

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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DOMAINE CHANDON DE BRIAILLES
ONE OF THE CROWN JEWELS OF THE CÔTE DE BEAUNE



A nice view of the Domaine Chandon de Briailles from their classically-styled gardens.

The Domaine de Chandon de Briailles in Savigny-lès-Beaune is one of the brightest stars in today's Burgundy, with a track record for excellent and utterly classic, *terroir*-defined wines that stretches back for several decades and whose wines have now been a cornerstone of my cellar for many years. And yet, because they are situated in the quiet town of Savigny-lès-Beaune, they are typically not spoken of with the same reverential tones as equally superb estates in tonier villages such as Vosne-Romanée or Chambolle-Musigny and are really amongst the ultimate "insider wines" in the Burgundy constellation today, despite the fact that their wines are beautifully structured, utterly classic and blossom gloriously with sufficient bottle age. The estate's history can be traced back to the 1700s, when their fine vineyard parcels were pieced together and the lovely house and grounds were constructed. The domaine includes a *grand maison*, a beautiful garden crafted by a student of France's most famous botanical architect, Le Nôtre (who was responsible for the gloriously symmetrical gardens of the Louis XVI era that adorn some of the country's most famous landmarks, including the palace at Versailles). Today the Domaine de Chandon de Briailles is owned by the de Nicolay family, who has possessed this superb estate since 1834, when Aymar-Claude de Nicolay inherited the domaine from his

grandmother, the Comtesse Chandon de Briailles (who as her name might suggest, was related to the family behind Champagne's most famous house: Moët et Chandon). While the estate has a fine, long history, it really is only in the last thirty years that the wines have risen to the top of the Burgundy hierarchy and begun to realize their full potential, and they seem to really have hit their top level of precision in the new millennium.

The de Nicolay family had lived in Paris for several generations and the property for many, many years was run on an absentee basis by hired managers in Savigny, but in 1984, Madame Nadine de Nicolay decided that the only way to properly oversee the estate and its 13.7 hectares of vineyards was to move down to Savigny-lès-Beaune full-time and look after things herself. She had already been splitting her time between Paris and Savigny for a few years, as beginning in late 1981 or early 1982, she began to shuttle back and forth between the city and Savigny, spending three days a week at the domaine. While the estate itself had been managed reasonably well enough by staff in prior years, the quality of the wines was never in the top division during this long period of absentee ownership and the family felt that an opportunity was being squandered by this situation. Madame Nadine de Nicolay arrived full-time in Savigny in the mid-1980s with her daughter, Claude de Nicolay, and together they set about transforming the domaine. While Madame de Nicolay began to rejuvenate the property, Claude undertook attaining degrees in viticulture and oenology from the University of Dijon, and the two ladies began the process that would see Domaine Chandon de Briailles become one of the very finest estates in all of Burgundy. Since 2001, Claude de Nicolay has been joined by her brother, François, in running the property and the wines have seemingly gotten better here with each passing vintage and have really reached their zenith in the last decade, so that today Chandon de Briailles is one of the very finest estates in the lovely commune of Savigny-lès-Beaune, as well as one of the crown jewel domaines in all of the Côte de Beaune. François de Nicolay had spent some time as a wine merchant in Paris prior to taking over management responsibilities from his mother at the domaine and beginning to work alongside of his sister Claude, and the brother-sister team has provided the domaine with dynamic leadership since François' full-time arrival in Savigny. For many years, the family had been assisted very ably by their long-time Cellar Master, Jean-Claude Bouveret, better known as "Kojak", who was an indispensable member of the team during his tenure here and left the domaine in November of 2012 to pursue new opportunities. He has been replaced in the cellar by Christian Knott as Cellar Master at the estate, an Australian gentleman of fine winemaking talents, and Kojak's previous duties as General Manager have been assumed by François Grangé. Along with François and Claude de Nicolay, they form a superb team for overseeing one of the finest estates in the entire region.

The Domaine Chandon de Briailles is one of the most important *biodynamique* estates in the Côte d'Or, having converted their vineyards to organic viticulture in 2005 and having been fully *biodynamique* since the 2008 vintage. However, this transition had already been begun many years earlier, as Nadine de Nicolay was no fan of chemical farming and from her first arrival at the domaine in the 1980s, she had sought to reduce drastically the amount of chemical additions that were made in the vineyards, so that by the 1990s, manufactured products were only used in the domaine's parcels on an emergency basis and the groundwork had already been laid for what would eventually become fully organic viticulture in 2005 and complete *biodynamique* vineyard management by 2008. However, the switch over to full-fledged *biodynamism* did not come painlessly, as one has a hard time imagining a more difficult vintage

in which to make the switch than 2008, as it was a vintage where mildew and oidium were rampant in the vineyards, with most *vignerons* in the Côte d'Or having to make multiple treatments to protect the grapes in this year. The de Nicolays had to watch a significant percentage of their crop lost in 2008 as they made the transition in one of the more difficult vintages imaginable for effecting such a change in farming techniques. Additionally, the family lost a few parcels that they had been working *en mettayage* from other vineyard owners, including plots in Corton-Charlemagne and Volnay “Caillerets” soon after this vintage, as the owners were perhaps not entirely happy with the switch to *biodynamism* and its potential impact on the size of crop loads in difficult viticultural years like 2008. But, despite the struggles in the vineyards and the very short, first completely-*biodynamique* crop in 2008, the results were a small quantity of truly exceptional wines from the domaine and even better wines with each passing subsequent vintage, as the vineyards happily reacted to the move to *biodynamism* and the sacrifices made in that first year are now happily behind the team at Chandon de Briailles and have certainly proven their merit.

Domaine Chandon de Briailles today consists of 13.7 hectares of vineyards, split fairly evenly between the three communes of Savigny-lès-Beaune, Pernand-Vergelesses and Aloxe-Corton. This vineyard patrimony includes some absolutely prime parcels, including more than three hectares of vines in the superb premier cru of Île de Vergelesses (making the domaine the single largest owner in this great vineyard), 2.61 hectares of vines in the outstanding Savigny premier crus of les Lavières and 1.68 hectares of aux Fourneaux, fully 1.12 hectares of pinot noir vines in the *lieu à dit* of Bressandes on the hill of Corton (there the family also has 14 *ares* of chardonnay planted in their section of Bressandes- from which they produce their Corton Blanc), and smaller Corton parcels in Clos du Roi, Maréchaudes, Chaumes and Corton-Charlemagne. Not only does the domaine own some superb *terroirs*, but they also are fortunate to have old vines in most of these vineyards- for example, their plot of les Lavières was planted in 1954, the Chandon de Briailles vines are on average forty years-old in Île de Vergelesses (with some older vines dating all the way back to 1938) and a significant part of their Clos du Roi parcel was planted in 1961. Like many domaines in the Côte de Beaune, the extreme frosts of the winter of 1985 killed off some of their old vines and there was a fair bit of replanting that took place after that frost, but these younger vines are now themselves fully twenty-seven years of age and just starting to really come again into their prime, so that none of the Chandon de Briailles wines can be said to hail from young vines anymore. Additionally, the transition to organic and then *biodynamique* viticulture has acted to self-regulate yields a bit amongst the younger parcels and the domaine has no longer had need to do any green harvesting in these younger vines since 2005, and one seems to sense that greater intensity in the wines has been found through this method of farming.

Today, the Domaine Chandon de Briailles' red wine lineup consists of Savigny-lès-Beaune *villages*, two premier crus in Savigny (les Lavières and aux Fourneaux), the Aloxe-Corton premier cru of les Valozières (which lies just below the grand cru of Corton “Bressandes” on the hillside), two Pernand Vergelesses premier crus (les Vergelesses and Île de Vergelesses) and three grand cru Cortons (Maréchaudes, Bressandes and Clos du Roi). Additionally, the estate produces three white wine cuvées as well- Île de Vergelesses Blanc, Corton Blanc and a very small amount of Corton-Charlemagne. The white wines here are relatively recent additions to the portfolio of the domaine, for when Madame Nadine de Nicolay arrived in Savigny in 1984 from

Paris, she felt that the family should produce a bit more white wine to drink in addition to their fine lineup of red wines, and she undertook to have chardonnay planted both in the Île de Vergelesses and in a small section of their Bressandes holdings on the hill of Corton as well. These chardonnay plantations date from the 1985 vintage. There is a part of the vineyard of Bressandes that is entitled to be labeled as Corton-Charlemagne if chardonnay is planted in this section, which is up at the top of the vineyard and where the soils are *terres blanches*, but the Chandon de Briailles chardonnay plot in the vineyard is a bit further down the slope on soils that are considered more properly designated for pinot noir, and so this wine cannot be bottled as Corton-Charlemagne and is instead bottled and sold as Corton Blanc. Today, this parcel of chardonnay in Bressandes has also been augmented by a few smaller plots of chardonnay in the *lieux à dits* of Renardes and Chaumes, so that there are now fully 60 *ares* of chardonnay planted between these three vineyards (still on soils designated as best for red grapes) as the source for the rare and very unique Corton Blanc bottling from the de Nicolay family.

While Domaine Chandon de Briailles is best known in some Burgundy circles these days for their adherence to *biodynamique* principals for their viticulture (with many neighbors fully noting and applauding the sacrifices they made in the 2008 vintage), they are also amongst the most traditional of Burgundian producers in the cellars as well, as this is an estate where new oak plays such a minor role in the wines that they are properly viewed as some of the most traditional and soil-driven Burgundies to be found anywhere in the Côte d'Or. To be more precise, the use of new oak is a bit lower for the red wines here than the white wines, as the two grand cru whites tend to be raised in about twenty percent new oak, whereas the grand cru reds only see a modicum of new wood, or none at all (depending on the cru and style of the vintage). The premier crus here see little or no new oak, so Chandon de Briailles is one of the staunchest defenders of *terroir*-defined wines in all of the Côte d'Or. The lower use of new wood will typically make the domaine's red wines quite tight and youthfully structured in the first years after bottling, which dovetails very nicely with the soils the estate works with in their vineyards in Pernand, Savigny and on the hill of Corton, but with sufficient bottle age, they tend to be some of the most beautifully pure, soil-driven and refined wines to be found in the southern half of Burgundy. Claude and François de Nicolay are also fans of whole cluster fermentation, so the estate for many years has used a fairly high percentage of stems during the fermentation, which also tends to make the wines a bit more reticent in their youth (or more properly, marked by this inclusion of stems during the fermentation), but with the passing of time will often add a lovely set of spice tones to the aromatics of the wines. As Claude de Nicolay is married to Frédéric Drouhin, I suppose it is not too surprising that I often find a "family resemblance" between the wines of Maison Joseph Drouhin and Domaine Chandon de Briailles, as both estates tend to make some of the most beautifully soil specific and elegant red wines in the entire Côte d'Or.

