Sauternes)

Château Guiraud is one of the most unique bottlings of Sauternes, as it includes more sauvignon blanc at forty percent, than virtually anyone in the appellation. Their 1986 vintage has always been delightful and the wine has now reached its apogee and is drinking with both complexity and style. The bouquet is a fine blend of peach, pineapple, honey, lovely savory elements from the sauvignon blanc and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and marvelously balanced, with bright acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, racy finish. Fine, fine juice. 2016-2045+. **93.**

1986 Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey (Sauternes)

In the US market, this was the first vintage of Lafaurie-Peyraguey that really caught the imagination of Bordeaux lovers and it was very widely distributed. Consequently, along with the 1988 vintage, the 1986 is the wine from this estate that I have had the most opportunities to enjoy and it continues to drink beautifully at age thirty. The bouquet is deep, pure and quite elegant in its expression of toasted coconut, pineapple, chalky soil tones, honey, orange peel and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a good core, bright, zesty acids and a fine finish that remains light on its feet and vibrant. 2016-2035+. **94.**



1983 Château Climens (Barsac)

The 1983 Climens is one of the stars of the vintage and has reached a really beautiful point in its evolution at age thirty-five. The bouquet offers up a vibrant blend of fresh apricot, tangerine, chalky soil tones, incipient notes of walnut, honey and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and generous on the attack, with a lovely core, fine focus and grip and a long, zesty and perfectly balanced finish. Fine juice with decades of life still ahead of it. 2017-2045. **93.**

1983 Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey (Sauternes)

The 1983 vintage of Château Lafaurie-Peyraguey is a very good wine, but to my palate, this property did not really hit its current level of quality until the 1986 vintage. The 1983 offers up a mature bouquet of peach, tangerine, honey, a touch of acetone, *crème brûlée* and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long, and fairly complex, with a good core and sound acids, but not quite the complexity that is exhibited from the 1986 vintage forwards. Still, this is a good, solid bottle of Sauternes with still plenty of life in it. 2015-2035+. **88.**

1983 Château d'Yquem (Sauternes)

The 1983 vintage of Yquem is drinking beautifully and has reached a lovely, tertiary stage of its evolution that still retains the vibrancy of youth to go along with all of the additional layers of complexity that bottle age brings. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of apricots, honey, barley sugar, chalky soil tones, new leather and a topnote of tea leaves. On the palate the wine is deep, long and focused, with superb depth at the core, lovely balance and a long, complex and still very zesty and energetic finish. A very tasty vintage of Yquem for current drinking. 2016-2060. **94.**

1976 Château Climens (Barsac)

The 1976 Climens is one of my favorite wines of this vintage. The wine has long drank at its plateau of peak maturity, but it has held onto the veneer of zesty youth far longer than most of its 1976 cohorts. The bouquet today is deep, complex and still quite vibrant, wafting from the glass in a blend of honey, coconut, pineapple, orange, a lovely base of chalky soil, honeycomb and a hint of tea leaves in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still very fresh, with lovely mid-palate depth, fine focus and grip and a long, classy and complex finish. A fine, fine vintage of Climens at its apogee. 2016-2040+. **94.**

1971 Château Climens (Barsac)

The 1971 vintage of Climens has long been one of my absolute favorites from this great property and the wine has continued to drink at its apogee for the last twenty years and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. The bouquet is pure and beautifully tertiary today, offering up scents of apricot, a touch of cherry, honey, orange peel, nutty undertow and a nice dollop of browned butter in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and still quite zesty in personality, with a great core, superb focus and grip and a long, refined and vibrant finish. 2017-2035+. **93.**

1970 Château Climens (Barsac)

The 1970 vintage of Climens is not as well-known as the lovely 1971, but this most recent bottle was showing just beautifully and was every bit as pure and vibrant as one could ask. The gorgeous bouquet seems even a touch more vibrant than the 1971 today, jumping from the glass in a complex blend of pineapple, orange, a touch of toasted coconut, chalky soil tones,

honeycomb and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off superb mid-palate depth, with bright, zesty acids, lovely focus and grip and perfect balance on the very long and complex finish. A gorgeous vintage of Climens! 2016-2035. **94.**