The winemaking process at Chandon de Briailles is perfectly suited to the very *terroir* specific style of the wines produced at the estate. Fermentation temperatures are kept relatively cool, there is no pre-fermentation maceration, and as François de Nicolay observes, "we try to rack the wines only once for blending purposes prior to bottling, but sometimes a wine will need one additional racking prior to the *assemblage*." The wines are also generally bottled without filtration, as François notes that a wine needing to be filtered is a very rare occurrence at the estate and "probably happens about once a decade." Additionally, neither François or Claude de Nicolay is particularly enamored of using high sulfur concentrations, so these wines tend to be

bottled with a bit lower SO₂ and the domaine is careful with the use of sulfur during the *elevage* of the wines. The white wines are typically aged in barrel from twelve to fifteen months prior to being assembled in tanks for a month or two prior to being bottled, with the red wines usually aging in barrels for fifteen to twenty months prior to their *assemblage* and eventual bottling. As noted above, in most vintages, there is plenty of whole cluster fermentation for the red wines here. As these are very classically styled red and white Burgundies that are meant to unfold with extended bottle aging, both the reds and the whites here tend to be pretty tight and nicely structured out of the blocks, and it is a very rare Chandon de Briailles wine indeed that does not need some time in bottle prior to starting to drink well and really show all of its potential. Part of this, of course, also has to do with the *terroirs* that the de Nicolay family work with, as Savigny-lès-Beaune, Pernand-Vergelesses and Corton all tend to be *terroirs* that produce fairly structured wines out of the blocks and demand some cellaring before their respective structures start to peel back and the underlying elegance in the wines starts to come to the fore. Happily, the de Nicolay family is perfectly content with the style of their wines and does not take any steps to manipulate the winemaking process to give the wines a bit more earlier appeal than what is natural with these great *terroirs*, all of which do indeed produce wines of great elegance and complexity once they have had sufficient bottle age. For much like the wines of Maison Joseph Drouhin, the wines of Domaine Chandon de Briailles are certainly amongst the most elegant and refined wines to be found in all of Burgundy when they reach their apogees, and the wines also age long and gracefully once they have begun to drink well.

One of the recent changes here in the cellars at Domaine Chandon de Briailles is a drift towards using less sulfur dioxide during the *elevage* and bottling of their wines, but it is still too early to see whether or not this will affect the potential longevity of the wines that are bottled with lower levels of SO₂. As François de Nicolay observes, “we try to use as little sulfur as possible during the *elevage* and *mise*, and we make a couple of small cuvées with no sulfites added” for certain clients. This trend is certainly popular at the present time in many fashionable wine circles, so it is not surprising that some of the domaine’s clientele would be hankering for no sulfur added bottlings, but, as readers may already know, I am a bit skeptical about low sulfur bottlings ability to age long and gracefully in the cellar. Certainly, there are plenty of reports of low and no sulfur cuvées that do age well, but usually these wines are cited as bottles that have never left the proprietors’ cellars in the first place and have always been kept at ideal storage temperatures. In the real world of wine merchandising, there are sadly very few bottles found on the open market that do not see at least a bit of warmer temperatures on their journeys from producers’ cellars to store shelves or restaurant wine lists, so I worry about domaines that become intrigued with low sulfur or no sulfur regimens in the cellar, as I fear for the wines’ ultimate stability and longevity once they get out into the pipeline on their way to consumers. But, that said, I have not had any adverse experiences whatsoever with any of the Chandon de Briailles wines in the last few years that have been produced with less SO₂ during their *elevage*, so I remain completely agnostic at the present time about whether or not this interest on the part of the de Nicolays will be a positive or negative in the long run. Time will tell. But, I should note that it has been my experience that other noteworthy producers who eschew sulfur during the *elevage* of their own wines- well-known estates in Morgon immediately come to mind- tend to make some of the very shortest-lived wines of their respective appellations, and while there is no doubting that these wines are often delicious to drink when young, one has to question the utility of a cellar methodology that seems to compromise a wine’s ability to age along the norms

expected historically from a given appellation. I would hate to see this become the case with some of my absolute favorite wines from the villages of Savigny-lès-Beaune, Pernand-Vergelesses and Aloxe-Corton!



Claude de Nicolay and her Jack Russell puppy at Domaine Chandon de Briailles.

Besides the core wines that the estate has produced from its own vineyard patrimony, they have produced a couple of wines from *mettayage* (or sharecropping) agreements in the past—though none of these contracts currently exists. To augment their bottling of Corton Blanc, the family undertook a *mettayage* agreement to produce a small bit of Corton-Charlemagne from a neighbor's vines starting in the 1996 vintage. This contract lasted through the 2009 vintage, so between 1996 and 2009, the domaine produced their Corton-Charlemagne from purchased grapes, though they have subsequently started producing a small quantity of this wine from the 2011 vintage forwards from their own tiny plot of chardonnay vines in the *terres blanches* section of Renardes, which can be sold as Charlemagne. The family has owned this parcel since 1988 (it was first planted to chardonnay in 1989), but it only began to be bottled as their Corton-Charlemagne in the 2011 vintage, as the vines were deemed too young by the family to be bottled on their own as a grand cru prior to this year. Additionally, the de Nicolay family also produced a bottling of Volnay “Caillerets” as well from *mettayage*, between the vintages of 2000 and 2009, and which came from the same owner of vines as their purchased grapes for their

Corton-Charlemagne. Typically, there would be five barrels of Caillerets bottled under the Chandon de Briailles label during the decade in which they produced this wine.

As the notes below will attest, Domaine Chandon de Briailles is one of the greatest estates in the entire Côte d'Or, but due to the relatively less well-known *terroirs* in which they work, their wines remain absolute steals in the context of today's crazy Burgundy prices. I cannot imagine that this situation will last forever, so one really should be taking advantage of this historical moment and salting these beautiful Burgundies away in the cellar before they start to gain more prominence in the over-heated Burgundy market and start their inexorable march upwards in price as well. I wrote the same thing about the wines of Maison Joseph Drouhin seven years ago, and we all know where their prices have gone since that time! Claude and François de Nicolay share the winemaking and viticultural responsibilities equally at the domaine these days (along with Monsieur Knott), and this brother and sister team are making some of the most beautiful wines that can be found in all of Burgundy today. The tasting notes that follow are organized by each cru, with the white wines listed first and then the red wines, with the grand crus of each color listed at the end of their respective sections on white or red wines respectively. Before the tasting notes on each wine, I have listed some background information on the age of the vines, size of the holdings and how long the domaine has been producing each particular *cuvée*. I hope you enjoy the article as much as you will enjoy the wines (for those of you who have not yet had the pleasure to drink your fair share of Domaine Chandon de Briailles already)! Each section includes notes on recently-tasted wines in bottle, and I have not included notes on wines tasted in barrel, as they appear each November in the annual report on the new vintage in Burgundy. As there have been some very difficult growing seasons in Savigny-lès-Beaune in particular (and the Côte de Beaune in general) in the last couple of years, Mother Nature has not always been kind to the de Nicolays when it comes to yields, and they have had to face some brutally short crops in some vineyards in the last few years. Consequently, they have made a few rather out of the ordinary wines where crop loads were simply insufficient to make a traditional Burgundy wine in some of the most adversely-affected vineyards, so look for a few rarities such as an "orange wine" blanc de noirs made from pinot noir without skin contact and a Savigny Port-styled wine that will be made from the vineyards most severely affected by hail damage in the catastrophically short vintage of 2013 in this village. It is nice to see that Claude and François de Nicolay have been able to keep their sense of humor in these very tough recent vintages in the Côte de Beaune. Domaine Chandon de Briailles is unequivocally one of the brightest stars in the entirety of the Côte d'Or today, and probably home to some of the greatest values to be found in all of Burgundy these days!

Pernand-Vergelesses "Île de Vergelesses" Blanc

The domaine did not start producing any white wines at all until the end of the decade of the 1970s, and when Madame Nadine de Nicolay arrived from the family home in Paris to oversee the domaine directly in the mid-1980s, one of the first decisions she took was to plant a parcel of Île de Vergelesses with chardonnay. With 3.33 hectares of vines in this superb premier cru, the domaine had some options and Madame de Nicolay decided to have a parcel right in the heart of their holdings planted over to chardonnay at the time of her arrival at the estate, so the one hectare of chardonnay vines here are beautifully-situated and run from the top to the bottom of the slope in the very center of the vineyard and one gets a very thorough expression of the terroir of Île de Vergelesses in the white wine from this vineyard. The chardonnay vines here

were planted in 1985 and again in 1991, when the family decided to expand the parcel planted to white grapes up to a full hectare. This is one of my favorite, “sleeper” white Burgundy bottlings, as it offers up a superb, chalky and stony soil signature to go along with really lovely fruit tones redolent of white peaches, delicious apples, lemon and in riper vintages a bit of pineapple. The soils here are very chalky at the top of the slope, with more clay in the mix as one descends towards the bottom, and with its due east exposition, the vines here bask in the morning sunshine and retain a lovely spine of acidity in all but the warmest of vintages, making this wine always racy and transparent in personality. It is my distinct impression that vineyards such as the Île de Vergelesses have really benefited a bit from global warming, and where the chardonnay here might not have ripened thoroughly in every vintage a generation ago, today, this is really a superb terroir for chardonnay and this wine is consistently excellent year in and year out. If one is looking for a beautifully-crafted, elegant and very soil-driven white Burgundy that does not cost a fortune per bottle, the Chandon de Briailles Île de Vergelesses Blanc is the wine for you!

2006 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses” Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2006 Île de Vergelesses Blanc from Chandon de Briailles came in at thirteen percent alcohol (which was quite moderate in this vintage!), with plenty of depth of fruit in evidence. The wine is very refined for a 2006 white Burgundy, offering up notes of peach, lemon zest, beeswax, chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, fresh and juicy to the core, with quite good acidity, fine soil signature and a long, crisp and complex finish. This is a lovely white Burgundy that drank well out of the blocks, and should continue to cruise along nicely through at least its tenth birthday. 2012-2016+. **89.**

2005 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses” Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The Île de Vergelesses Blanc in 2005 is quite a successful example of the vintage, with a more forward personality that sees the wine fully mature at age seven and drinking with quite a bit of style. The bouquet is a fine mix of ripe peaches, apples, gentle notes of honey and a nice supporting base of chalkiness. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, bright and succulent, with sound acids, fine focus and very good balance on the long and wide open finish. This will not make old bones, but for drinking over the next several years, there is a lot of pleasure to be had here. 2013-2017+. **89.**

Corton Blanc

As noted above, the domaine’s rare Corton Blanc bottling was born once Madame de Nicolay arrived with her daughter Claude from Paris in 1984 and sought to add a bit more white wine to the estate’s lineup. The first small parcel of chardonnay for this bottling was planted towards the bottom of the family’s parcel in the lieu à dit of Bressandes, and once this wine proved its merit, further parcels of chardonnay were planted in Renardes and Chaumes on the hill of Corton. This is a very unique white Corton, as the soils are predominantly “terres rouges” soils in all three plots where chardonnay is planted, so the wine tends to be a bit more sumptuous and fruit-driven out of the blocks than the family’s Corton-Charlemagne bottling, and the fruit will often have just a touch of the exotic to it, with notes like passion fruit or papaya often to be found amongst the more classic white Burgundy notes of pear and apple. Despite the wine coming forward a bit sooner than the Corton-Charlemagne from Chandon de Briailles (I find that in most vintages, this is absolutely delicious to start drinking after only a couple of years of bottle age), the wine has a very strong track record for longevity as well, as the wines from the vintages of the late 1980s and early 1990s that I have had the pleasure to drink in the

last couple of years have remained fresh and vibrant, with lovely complexity and breed. Like so many of the superb wines in the Chandon de Briailles lineup, this wine is really rather underrated in today's Burgundian firmament and is thus, a very fine value.



A barrel of "orange wine" blanc de noirs sitting in the Chandon de Briailles cellars in November of 2012.

2008 Corton Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2008 Corton Blanc is really a lovely example of this top-notch white Burgundy vintage and at age five it is starting to really sing on both the nose and palate. The excellent bouquet is a mix of pear, pineapple, a beautifully complex base of soil, orange peel, almond blossoms and a judicious touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and now quite generous on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids, excellent complexity and grip and a very long, focused and refined finish. This is one of my favorite recent vintages for this fine bottling! 2013-2025+. **93.**

2005 Corton Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The fine 2005 Corton Blanc has aged faster than I initially anticipated (as has been the case with many of these lower acid 2005 whites) and is now probably at its peak of maturity. The complex and already quite developed nose offers up scents of pear, ripe apples, acacia blossoms, delicate notes of honey, a dollop of beeswax and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and wide open, with a fairly gentle structure, but lovely balance, very good focus and moderate complexity on the long and silky finish. This is a very good drink

today, but I liked it even better in its immediate youth and it is best off drunk up in the next several years. 2011-2015. **87.**

1996 Corton Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1996 Corton Blanc from Chandon de Briailles was still drinking beautifully when I last saw a bottle in 2010, but whether or not other bottles are having premo issues is of course an open question. The nose on this particular bottle jumps from the glass in a brilliant mélange of honeyed pears, tangerine, almonds, a beautifully complex base of soil tones, gentle and slightly musky floral tones and a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully delineated, with a fine core, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the well-balanced and complex finish. As is typical with this bottling from Chandon de Briailles, this does not have the same cut and mineral drive as Corton-Charlemagne, but is a beautiful bottle of white Corton cut in a slightly more generous style. 2010-2020+? **92.**

1992 Corton Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1992 Corton Blanc from Chandon de Briailles is at its apogee and drinking beautifully at age nineteen. The deep, mature and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of tangerine, fresh apricot, orange blossoms, beautiful soil tones, fresh almonds and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, beautiful balance, sound acids and excellent complexity and grip on the focused and very classy finish. This is a beautiful bottle of grand cru white Burgundy at its absolute apogee, but with plenty of life still in it. 2011-2020+. **93.**

1991 Corton Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1991 Corton Blanc from Chandon de Briailles is another truly impressive and eye-opening example of the vintage, which makes me wonder if there are not indeed many more fine bottles of 1991 white Burgundy floating around. The nose is flat out beautiful, as it offers up notes of lemon, candied grapefruit peel, beeswax, chalky soil tones, polenta and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, à point, and beautifully balanced, with a lovely girdle of acidity, fine focus and impressive length and grip on the complex and classy finish. Lovely wine. 2007-2012. **92.**

1988 Corton Blanc- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

As the years have gone by, this is the vintage I now look for most often for fully mature white Burgundies, as so many of these initially tight and almost painfully racy whites have blossomed into magisterial wines with sufficient bottle age. This is certainly the case with the 1988 Corton Blanc from Chandon de Briailles, which now offers up a bright and complex bouquet of honeysuckle, buttered pears, beautifully complex soil tones, a nice dollop of *crème patissière*, sweet almond and a bit of candied orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and perfectly balanced, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids and excellent focus and complexity on the long and very classy finish. This is a stunning white Burgundy at its apogee of peak drinkability and which will continue to dazzle for many years to come. 2014-2025+. **94+.**

Corton-Charlemagne

Domaine Chandon de Briailles has really had two histories with Corton-Charlemagne, with the first chapter written by the wines produced under the mettagage agreement discussed above from the vintages between 1996 and 2009. When the de Nicolays were purchasing fruit for their bottling of Corton-Charlemagne, the grapes hailed from a prime parcel in the lieu à dit of "le Charlemagne" over on the Pernand-Vergelesses side of the hill. After that mettagage

agreement was ended, the domaine began again to produce a very small quantity of Corton-Charlemagne from their parcel of vines planted in Renardes on the “terres blanches” portion of the vineyard, and when I say a small quantity, I mean it, as there is only a single barrel of this wine now produced by the estate! Since 2011, the estate-grown Corton-Charlemagne is typically raised entirely in a “one wine” barrel, but during the years when they produced a bit more from their mettagage agreement, the wine would be raised in about twenty percent new oak. While the domaine has never been most famous for their Corton-Charlemagne bottling, I have always found them to produce one of the greatest examples on the hill of Corton, with the wine being absolutely classic in style and as is so typical of all the wines from this great estate, a very elegant and transparent example.

2005 Corton-Charlemagne- Chandon de Briailles

The 2005 Corton-Charlemagne from Chandon de Briailles is a very good example of the vintage, and the wine is now drinking at its apogee. The wine offers up a complex and à point nose of pears, tangerine, honeycomb, a gentle base of minerality and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and a bit buxom in personality, with lovely generosity to its fruit component, a nice signature of soil, good framing acids and a very long, complex and wide open finish. I assume that the heritage of this wine being on the Pernand side of the hill has helped the wine retain its freshness and purity in this rather fruit-driven white Burgundy vintage. Good juice for current consumption. 2011-2018+. 92.

1996 Corton-Charlemagne- Chandon de Briailles

1996 was the first vintage at Chandon de Briailles that a Corton-Charlemagne was produced at the estate, and happily, this particular bottle was nearly outside of the long reach of premox and was still drinking quite well. The nose is deep, complex and showing the very first vestiges of premature advancement in its fully mature blend of ripe apple, mandarin orange, fresh apricot, *crème patissière*, a hint of coffee, a lovely base of minerality and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and just a touch advanced on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, good acids and fine length still on the finish. There is less grip here on the backend than should be expected, which to my palate is the first signs that premox is just beginning to take hold of this particular bottle. It was tasted in November of 2011, and at that time it was a tasty drink, if not a totally pristine bottle. Of course, premox is a bottle by bottle plague, so I am not sure of what relevance this note really is in the big picture, but at least it is a snapshot. 2011-2015. 89.

Savigny-lès-Beaune AC

The Domaine Chandon de Briailles example of Savigny-lès-Beaune is really a superb wine and one of the often overlooked, great village wines in the Côte de Beaune. I have always been of the opinion that this bottling would age very well indeed, but had not had the opportunity to put this theory to the test until my most recent visit to the domaine in early April, when François de Nicolay dug out some odd lot half bottles that were tucked away in the cellar (they were originally bottled in halves to be used for tastings in the year or two after the bottling for visiting tasters, and then had been largely forgotten) and we had a chance to see just how well this bottling would do with extended bottle age. The vines for this bottling come from a single lieu à dit in Savigny: aux Fourneaux, which as the name suggests, lies immediately below the premier cru section of this vineyard on the slope, and all are nicely mature vines, with the average vine age around forty years of age.

2000 Savigny-lès-Beaune- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

I really like the 2000 Savigny *villages* for current drinking, as the wine offers up lovely depth and complexity, coupled to a wide open and mature personality on the palate, with just a bit of backend tannin still present and likely to continue to carry the wine for several more years. The bouquet is a pretty and tertiary blend of cherries, strawberries, *sous bois*, coffee, vinesmoke and game. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely tangy, with a good core, fine soil signature and just a bit of backend tannin to perk up the finish. This is not the most elegant *villages* out there, but it is drinking very well right now and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. 2014-2024. **87.**

1998 Savigny-lès-Beaune- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1998 vintage of red Burgundy is pretty shut down at the present time (I have an article in the works on the vintage), but the Savigny-lès-Beaune AC from Chandon de Briailles is one of the more accessible and tasty examples of the vintage I have tasted in the last year or so. The bouquet is excellent, offering up a fine mélange of black cherries, red currants, gamebird, nutskin, forest floor and coffee. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just about into its apogee, with a fine core of fruit, still a bit of the vintage's chewy tannins, and fine length and grip on the complex finish. It is not a crime to be opening this wine today, but it will be even better with another year or two in the cellar. 2016-2035. **90.**

1996 Savigny-lès-Beaune- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1996 Savigny *villages* from the de Nicolays is rather typical of a great many wines of this vintage today, as it offers up lovely purity of fruit and precise soil tones on the nose, but has a touch of "rusty pipe" to it on the backend that detracts a bit from the pleasure quotient of the wine for current drinking. The bouquet is a fine mix of cherries, strawberries, orange peel, *sous bois*, cinnamon, woodsmoke and a bit of gamebird. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and still a bit tight, with a good core of fruit, tangy acids and a bit of chewy tannin perking up on the long, slightly rusty finish. One really has to wonder whether or not the fruit will outlast the remaining tannins here, but if the rusty pipe element turns out to be a passing phenomenon (as it was in the 1972 reds) and the tannins back off fully in the coming years, this could turn out to be a really stellar bottle of village Savigny. But, right now, I really am not sure if this will happen or not. 2016-2030? **84-91?**

1992 Savigny-lès-Beaune- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

I have had so many pleasant surprises from 1992 red Burgundies over the last several years and truly regret my decision to drink my bottles from this vintage early on (when they were far more vegetal than the 2004s are today!), as I wasted what could have been some splendid bottles today. The 1992 Savigny *villages* from Chandon de Briailles is a lovely wine that is fully mature, wafting from the glass in a mix of dried cherries and red currants, forest floor, cinnamon, venison, woodsmoke and a bit of charred wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively complex, with fine focus and grip, lovely structure and a long, complex and mature finish. A lovely bottle for current consumption, and still with plenty of life in it. 2014-2025. **88.**

1990 Savigny-lès-Beaune- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

Domaine Chandon de Briailles made some lovely 1990s, and the last few bottles I have tasted from this vintage from the de Nicolays have been exemplary. The 1990 Savigny AC is really quite lovely and shows none of the overripe signature of so many of the wines from this vintage, as it offers up scents of dried plums and cherries, woodsmoke, squab, a fine base of soil, cinnamon, cumin and a touch of fruitcake in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep,

fullish and very complex, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, autumnal and beautifully balanced finish. A really lovely bottle of 1990 red Burgundy. 2014-2030. **91**.

Aloxe-Corton “les Valozières”

The Aloxe-Corton “les Valozières” premier cru bottling from Chandon de Briailles is one of the original wines in the estate’s lineup, but I did not consistently taste it during the first few years that I began visiting and tasting out of barrel, so I have less experience with this cru than any other in the domaine’s portfolio. The de Nicolay family owns a fairly small parcel in Valozières, with just over a quarter hectare of vines, and these are some of the youngest vines in the domaine’s vineyard patrimony, as the frost of 1985 really hit this parcel hard and it had to be entirely replanted in 1987 and 1988. However, as that was now twenty-six years ago, the vines are now starting to enter into their plateau of serious production and have taken very well to the transition to biodynamique viticulture. The vineyard lies immediately below the grand cru of Bressandes on the slope, with the upper section of this vineyard designated as premier cru and the lower, flatter section, with its deeper clay soils, only entitled to “villages” status.

2006 Aloxe-Corton “les Valozières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

This Aloxe-Corton premier cru from Chandon de Briailles is oft overlooked in their stellar lineup, but it is a very fine wine and one I should taste with more consistency. The 2006 bottling of les Valozières is quite fine, offering up a deep and nicely structured personality on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a mid of red cherries, citrus peel, a nice touch of grilled venison, stony soil tones, smoke and incipient notes of the *sous bois* to come with a bit more bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep and full, with nascent complexity, still a bit of tannin to resolve and fine length and grip on the long, stony and broad-shouldered finish. Good juice that still could use a few more years to fully blossom. 2017-2035+. **91+**.