1970 Château Guiraud (Sauternes)

The 1970 vintage of Château Guiraud is another very tasty, fully mature wine, but this is a bit more tertiary in its development than either the Climens or Suduiraut. The wine is a deep golden color and offers up a complex nose of honey, apricot, clover, orange, incipient notes of tea leaves and a good base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with the fruit just starting to fray a tad on the backend and leaving a gentle note of bitterness on the fairly long finish. Drink up over the coming decade. 2016-2025. **88.**

1970 Château Suduiraut (Sauternes)

The 1970 Château Suduiraut is another lovely example of this fine Sauternes vintage, offering up a deep and fully mature bouquet of apricot, tangerine, leather, *crème brûlée*, a fine base of chalky soil and a topnote of honey. On the palate the wine is deep, full and focused, with a lovely core, fine balance and grip and a long, vibrant and bouncy finish. This is really a lovely vintage of Suduiraut that is presently at its apogee of peak maturity. 2016-2040. **93.**

1967 Château Gillette “Crème de Tête” (Sauternes)

The 1967 Château Gillette “Crème de Tête” has reached a beautiful point in its evolution, as it is a tad less overtly sweet than it was in its youth and has now added a lovely layer of gently savory elements on the nose to go along with its classic *Sauternais* blend of dried fruit, honey and soil. The bouquet offers up a very refined blend of tangerine, apricot, cherries, *crème brûlée*, a lovely base of soil, orange peel and gently smoky notes redolent of peat. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and perfectly balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, bright acids and a long, classy and focused finish. The sweetness is drying out just a touch right now and the wine is really a star at the table at the present time, but still with decades of life ahead of it. 2018-2040. **92.**

1955 Château Suduiraut (Sauternes)

The 1955 Château Suduiraut is a lovely old bottle of Sauternes that continues to drink splendidly and has plenty of life still ahead of it. The deep and tertiary bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of apricot, heather, honey, coffee, complex soil tones and an exotic topnote of clover. On the palate the wine is still full, long and deep at the core, with lovely old wine complexity, sound acids and a very long, poised and nicely balanced finish. Fine, fine old wine. 2014-2035. **92.**

1949 Château Climens (Barsac)

The 1949 Château Climens is an absolutely beautiful wine that seems to have been aging at a very relaxed pace, as the wine retains marvelous bounce and palate vibrancy at more than sixty years of age. The mature and tertiary bouquet offers up a complex constellation of toasted coconut, rosewater, orange rind, a touch of new leather, *crème brûlée* and an exotic topnote of rosemary. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, resolved and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, zesty acidity and great length and grip on the focused and very complex finish. I would never have expected a wine of this age to still have such a lively mouthfeel. Great juice! 2016-2035. **96.**

1918 Château d'Yquem- Bottled by Eschenauer et Cie (Sauternes)

This *négociant* bottling of 1918 Yquem was tasted back in 2010 and was truly a lovely old bottle with plenty of vitality and charm. The bottle was a low shoulder fill, but the wine was still in fine condition, delivering a bouquet of barley sugar, candied orange, new leather, clover honey, a touch of cherry, tea leaves and caramel. On the palate the wine is deep, full and beautifully refined in profile, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a very long, complex and perfectly balanced finish. I do not know how this Eschenauer bottling compares with an estate bottled version of the 1918, but this was an absolute delight to drink and a very generous addition to our tasting lineup on this evening. If memory serves me correctly, this bottle came from the cellar of Jamie Kutch and was generously brought by him to a mature Burgundy dinner here in New York. 2011-2050+. 94.



This issue is dedicated to the memory of the maestro, Bruno Giacosa, who passed away at the ripe age of eighty-eight in the month of January this year. May those of us who he has left behind continue to be able to drink deeply of the clear waters he has left us though the legacy of his beautiful wines and remember the great gifts that hard work and heroic integrity can create in the face of great adversity and a sometimes uncaring world.