Pernand-Vergelesses “les Vergelesses”

The soils in les Vergelesses are deep, clay soils with a strong vein of iron, which produce wines that are initially quite structured, but which blossom into plummy and soil-driven wines with a bit of bottle age. Les Vergelesses lies on the slope below the slice of a premier cru known as the Île de Vergelesses, with a southerly to southeasterly exposition, with the Île de Vergelesses separating this vineyard from its neighbor, the fine premier cru of Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Vergelesses”. Domaine Chandon de Briailles owns 1.23 hectares of vines in les Vergelesses, and these are pretty old vines, as the entire parcel was planted in 1954 and did not have to be replanted after the frosts of the winter of 1985. I really like this bottling from the estate, which is never quite as structured and stony in personality as their stellar Île de Vergelesses (which really behaves as if it were another of the grand crus of Corton in my experience), and the les Vergelesses will typically drink four to five years sooner than the Île de Vergelesses bottling from the de Nicolays. This is a superb premier cru that really drinks well at maturity and is often one of the finest values that one can find on the red Burgundy market for a soil-driven, complex and ageworthy premier cru at a very fair price.

2006 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Vergelesses”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2006 les Vergelesses from Chandon de Briailles shows excellent potential, but it is still a few years away from really blossoming and should be left alone, unmolested in the cellar for at least a few more years. The excellent bouquet offers up scents of cherries, wild

strawberries, woodsmoke, coffee, a touch of orange zest, a fine base of soil tones and incipient notes of game. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and tangy, with a fine core, still a fair bit of tannin remaining, good acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and well-balanced finish. This will be a fine bottle at its apogee, but it still needs just a bit more bottle age. 2016-2040. **89+**.

2005 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Vergelesses”- Chandon de Briailles

The 2005 les Vergelesses is a really superb example of the vintage and will no doubt prove to be one of the great steals of this watershed vintage. As readers will recall, the 2005 vintage was the first truly brutally expensive vintage in the region, as speculation of top wines from Burgundy really arrived with this top flight year and prices soared exorbitantly. Happily, no wine arbitrage specialists seem to be aware of the existence of les Vergelesses! The 2005 is a lovely wine, offering up a deep and pure nose of cherries, red berries, grilled game, incipient autumnal tones, deep soil nuances and a bit of bonfire in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a fairly closed personality at the present time, a sappy core of fruit, ripe, firm tannins and a long, promising and chewy finish. Give this lovely wine another five or six years to start to really blossom. I clearly thought this wine would drink sooner when I first tasted it out of barrel, but I underestimated the inherent structure of the vintage at that time, and this certainly deserves a bit more bottle age before broaching. 2019-2040. **90+**.

2000 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Vergelesses”- Chandon de Briailles (served from magnum)

I can vividly recall (foolishly) lobbying for this magnum not to be opened during a tasting trip to Germany, as a friend had purchased it in Burgundy and brought it along with us as we continued our tasting trip through Germany. I was very palate-fatigued after a particularly long day of tasting and was deep into a well-earned glass of beer, when the magnum was popped. Twenty minutes later (beer now finished!), I was pouring my second glass of this lovely wine and certainly no longer complaining that I was too wiped out to drink mature red Burgundy! The nose is deep, complex and still fairly youthful out of mag, offering up scents of cherries, red berries, game, woodsmoke, orange zest, incipient notes of forest floor and a lovely topnote of cinnamon. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and still on the young side, with a good core, lovely focus, a dollop of tannin and still a bit of its youthful stemminess to drop with further bottle age. This is a lovely wine that is probably drinking beautifully already out of regular-sized bottles, but could still use a year or two more out of magnum. 2015-2035+. **90**.

Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”

To my mind, Île de Vergelesses is one of the greatest premier crus of the Côte de Beaune, and also one of the best-kept secrets in the firmament of Burgundy in this day and age of overheated pricing. The de Nicolay family owns a superb, 3.33 hectare section of this superb premier cru, which is located like a spearhead between the premier crus of les Vergelesses that lie respectively in Savigny and Pernand. Domaine Chandon de Briailles is the largest land owner in the vineyard of Île de Vergelesses, with their parcel located in the section closer towards the intersection of the roads to Savigny and Pernand. This section of Île de Vergelesses abuts a little slice of Savigny “les Vergelesses” known as “Basses Vergelesses” (which is sandwiched between the Île de Vergelesses and les Lavières), and on its western border, by the primary section of Savigny “les Vergelesses”. One hectare of their parcel is now planted to chardonnay and produces their stellar white bottling from Île de Vergelesses, with the remaining 2.33 hectares planted to pinot noir of a very respectable age, as these vines too primarily date back to the mid-1950s, with some stretching back all the way to 1938, and a small portion

having been replanted after the frosts of 1985. The Île de Vergelesses has far more limestone in its soils than its neighbor of Pernand “les Vergelesses”- though both climats have far more clay in their soil composition than what is found up on the hill of Corton proper- and the higher concentration of limestone in the Île produces a wine of far more inherent elegance and minerality than the les Vergelesses bottling. Remington Norman in his books on the top domaines of Burgundy suggests that the Île de Vergelesses comes forward and drinks sooner than the Pernand “les Vergelesses” bottling from Chandon de Briailles, but to my palate this is not the case, and I always find that the Île de Vergelesses needs more time in the cellar to fully blossom and start to drink at its full potential. There is little doubt that this fine premier cru has benefited from global warming, as one finds that examples from this vineyard are far more routinely ripe and pure, whereas a generation ago, ripeness was not something that could be consistently counted on for grapes in cooler years in the Île de Vergelesses. In my experience, the de Nicolays’ version of Île de Vergelesses is the reference point example of this fine terroir, and this is clearly one of the greatest wines produced in the Chandon de Briailles cellars.



François de Nicolay at the domaine in Savigny-lès-Beaune.

2010 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2010 Île de Vergelesses from Chandon de Briailles was still quite young when I last tasted it out of bottle in June of 2013, but as promising as ever, as it wafts from the glass in a classy mélange of cherries, strawberries, vinesmoke, stony minerality and a topnote of fresh

herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with tangy acids, classic, youthful structure, a sappy core of red fruit, superb soil inflection and a very long, primary and moderately tannic finish. This will be superb, but it still needs at least a decade in the cellar to really reach its apogee. It should prove to be a very long-lived vintage for this superb wine. 2023-2055+. **93.**

2007 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2007 Île de Vergelesses from François and Claude de Nicolay is really a beautiful bottle in the making, with the fine structure of this cru still wanting a few more years to fully blossom. The great nose jumps from the glass in a complex, red fruity blend of cherries, strawberries, mustard seed, iron-like soil tones, gamebird, orange zest and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and already quite open on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, impeccable focus and soil signature, ripe, chewy tannins and outstanding length and grip on the utterly classic finish. A superb wine in the making, but give it a few more years to blossom fully on the palate. 2017-2035+. **92.**

1996 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1996 Île de Vergelesses from Domaine Chandon de Briailles is an absolutely superb example of the vintage that offers up admirable complexity and beautiful integration of its structural elements. The very deep and classy nose offers up a complex mélange of red and black cherries, grilled venison, coffee, great minerality, orange peel, forest floor and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent, with a fine core of pure fruit, moderate tannins, beautifully buried acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and very long finish. Just a beautiful 1996 red Burgundy. 2011-2025+. **92.**

1983 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1983 Île de Vergelesses is really a lovely example of the vintage and is drinking very well indeed. There is a dry-edge to this wine on the backend that will probably always be part of its profile, but it is a very clean wine with fine complexity and purity and absolutely no signs of hail taint on either the nose or the palate. The complex and tertiary nose wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of cherries, forest floor, coffee, a touch of dried oak leaves, coriander and a bit of dusty soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely transparent, with a bit of backend, chewy tannin, fine focus, good acidity and a long, complex finish. This is a very tasty and thoroughly satisfying example of the 1983 vintage with years of life still ahead of it. 2013-2025. **88.**

Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”

The de Nicolays own 1.6 hectares of vines in the fine premier cru of Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”. This very well-situated premier cru lies as the most easterly of the band of premier crus on the northern side of the appellation, running along the Pernand-Vergelesses border and with its immediate neighbor on the slope to the west the fine Savigny vineyard of les Lavières. Just over the communal boundary to the north is the premier cru vineyard of Pernand-Vergelesses “les Vergelesses”. Domaine Simon Bize et Fils is another of the Savigny superstars with a fine slice of aux Fourneaux. The soils in aux Fourneaux tend to be a bit deeper than those of les Lavières, and though they still retain a fairly high limestone content, they do not produce quite the same inherent elegance in the young wines as is the case next door in les Lavières. The age of the vines here in the Chandon de Briailles parcel is quite old, as the parcel was planted between 1955 and 1961.

2005 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2005 Fourneaux from Chandon de Briailles is outstanding and was showing great potential when I last tasted it in November of 2012. The deep, young and nascently complex nose soars from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, a touch of red currant, lovely minerality, a hint of bonfire, superb spice tones and an incipient note of gamebirds. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite tangy, with a rock solid core of fruit, moderate tannins, bright and bouncy acids and outstanding length and grip on the still very young, but focused and beautifully balanced finish. This will be dynamite in the fullness of time, but give it at least another eight to ten years of bottle age to really start to show all of its potential! 2020-2060. **92+.**

2004 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2004 Fourneaux from Chandon de Briailles is not a particularly herbal example of the vintage and there is little doubt that “green meanies” are not going to be a serious concern for this wine. However, the wine is currently quite shut down and shows a distinctively dry edge to its tannic structure, so my primary worry here would be whether or not the fruit will outlast the chewy tannins. The bouquet is really quite nice, offering up scents of dried cherries, woodsmoke, orange peel, a touch of coriander seed and a complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite closed down, with a good core and fine, nascent complexity, but also some rather prickly tannins that currently clamp down on the long finish. This is emphatically not a great time to be opening bottles of this wine, but I would hazard the guess that the odds are probably fifty-fifty that this wine will resolve seamlessly. If it does, it will offer lovely soil signature and plenty of complexity. 2018-2030+? **86-91?**

2002 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

Chandon de Briailles’ 2002 Fourneaux is one of the prettier examples of the vintage that I have tasted in the last few years, wafting from the glass in a complex and classy blend of red and black cherries, a touch of gamebird, woodsmoke, fresh herbs, coffee and a hint of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and modestly tannic, with fine acids, lovely focus and balance and very good length and grip on the finish. This is still essentially a fruit-driven vintage of Fourneaux (at least by the very high and transparent standards of Chandon de Briailles), but it is a very tasty wine nonetheless. It still has decades of life ahead of it, but it is now starting to blossom. 2011-2040. **90.**

1996 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1996 Fourneaux from Chandon de Briailles is a very pretty and well-balanced middleweight that is drinking very well at the present time. The bouquet is a fine mélange of dark berries, roasted game, coffee, *sous bois*, dried red berries, a beautiful touch of soil and a topnote of bonfires. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and very nicely balanced, with still a bit of firm tannin perking up the backend and very good length and grip on the tangy finish. At the present time the acids here are perfectly integrated into the body of the wine. Good juice, but perhaps without quite the flair of the wines made by the domaine in the last decade. 2011-2025. **88.**

1993 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1993 Fourneaux from Chandon de Briailles is a stellar example of the vintage and the wine is currently wide open and drinking very well indeed, though still with plenty of the vibrancy of relative youth in evidence on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a first rate blend of red and black cherries, grilled meat, stony soil tones, coffee, cumin, turmeric, woodsmoke and an autumnal topnote of dried leaves. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully complex, with bright acids, excellent focus and grip, tertiary complexity and

just a whisper of remaining tannin on the long and very classy finish. A beautiful bottle of Savigny premier cru that is now into its apogee, but has decades of life still ahead of it. 2014-2035+. **93.**

Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”

Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières” is my personal favorite premier cru in the village. I know that crus such as les Vergelesses, la Dominode, aux Gravains or aux Serpentières can be equally fine, but I love the inherent elegance that so many examples of les Lavières exude at maturity, and probably only les Vergelesses has the same potential to refinement as is found in les Lavières. However, this is a proper premier cru on the north side of Savigny, and that means that the wine inevitably starts out life tight and structured and one has to exercise a bit of patience with a young vintage to capture all of the potential inherent in top examples from this vineyard. The premier cru is sandwiched between aux Fourneaux and aux Gravains, with les Vergelesses tucked up above it to the north in the direction of Pernand, so this is right in the heart and soul of the band of premier crus on the northern side of the commune. The soils here are very limestone-based, and they are not deep soils, so one strikes the bedrock here quite quickly and the stony nature of the underlying soil is one of the reasons for the great purity and racy refinement one gets out of les Lavières when the wines are mature. The de Nicolay has a great, great parcel of old vines in the vineyard, having been planted in 1955, and this is one of the domaine’s most important holdings, as they have 2.61 hectares of this vineyard. In top vintage, I do not look to drink a bottle of Chandon de Briailles’ les Lavières before it has reached its tenth birthday, as it is a very serious wine and does need time to unfold from behind its considerable structural elements and truly start to deliver all of the complexity and purity of this wine at its apogee, but it is never as sturdily burly out of the blocks as other Savignys such as Serpentières or Narbantons can be early on. However, in vintages like 2006 or 2007, this wine can come forward a bit earlier and both of these vintages from the de Nicolay family are really drinking very well at the present time. Like all of the very top premier crus in Savigny, les Lavières can last far longer than some commentators have intimated in the past (when they have even bothered to pay attention to wines from the appellation, as most of them write as if they have seldom even drunk bottles of Savigny before they decided to write a book on Burgundy and felt it incumbent upon them to visit the village’s top estates and ask them to open some bottles for them), and I see no reason that the top vintages of the de Nicolays’ les Lavières these days cannot be kept for upwards of fifty years out from the vintage. This is a great bottling from Chandon de Briailles and one of my favorite premier crus in the entire Côte de Beaune.

2010 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2010 les Lavières has completely shut down after its bottling, and when I tasted this wine again in November of 2012, it was a hermetically-sealed and very grumpy young adolescent. The nose is closed and currently a bit peppery, but with lovely underlying potential in its red fruity blend of cherries, quince, vinesmoke, beautiful soil tones and a topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite defined by its lovely minerality, with moderate tannins, snappy acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and very young finish. This is shut down for hibernation and will need quite a bit of patience before it again blossoms, but it will be a great wine in the fullness of time. 2020-2050. **93.**

2007 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2007 les Lavières is turning into a superb example of this oft overlooked vintage. The deep, youthful and still fairly reticent nose offers up a fine mélange of red and black cherries, vinesmoke, a touch of gamebird, coffee, mustard seed, lovely soil tones and that classic topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core, superb soil inflection, moderate tannins and a long, still fairly closed finish. This will be a superb example of the 2007 vintage, but it still needs a few more years of cellaring to fully blossom. 2015-2040. **92.**

2006 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2006 Chandon de Briailles les Lavières was showing beautifully in November of 2014, as the wine soars from the glass in a perfumed blend of cherries, red plums, a bit of cocoa, red currants, vinesmoke, chalky minerality and Savigny spice tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, soil-driven and impressively complex for a young wine, with ripe tannins, excellent focus, tangy acids and serious reserve at the core. The finish is long and beautifully balanced, as it dances across the tongue and closes with excellent grip and soil inflection. Just a very serious bottle of wine. 2014-2040. **91-92+.**

2005 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2005 les Lavières from Chandon de Briailles is an excellent wine in the making, but like so many of the 2005s, it is now in need of some extended bottle age and I clearly underestimated just how much time this wine would need in the cellar when I first tasted it out of barrel. The bouquet is now quite reticent, but shows off the same purity and nascent complexity that were evident early on, offering up notes of cherries, red currants, citrus peel, a beautiful base of soil tones, roses and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with tangy acids, firm tannins and a very long, focused and very promising finish. Give this wine at least another three or four years in the cellar before opening bottles, as it still needs time to fully blossom, but it is going to be a long-lived and very fine bottle of Savigny at its apogee. 2018-2045. **93+.**

1993 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles (magnum)

Out of magnum, the 1993 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières” from Chandon de Briailles is still a tad on the young side and could do with another four or five years of bottle age to fully blossom- though its true peak of maturity is still probably a good decade away! The deep, complex and black fruity nose offers up a lovely blend of black cherries, grilled venison, coffee, *sous bois*, woodsmoke and still a touch of its youthful stemminess waiting to resolve. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully complex, with a sappy core of fruit, lovely focus and grip, a fair bit of ripe tannin and outstanding length and grip on the tangy, fairly youthful and soil-driven finish. This will be a very fine bottle in the fullness of time, but it is still a bit too young for primetime drinking (at least out of magnum). 2016-2040+. **93.**

1991 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1991 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières” from Chandon de Briailles is closing in on its apogee of peak maturity and is beginning to really drink splendidly at age twenty. The deep, pure and very transparent nose offers up a complex mélange of cherries, wild strawberries, orange rind, woodsmoke, earth, coffee and incipient notes of *sous bois*. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and tangy, with lovely complexity, excellent mid-palate depth, still a bit of remaining tannin to resolve fully and outstanding length and grip on the focused and superb finish. Savigny makes long-lived and sturdy wines that take their time blossoming, but as this beautiful wine so aptly demonstrates, the wines are very much worth the wait! 2012-2035+. **92.**

1988 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Lavières”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1988 les Lavières is a very typical 1988 that is still just a touch hard-edged and showing a bit of adolescent “rustiness”, but also with lovely, autumnal complexity and very good length and grip. The bouquet offers up a tertiary blend of desiccated cherries, mustard seed, *sous bois*, hung game, a complex base of soil and a touch of dried oak leaves in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish and surprisingly suave and round on the attack, with a good core of fruit, moderate tannins and a long, mature finish. This will probably always have its slightly chewy shadings and is drinking very well now (particularly with a bit of air) and offers up very good complexity. 2013-2035. **87.**

Volnay “Caillerets”

The Volnay “Caillerets” from Chandon de Briailles was produced between the vintages of 2000 and 2009, which was made from a parcel of vines that the estate exploited under a mettagage agreement. The owner of these vines was the same producer who supplied the mettagage grapes for the first bottling of Corton-Charlemagne that the domaine produced, and I imagine that the owner of the vines was not particularly sanguine about the switch over to full-scale biodynamique farming principals on the part of the de Nicolays in the 2008 vintage. One often sees in regions where vineyard owners are selling their grapes, they are more concerned about the quantity of each harvest, and a switch to the lower yields of biodynamique farming are hardly going to be of serious interest to one who is making their living by selling their grapes and not having to worry about putting their name on the label of the resulting wine. In any event, the mettagage agreement here ended after the 2009 vintage, and I have only had one recent bottling of Caillerets from Chandon de Briailles in recent years. As I noted above, during the course of this mettagage agreement, there was enough quantity of grapes for the domaine to produce about five barrels a year of Volnay “Caillerets”.

2006 Volnay “Caillerets”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2006 Volnay “Caillerets” from Chandon de Briailles is a very good bottle in the making that is still a few years away from fully blossoming. The wine offers up a bouquet of black cherries, red plums, cocoa, a lovely base of dark soil tones, a bit of game and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, with a good core of fruit, fine focus and balance and a long, still fairly chewy finish. Good juice in the making, but a bottle that still is in need of a bit more hibernation in the cellar. 2019-2040. **92+.**

Corton “Maréchaudes”

The Maréchaudes climat is located just below Bressandes on the hill of Corton, and is one of the lowest lying vineyards that are entitled to grand cru status on the slope. In fact, the lower half of this vineyard is only entitled to Aoxe-Corton premier cru status. The lower elevation tends to make a Corton red that is less stony and stern on release, as the soils here are deeper and richer from erosion of the lieux à dits above (primarily Bressandes), and this is one of my favorite sections of Corton to drink when the wine is relatively youthful. This is the smallest of the de Nicolays’ holdings for red Corton on the hill, as they have forty ares of vines here that were planted in the mid-1970s and early 1980s. However, I get the feeling that it is not so bad to have slightly younger vines here in Maréchaudes, as this at least gives clients of the domaine one grand cru red that they can pop with great pleasure on the earlier side, rather than be tempted to waste bottles of Bressandes or Clos du Roi too soon out after the vintage. The style

of the Chandon de Briailles Maréchaudes is always a bit more fruit-driven in personality than their other two Corton rouge bottlings, but this is not to say that the wine is short of soil signature, it is just far less stony and dominated by its minerality out of the blocks than these other two great Corton lieux à dits. I have only gone back as far as the 1998 vintage of Maréchaudes from the de Nicolays in recent times, but I have little doubt that their Maréchaudes would have no difficulties cruising along for fifty years or more out from its respective vintage. It is the least of these three great Cortons in the cellar, but this is not to say that this is a weak-kneed or atypical bottle of Corton, it is just not quite as well-situated on the hillside as the twin towers of Bressandes and Clos du Roi!

2006 Corton “les Maréchaudes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2006 Maréchaudes from Chandon de Briailles is a very fine example of this underrated vintage and it is just starting to drink well at age eight. The nose is a fine blend of red and black cherries, smoky overtones, a bit of orange zest, venison, fine soil nuances that will get more autumnal as the wine continues to age and fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with good mid-palate concentration, fine focus and balance, moderate, well-integrated tannins and fine length and grip on the classic finish. It is already a pretty good drink, but a few more years of bottle age are certainly not going to be detrimental to this fine bottle. 2015-2045+. **93.**

2005 Corton “Maréchaudes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2005 Chandon de Briailles Maréchaudes is an excellent example of the vintage, but like so many of the top 2005s, it is quite closed down now and is taking longer to start to stir than I initially anticipated when I tasted the wine out of barrel. The deep and youthful nose delivers scents of cherries, red currants, incipient notes of forest floor, gamebirds, a bit of bonfire and an excellent base of Maréchaudes soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite sappy at the core, with ripe tannins, tangy acids and excellent length and grip on the still fairly youthful finish. Originally, I thought this wine might be drinking by now, but I would still keep it tucked away in the cellar for at least another five years before starting to open bottles of this fine wine. 2018-2050+. **93+.**

2001 Corton “Maréchaudes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2001 Corton “Maréchaudes” from Chandon de Briailles is starting to really drink splendidly at age ten, offering up an outstanding bouquet of cherries, orange peel, forest floor, bonfires, venison, coffee and a complex base of soil tones that have not yet gone autumnal in tone. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and coming into full bloom, with a lovely core of pure fruit, excellent soil signature, fine focus and superb grip on the very long, complex and classy finish. There is still a bit of tannin here on the backend, but they are seamlessly woven into the body of the wine and it is awfully easy to drink this wine today! Fine juice that will continue to improve, but is getting close to its peak of drinkability. 2011-2040. **93.**

1999 Corton “Maréchaudes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 1999 Maréchaudes is a big boy and one of the ripest examples of a mature Chandon de Briailles wine that I have had the pleasure to taste. The wine came in at a full fourteen percent natural alcohol (quite high by the standards of this domaine) and was fermented with one hundred percent whole clusters. The wine is deep, complex and really starting to blossom now as it enters its fifteenth birthday, wafting from the glass in a deep and complex aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, venison, baking spices, *sous bois*, coffee, a fine base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and broad shouldered, with

a fine core of ripe fruit, excellent acidity, superb focus and grip and a very long, well-balanced and moderately tannic finish. It is no crime to be opening bottles of this wine today, but it is clearly still climbing in quality and another four or five years of bottle age would deliver an even more complete and suave example of the vintage. Fine juice! 2014-2040. **93+**.

1998 Corton “Maréchaudes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The '98 Corton “Maréchaudes” is a lovely and still youthful example of the vintage, and happily, this is one 1998 red Burgundy that is still fairly open and has not hunkered down into a period of hibernation. The deep and classy bouquet offers up a fine constellation of cherries, orange peel, a complex base of soil tones, coffee, incipient notes of *sous bois* and a nice dollop of fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, still a fair bit of tannin to resolve, good acids and a long, focused and soil-driven finish. This will be a lovely wine with a bit more time in the cellar. 2015-2035+. **91**.



Spring just starting to stir in the Le Nôtre-inspired gardens at Domaine Chandon de Briailles.

Corton “Bressandes”

The lieu à dit of Bressandes, lies higher up on the slope than Maréchaudes, where the soils are thinner and stonier, and this is a more classically structured and austere Corton in its youth, but with even better potential for long-term development than the lovely Maréchaudes. To my palate, Bressandes, along with the lieux à dits of Renardes and Clos du Roi, is one of the three greatest on the hill of Corton for red wines and Domaine Chandon de Briailles makes one

of the very finest examples of Bressandes to be found in all of Burgundy. This is a very important holding for the domaine, as they own 1.12 hectares of vines here that are planted to pinot noir that averages thirty-five years of age at the present time. Bressandes lies below Clos du Roi and Renardes on the hillside and has a very fine combination of clay and limestone to its soil composition that translates into an utterly classic example of red Corton- deep, minerally in its youth and very complex and refined at full maturity. This is one of the greatest wines in the Chandon de Briailles lineup, but in top vintages, I try very hard not to touch bottles until they are at least twelve to fifteen years old, as this is a proper Corton that has the potential to last easily for sixty to seventy years in the bottle in a deep and structured vintage.

2010 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2010 Bressandes from Chandon de Briailles is a superb wine in the making, but like the 2010 les Lavières, it was very shut down when I last crossed paths with it in bottle back in November of 2012. The reserved and classic nose reluctantly offers up scents of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a beautiful base of soil, a touch of gamebirds, coffee and fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very transparent and utterly shut down, with a rock solid core, firm tannins, tangy acids and a very long, very primary and very closed finish. This will be great, but it needs plenty of time. 2022-2060. **94+.**

2009 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2009 Bressandes weighs in at 13.5 percent alcohol, which is not too bad in the context of the vintage, but certainly a riper version than is typical from this fine estate. The nose is deep, ripe and impressively complex, as it offers up scents of black cherries, a touch of chocolate, woodsmoke, venison, soil tones, spices and a whisper of wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly complex, with a plush attack, a sappy core and very good length and grip on the ripely tannic and sturdy finish. This is a very good effort for 2009, but it is not a great example of Chandon de Briailles Bressandes and at this point in time, it seems just a touch less promising than it did out of barrel. 2020-2050. **91.**

2007 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2007 Corton “Bressandes” from Chandon de Briailles is a stellar example of the vintage, and it does not seem to be much further away from peak drinkability than the fine Île de Vergelesses. The outstanding bouquet offers up an aromatic mix of red and black cherries, orange zest, gamebirds, mustard seed, coffee, a very complex base of soil and just a touch of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a rock solid core, ripe moderate tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, poised and perfectly balanced finish. An excellent wine in the making. 2017-2040+. **93+.**

2006 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

I had not seen an example of 2006 Bressandes from Chandon de Briailles in a few years and was very happy to see how it was developing when I visited the domaine in June of this year. The wine is now currently quite adolescent, but its ultimate promise is quite evident and this should prove to be a very fine and absolutely classic vintage for this fine bottling. The deep and superb nose offers up scents of black cherries, red currants, a touch of plum, coffee, incipient notes of bonfire, coriander, blossoming notes of *sous bois* that include a strong vein of iron in its complex base of soil and just a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely shape and balance, moderate, but still firm, tannins and a very long, soil-driven finish. This is a lovely bottle in the making. 2019-2060.

93.

2005 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The more profound *terroir* of Bressandes has teamed up with Chandon de Briailles to produce a classically structured and very promising young wine in this vintage. The bouquet is deep, complex and quite primary, as it offers up scents of red berries, a touch of sweet currant, lovely orange zest, incipient notes of the gamebirds to come, vinesmoke and a strong signature of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and rock solid, with a great core of fruit, a turbo-charged base of minerality, and beautiful balance and focus on the long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. Put this one in the time capsule. 2018-2050+. **93+**.

2001 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2001 Corton “Bressandes” from Chandon de Briailles is a lovely middleweight that is transitioning into its full state of maturity and offers up superb aromatic and flavor complexity, as well as lovely intensity of flavor, if not stunning depth at the core. The very complex and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a blend of roasted game, baked cherries and plums, orange peel, iron-like soil tones, *sous bois* and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with good, but, not great mid-palate depth, modest tannins and a long, transparent and tangy finish. While this does not have the reserves of fruit at the core of top recent vintages of this wine, there is superb complexity and really outstanding length and grip on the backend, and there is absolutely nothing lacking with this lovely bottle. It is just starting to reach a good point for drinking, but it has years and years of life still ahead of it. 2011-2035+. **93.**

1993 Corton “Bressandes”- Chandon de Briailles

I had not crossed paths with a bottle of the '93 Bressandes in seven or eight years and was very happy to see a good friend in Germany have a bottle standing for a dinner together during my last trip to Europe. This is a great wine that is just now starting to reach its apogee of maturity, but clearly has several decades of life still ahead of it. The deep, very complex and just blossomed nose offers up scents of baked cherries, red plums, orange peel, dusty soil tones, gamebirds, fresh herbs, a touch of bonfire, incipient notes of *sous bois* and spice tones redolent of coriander and cinnamon in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, suave and tangy, with superb mid-palate depth, lovely, middle-aged complexity, modest tannins and absolutely superb length and grip on the tangy and very classy finish. I love the place in its evolution where this wine has reached, where the fruit is still very bright and pure, but all of the tertiary elements have begun to emerge into equally weighted components on both the nose and palate. Great juice. 2013-2050+. **94.**

1990 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

While I am generally not a big fan these days of the 1990 red Burgundy vintage, the Corton “Bressandes” from Chandon de Briailles is an exception. This is a very, very fresh example of this prune vintage, offering up a deep, ripe (but decidedly not overripe) and impressively pure bouquet of cherries, roasted venison, mustard seed, a bit of dried fruit, woodsmoke and a superb base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, rich on the attack and rock solid at the core, with impressively tangy acids, modest, melting tannins and outstanding length and grip on the complex and classy finish. The ripeness of the 1990 vintage has taken away a bit of the transparency that is so typical of the Chandon de Briailles Cortons, substituting quite opulent depth of fruit, but this is one 1990 red Burgundy that is drinking beautifully today and seems to show every indication of cruising along beautifully for several decades to come without straying over the line into dull overripeness. Good juice. 2012-2035+. **91.**

Corton “Clos du Roi”

The Clos du Roi lieu à dit on the hill of Corton is one of the greatest vineyards for red wine to be found in Burgundy. As the name implies, this parcel was once owned by the King of France back in the middle ages, and it is a splendidly situated lieu à dit, in the heart of the hill of Corton, overlooking the southern half of Bressandes which lies below it on the slope, and capped with the thin slice of limestone-soiled Le Corton, which is primarily planted to chardonnay and produced Corton-Charlemagne. The climat of Renardes lies immediately alongside of Clos du Roi on the northern side of the vineyard. The vineyard of Clos du Roi has plenty of iron in its mix of chalky limestone and clay, and this can really be sensed in the wine in its youth and when it is thirty or forty years old. The de Nicolay family has 38 ares of Clos du Roi, which was primarily planted in 1961, but a portion of their parcel was affected by the severe frosts of 1985 and had to be replanted, so now part of these vines are only twenty-nine years old (young by the high standards of the domaine, but now reaching a very good age and clearly into their prime). I tend to drink more Bressandes from Chandon de Briailles than I do Clos du Roi- not out of a preference for one over the other, but, rather because there is simply so much more Bressandes produced by the de Nicolay family from holdings that are nearly three times the size. However, the domaine's Clos du Roi is an utterly complete and magnificent example of great red Corton and quite different stylistically than their superb Bressandes. As the Clos du Roi lies above Bressandes on the hillside, it tends to be a more stony and minerally-defined wine in its youth, without quite the same early generosity of fruit to complement the superb signature of soil that is found in equally young Bressandes, but a wine that is always utterly complete and refined and simply in need of the requisite period of bottle age to fully blossom and realize its stellar potential. People who are not overly familiar with the differences of terroir between Clos du Roi, Bressandes and Renardes often wonder why I seethe at DRC's decision to blend these three climats together and produce simply a generic red Corton from the prime parcels that were leased to them by the Prince de Merode domaine, but these three terroirs are as different from one another as Echézeaux, Grands Echézeaux and Romanée-St.-Vivant, and somehow the team at DRC manages to get those three wines into bottle separately! Clos du Roi is the finest and most complete of these three superb lieux à dits on the hill of Corton, with a more complex and elegant expression of underlying minerality than its two illustrious neighbors, great purity and typically a very red fruity personality to its fruit component, and quite often a potpourri of spice and herb tones that add to the beautiful complexity of this wine at its peak of maturity. Domaine Chandon de Briailles' Clos du Roi is one of the greatest red grand crus to be found in the entire Côte d'Or.

2005 Corton “Clos du Roi”- Domaine Chandon de Briailles

The 2005 Clos du Roi from Chandon de Briailles is a great wine in the making, but it is currently quite shut down and in need of quite a bit more cellaring time before it starts to stir. The wine offers up a reserved and very, very promising nose of red and black cherries, red currants, coffee, woodsmoke, incipient notes of game and autumnal soil, traces of iron, fresh herbs and plenty of stony minerality. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with suave, but firm tannins, tangy acids, great concentration and balance and a very, very long, poised and chewy finish that will be magnificent in the fullness of time. Give this great wine at least another seven or eight years to stir, but it will be at its best fifteen to twenty years from now. 2022-2075+. **95.**

1991 Corton “Clos du Roi”- Chandon de Briailles

I love the 1991 red Burgundies today, as the wines are fully mature and still packed with vibrancy and charm. The 1991 Corton “Clos du Roi” from Chandon de Briailles is a superb example of the vintage, jumping from the glass in a complex mélange of plums, baked cherries, coffee, fresh herb tones, a beautiful base of complex, slightly autumnal soil tones and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and *à point*, with a fine core of fruit, superb complexity, melting tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long and classy finish. Just a great bottle of Corton that has just entered its plateau of maturity- where it should reside very comfortably for the next several decades. 2010-2030+. **93.**

1990 Corton “Clos du Roi”- Chandon de Briailles

While the 1990 Clos du Roi cannot quite match the purity of the wine in a vintage like 1991, this is still a very fine example of its own vintage and shows off admirable restraint for this rather overripe year. The wine really is lovely on the nose, offering up a complex constellation of desiccated cherries and red plums, *sous bois*, cinnamon, hung game, coffee and a nice touch of heather in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and boasts outstanding mid-palate depth, with impressive purity for the vintage, melting tannins and lovely length and grip on the *à point* and classy finish. This is a superb effort for the vintage and a real joy to drink. 2013-2035. **91.**

1988 Corton “Clos du Roi”- Chandon de Briailles

The 1988 Corton “Clos du Roi” from Chandon de Briailles spent fully two years in barrel, as the malo was so late here that the wine went through a second winter in the cellars prior to completing its second fermentation. The wine is still a tad on the young side, but it is blossoming with plenty of promise and should prove to be an absolutely stellar example of the vintage in the fullness of time. The deep and very complex nose offers up scents of cherries, orange zest, gamebirds, coriander seed, woodsmoke, coffee, a beautifully complex base of soil tones and a gentle topnote of autumn leaves. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tightly-knit, tangy and moderately tannic finish. This still could use five more years to fully blossom, but its potential is readily apparent and this is going to be a stunning wine in a few more years’ time. 2018-2050. **95.**

**THE 2013 GERMAN VINTAGE:
A THROWBACK VINTAGE OF INCONSISTENCY,
MEASURED RIPENESS AND RATHER ZESTY ACIDITY**



End of October's golden berries in the Hipping vineyard in Nierstein ready for Kabinett picking.

I had no real idea what to expect of the 2013 vintage in Germany as I arrived for my annual March visit to some of my favorite producers across wine country. It was far from a classic growing season across Germany in 2013, with problems starting early as the weather was cool and unsettled during the important flowering period (which arrived behind schedule to make matters worse right from the outset), so that the crop load would end up being very small this year. However, given that the vagaries of the weather during the flowering were not uniform across regions or even villages, some estates were able to produce fairly close to a “normal” crop load in 2013- for example, Tim Fröhlich of Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich reported that yields here in this vintage were only off about five percent, while nearby at Weingut Dönnhoff, Cornelius Dönnhoff observed that their yields were off anywhere from thirty to forty percent, depending on the village and vineyard. So 2013 is far from a homogenous vintage, and not only in the realm of crop size, but some villages and some regions were far luckier with the weather over the course of the summer and autumn than were others. Probably the least fortunate region that I visited on this trip was the Saar, which has had to struggle not only with extremely short crop loads, but also inconsistent quality. The Middle Mosel seemed to have been a bit more blessed (at least at the estates where I tasted), and the Nahe and the Rheinhessen had amongst the best growing conditions in this challenging year. As Klaus-Peter Keller of Weingut Keller in Flörsheim-

Dalsheim noted, in the Rheinhessen “we were probably very lucky with the weather in 2013- compared to other regions- and we were very happy with the quality of wines we were able to produce this year.”

It was a vintage that was characterized first and foremost by the difficulties at flowering, so that yields were generally very short in 2013, though of course, with the difficulties that would come with the weather at harvest, this at least allowed estates to collect their berries quickly in the fall when the weather was at the best it would be during the harvesting period. Typically, in easier years, German producers like to have a long window for picking, so that they can select parcels of grapes to target specific types of wines, so that they will make passes through the vineyards several times, with one picking focused on selecting berries for Auslesen, and another for dry wines and a third for Kabinett and a fourth for Spätlesen for example, and the harvest can often stretch out over the better part of a month if there is a good Indian Summer and the weather holds sunny and not too warm. However, in 2013, there was rain at many times during the harvest, so that growers had to pick grapes when Mother Nature relented and gave a bit of sunny weather, rather than when it would have been optimal to pick the grapes for specific selections in sunnier conditions. So winemakers were forced to jump around as nature dictated, picking parcels here and there when the weather would cooperate. According to Tim Fröhlich , in the Nahe there was a period during the picking when it was completely rain-free, from around October 28th until November 8th, but with damp weather on either side of this window. As Cornelius Dönnhoff of Weingut Hermann Dönnhoff corroborated, “we started picking on October 15th, just as the botrytis was starting to arrive, but as November went by, it became harder and harder to find good days to pick.”

Up until the harvest, most producers did not really have a real inkling of just how short the yields were going to be in 2013, as the number of bunches on the vines did not look to be brutally short (though they were certainly lagging in ripeness), but when the picking started and the bins of grapes started to arrive at the wineries, it became very clear that some vineyards had really produced tiny quantities in 2013. As Christophe Schaefer mentioned, when pickers started bringing in bins of grapes from one section of the Domprobst that they were picking that day, he thought that the pickers had misunderstood him and made a selection, rather than picking everything, and told them “no, I wanted to pick all the grapes in this section”, only to be told, “we did that- these are all the grapes in that parcel!” But, yields did vary pretty dramatically from estate to estate and even from vineyard to vineyard, as problems at flowering and shot berries varied rather dramatically, and there was also hail in some vineyards as well in mid-June (such as Niederberg Helden and Saarburger Rausch), which further cut back on the potential size of the crop. Some of the numbers are just brutal: yields were off forty percent for Johannes Haart in Piesport, fifty percent for Florian Lauer and Weingut Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch, sixty percent for Hanno and Dorothee Zilliken and two-thirds at Schloss Lieser! At Weingut Willi Schaefer, 2013 was the smallest crop in the history of the estate and for Egon Müller, 2013 was the smallest crop since 1945! So you can understand why people like Tim Fröhlich and Klaus-Peter Keller felt very fortunate to have much closer to normal crop sizes in many of their vineyards.

Not only did 2013 present very poor and unsettled weather during the important flowering period, as it was very cold and grey in April and May, and the growing season got off to a very, very slow start. Very fine sunny and warm weather generally returned for June and

July (at least where there was no hail, as there were three isolated hailstorms scattered around wine country during the middle of this month), but then it turned rainy in August and September, with attendant threat of mildew and growers really were not sure if the grapes out on the vines were ever going to ripen fully. However, as was the case with problems at flowering, the rainfall varied quite dramatically from region to region in 2013 in August, September and October, so that the middle Mosel received 410 millimeters over this period and the Rheinhessen only 190 millimeters. So it is pretty easy to understand how different the 2013ers can be from estate to estate and region to region. As Klaus-Peter Keller noted, the amount of rainfall he experienced in his vineyard plots was actually quite beneficial, as it served to bring more minerality into the wines, but was not sufficient in quantity to dilute the juice.

The rain in August and September posed problems with mildew that growers had to be constantly vigilant about during these two months, but as the grapes were still lagging well behind in terms of ripeness, they had thick, green skins at this time and botrytis was never really able to get a hold in the vineyards during this time period. It really took until mid-October for the botrytis to arrive, and happily, when it did, it was generally very clean noble rot and the botrytized wines from 2013 are really surprisingly pure and racy this year, without the opulence out of the blocks than other heavily botrytized years like 2006 produced in the young wines. The noble rot came on quickly once it finally got started in October, but this was fine with many estates- at least those who now had reasonably ripe grapes and could now start to look for a window for picking. But, keep in mind that botrytis can often be a problem in vintages with modest ripeness, as the noble rot will concentrate everything in the grape when it arrives- acidity, sugars and extract, and if those acids are still green and unripe, you can get some positively jarring wines where the acids never fully integrate into the other components. However, at least at the *crème de la crème* of producers I visited this spring, I did not encounter very many of these wines and almost all of my botrytized wine experiences from this vintage were very, very positive! In fact, there are really some absolutely beautiful, gently glazed botrytis wines that are absolutely stunning in some of the cellars where I tasted from the 2013 vintage, and there are also some brilliant Auslesen that show almost no botrytis at all and really are beautifully pure, classic throwback wines that are in Oechsle levels that recall yesteryear in Germany. For, 2013 is emphatically not a vintage where ripeness rules (it has been a while since this was the case with a vintage with so much upper Prädikat wines!), as it is really the twin towers of high acidity and dramatic levels of dry extract that define so many of the beset 2013ers.

The combination of very high dry extract and very high acidity made for a wide array of very chewy, crunchy young 2013ers to taste through on this trip, and there is a tactile quality to the most successful 2013ers that is very, very rare in my experience and very exciting. I can imagine that there are less successful cellars where the combination of these two elements can be rather abrasive and irreconcilable, but I did not hit many (any?) wines that would fall into this category during my visits. As far as I can recall, every grower who I visited with on this trip de-acidified at least some of their cuvée in this vintage, as some wines were just too high in acidity to make them workable- particularly at lower Prädikat levels or with dry wines. And several estates decided to make a bare modicum of dry wines in 2013 (such as Weingut Willi Schaefer), as outside of the Nahe and Klaus-Peter Keller's cellars, dry Riesling was not the strength of the vintage this year. As Christophe Schaefer commented, "we know that we have a large number of clients who really want more dry wines than we have made this year, but does it really make

sense to try and force some wines in a dry direction, when the style of the vintage provided such beautiful raw materials for producing off-dry and noble sweet wines at various Prädikat levels?” One of the keys to remember about the 2013 vintage is that there was a fair bit of botrytis, once it finally began to get a toehold in the vineyards in mid-October, and botrytis is hardly a welcome guest if one is aiming to make primarily dry wines. I have had little positive experience over the years with dry Rieslings made from botrytized grapes (as I will discuss in some detail in the next issue, when I report on the comparative 2004 dry Riesling tasting I attended in Saarbrücken at the end of my trip, as there were several fairly heavily glazed dry Rieslings in that lineup and they all placed at the very bottom of the score sheet), and even if these glazed examples can provide a bit more early appeal from their pumped up profiles from the noble rot, they almost uniformly age into less well-balanced and far from interesting wines over the long haul. It is almost a universal truth that if one wishes to make truly great dry Riesling, then keep all the botrytis out of those vats.

So what are the style of the top 2013ers? It is really quite difficult to generalize, as there is such a wide variety of collections in cellars from region to region, as this is one of the least homogenous vintages I can recall tasting in Germany. In general, the wines are very high in acidity, but not quite so high as in 2010, or perhaps it is better put, that the acids in 2013, though obviously quite tensile, are a tad less apparent, due to the very real sense of buffering provided by the very high dry extract of 2013. The 2010ers were really “high wire acts”, with powerful and quite extroverted personalities that were revved up right to the edge by their electric acidities. The 2013ers are a bit more demure in profile, partly because their ripeness levels are not as dramatic in general than their comparable 2010 comrades, and also because the depth and density in the 2013ers comes from the very low yields and the very high dry extract. So they tend to be beautifully lithe and filigreed wines in many cases, with slightly more “classic” profiles than we have been accustomed to in the last twenty years of global warming, but also often rock solid at the core and very mineral-driven. There are really an awful lot of very special wines to be found in 2013 from the vast majority of the growers who I had the pleasure to visit on this trip. The dry wines that I tasted seemed to be best in the Nahe and Rheinhessen, though there are some beautiful dry Rieslings to be found in less likely places like Piesport as well in this vintage. But, it is the Prädikat wines that really stand out to my palate in 2013, with beautifully filigreed Kabinetten, utterly classic and refined Spätlesen (a particularly strong level in this vintage), and a glorious array of Auslesen that range from relatively low Oechsle level wines with just a whisper of botrytis that recall vintages like 1988, to beautifully glazed and very clean botrytized wines that deliver textural and aromatic fireworks, but again without quite the same levels of ripeness as we have become so accustomed to in wines at this Prädikat level. There are also small quantities in many cellars of beautiful dessert wines, as Eiswein, BA and TBA were all possible in 2013. In short, if one picks the best producers in this vintage, there are some absolutely brilliant wines to be found and do not make the mistake of believing that this is not a very, very strong vintage in Germany from the very top estates. Quantities are low in 2013, but German wine lovers’ expectations should not be, as there are an awful lot of stunning wines to be found from this most-unexpectedly fine year!

The following wines were all tasted during my visit to Germany in March of this year. I have included a handful of notes on wines that are not from the 2013 vintage, if they were the first time I was seeing these wines from previous vintages. I deviated a bit from my normal

routine this year, adding a few new estates to my roster of visits to try and branch out a bit and cover some of the up and coming stars in the world of German wine. To do so, I had to miss a few of my very favorite estates, such as Maximin Grünhäuser and Karthäuserhof, but there was just no way I could add more visits in other parts of the region and still get over to the Ruwer on this tightly-packed trip. What is highly clear that I need to expand the amount of time that I spend each spring visiting Germany, as my schedule these days simply does not allow all the time I need to visit a more significant percentage of the top stars in the firmament of German wines. I was extremely pleased to add a few very worthy new estates to my itinerary this year, but profoundly regretted not being able to see some of my favorite producers who I generally visit every year, and I will make a solid effort to double how much time I spend in German wine country next year. As it is, my schedule is already so concentrated during some of these days of five estates a day, that I often arrive at the dinner table with a great lineup of old German bottles on the table and absolutely no energy to drink anything. I most assuredly have to remedy this situation in the future! So I apologize in advance if some of your favorite producers are not covered in this report and I am fully aware of the shortcomings of the coverage here and am working to repair this in the future.

The only thing that will keep me from greatly expanding my coverage in future visits is if the expansion of bottlings sealed up under the infernal screwcap continues to grow unabated in Germany. While I cannot think of any category of wine that is deserving of this, in my opinion, egregiously flawed closure, probably the worst types of wines for the screw would be the already fairly reductive school of German Rieslings. The unhappy marriage of screwcaps and German wines seems likely to undo a lot of the hard work that has been put in by producers and passionate fans of these wines over the last decade or two, and just as German wines seem poised to start to really cash in on all of this previous hard work and, dare I say it, become very popular in the mainstream, the number of bottlings sealed up under screwcap continues to grow. Most of the producers who I ask about this phenomenon point to two camps as the chief protagonists in this unfolding tragedy- their importers in foreign markets and restaurateurs in Germany. Privately, most producers readily acknowledge that they have reservations about the ability of wines sealed up under screwcaps to age gracefully (and we are talking about German Rieslings for the most part, which at this point, seem like the only white wines not made by Kalin Cellars that are immune from premature oxidation and continue to age like all white wines did fifteen years ago), and they almost universally state that if they had a free hand with this decision they would not use the closure. There are of course a few outliers, such as Reinhard Löwenstein of Weingut Heymann-Löwenstein, who are very staunch proponents of the screwcap (despite the fact that the last time we chatted about this a couple of years ago at Prowein, he had one of his screwcapped wines in a huge decanter, trying to shake off the reduction!), but most winemakers in Germany are simply using this closure for certain wines because of pressure from their clients.

As most of the German wines sealed up under screwcap are entry level wines, except at estates such as Heymann- Löwenstein (who really makes great wines and needs to get back to the real world of natural cork ASAP in my opinion) or Joh. Jos. Christoffel, most growers can rationalize using this closure that they are not really happy with by assuming that the wines will be drunk young in any case, and the odds are that most will have been drunk up before anyone begins to notice if they become reduced down the road. As most of these wines are Estate Trocken or QbA bottlings, they are probably right that they will be drunk on the young side, but

if this same convergence of closure and mentality of convenience had existed twenty or twenty-five years ago, the world would have been deprived of some of the superb QbA bottlings made at Maximin Grünhäuser by legendary Cellar Master Alfons Heinrich from the 1980s and 1990s, which continue to drink with stunning beauty and complexity decades after they were bottled. Remember, just because a wine is less expensive today does not mean that it is not a great wine with extended cellaring potential- it was not that long ago that wines from Marius Gentaz, Raymond Trollat, Noël Verset and Jacky Truchot were also considered dirt cheap- and it seems to me to be asinine to seal up these wines under screwcaps and just hope that they will all be drunk up before the problems start to arise with permanent reduction. Is that not the same strategy that so many Australian estates took with this closure a decade ago, and just perhaps, it is not a mere coincidence that the nearly wholesale adoption of the screw Down Under has dovetailed with a precipitous drop in market share of their wines on the international wine scene. Remember, the least expensive bottlings are typically sold to the least experienced wine drinkers- most of whom could not identify a reduced wine in any case at their level of experience, but who certainly can tell if they like the wine in question or not, and if the answer is “no, I do not like this wine” (perhaps solely because of reduction issues under its closure), they will simply decline to ever buy another bottle from this estate again in the future.

Look, the research base on screwcaps and reduction is out there and is growing every year, and each and every scientific study shows that permanent reduction for wines sealed under screwcaps consistently ruins a much higher percentage of wines after two or three years of bottle age (the eighteen month period after bottling seems to be the tipping point- before that one has a decent chance of catching a screwcapped wine before it is reduced, after that, the odds fall off precipitously) than crappy corks affected with TCA ever did, even in the darkest days of natural corks. Why so many producers and screwcap cheerleaders like Terry Theise do not bother to read the data before plunging headfirst into the very cold water of a wine’s (short) life under screwcap is a very interesting question. In my opinion, the screwcap industry’s feverish attempt to develop a liner which allows some oxygen ingress is an implicit acknowledgement that the reduction problem is very real and very, very large for wines sealed up under this closure. The problem with these oxygen permeable liners for screwcaps is that they are simply going to trade one set of problems (permanent reduction) for another (non-stop oxidation), and they may be able to allow wineries to get around copper additions blue fining to the wines prior to bottling, but these new liners are not going to improve the ability for these wines to age under the screw with anywhere near the success rate we have come to know under natural cork.

In very simple terms (and believe me, I am no chemist and have had to have these issues explained to me in the simplest terms by real chemists to understand what is going on here), the reason for this is that cork acts as a natural valve for the wine when it is inserted into the bottle. The cork allows for a fairly steady period of gentle oxygen ingress over the first twelve to eighteen months after bottling- during which time a young wine is most prone to reduction and in need of some additional oxygen to keep its balance intact- after which the natural cork seals itself off and the rate of oxygen transfer falls off one thousand fold. The reason natural cork does this is a basic chemistry law known as “ Henry’s Law”, which governs the rate of gas (in this case, oxygen) transfers through various mediums. A natural cork’s inner membrane system, which is very complex, starts out its life in bottle filled with air, through which the needed oxygen can pass fairly easily during its first months in bottle. As each cellular structure per cork is unique,

the oxygen ingress rate varies according to the unique pattern of this inner membrane, as there is oxygen trapped in here prior to the cork being compressed and inserted into the bottle, and recent research confirms that the oxygen in the interior of the cork is released into the wine at bottling (this phenomenon has long been speculated). If all natural corks possessed identical cellular structures, then there would be no variation on oxygen ingress over this time period (which would also be constant, rather than ranging from twelve to eighteen months), as they would disperse the same amount of trapped oxygen into the wine at compression. However, what does not vary is that over the twelve to eighteen month period after bottling, this inner cellular structure fills up with water and comes up to one hundred percent humidity, as which point, “Henry’s Law” again kicks in, and the rate of oxygen transfer falls off by the aforementioned thousand fold, as outside oxygen must now pass through an aqueous solution, rather than a gaseous, and for all intents and purposes, the cork becomes an anaerobic seal for the wine. This valve-like behavior by natural cork is not something that is going to be able to be replicated by an oxygen-permeable liner for a screwcap, so that it will be impossible for the liner to “turn off” the flow of oxygen as a cork effectively does when it comes up to one hundred percent humidity.



A picture-perfect spring day on the Mosel in Piesport.

Of course, as cork is a natural product, there are other issues that will eventually come into play- a flawed seam along the side of the cork may develop and allow oxygen in, or the cork may crumble over a long period of time, or be infected with TCA (current research indicates that

“single punch” natural corks will still have a one percent risk of TCA taint to them- though this is far better than was the case fifteen years ago), so there are always going to be off bottles, but in terms of a natural cork’s ability to allow oxygen ingress initially and then “shut down” the flow through the mechanisms of Henry’s Law, recent studies show this to be remarkably predictable and this is one of the reasons that we had not been previously plagued with such a rash of permanently reduced wines when cork was the closure of choice for serious wines. But, the issue is not whether or not there will still be “off” bottles sealed under cork, but rather, which of these two mainstream closures- natural cork or screwcaps- causes the largest number of damaged wines. From all of the research that I have read (and I have plowed through plenty), the data unequivocally shows that screwcaps (as they currently exist) cause a far larger rate of wine failures under this closure than are currently ruined under natural cork, and this by a very wide margin. Perhaps, if the research was done twenty years ago, when corks were far more prone to TCA problems than they are today, the differential between the failure rates of the two closures in scientific studies would not be so dramatic, but corks have gotten a hell of a lot better in the last decade. That one closure- screwcaps- cause damage by permanent reduction (or oxidation if the closure is dented in transit- a not insignificant percentage are thusly damaged, but of course, those numbers do not appear in scientific studies where the closure does not have to go through the vagaries of travel through the wine trade pipeline), and another- corks by TCA taint- is immaterial; the only thing that matters is what percentage of wines are damaged once they are closed, and what is the time period over which they are ruined. And the research shows that screwcaps ruin a far larger percentage of wines than cork does today- period.

So why do screwcaps continue to make further inroads into the world of fine wines, given that the data is so persuasive that it is the inferior closure? Part of the reason is that some of the biggest proponents of the closure either have not bothered to read the research data that is out there and remain blissfully unaware, or perhaps, they have a financial interest that colors their choice of closure and encourages them to ignore the research findings. For, one has to remember that screwcaps are far cheaper than single punch, top-line corks, which now usually cost more than one euro per unit for the very best grade. Screwcaps cost less than a quarter of this (and may be more like ten percent in cost- I forget the exact figures, but I have them somewhere in my office here and if this newsletter was not already a week late, I might take the time to dig out the precise figures of the cost of each closure). I am sure that this is a very real attraction for many winegrowers in Germany- particularly for their entry level bottlings- which are very price sensitive in terms of finding a following in the market- and squeezing out just a bit more profitability for these high volume wines and still being able to find a strong customer base is a very important concern. I fully understand this. However, the single punch, top of the line grade of corks are not the only game in town when it comes to alternatives to screwcaps, as the cork industry has also made terrific strides with the quality of their “agglomerated” corks (like Champagne corks, made from ground up bits of cork and then glued back together in molds to replicate the shape of single punch corks. These “Aglo Corks” are completely TCA-free (as the smaller pieces make it possible to analyze the constituent components and eliminate completely any potential TCA taint (which can always be lurking in the interior of a single punch cork, no matter how much quality control is done on the exterior of the cork) and are priced at the same levels as screwcaps. So, rather than naively suggest putting a 1.10 euro, single punch cork in a bottle that sells ex-cellar from a domaine in Germany for 3.50 euros, I would strongly urge producers to be proactive and instead seal up those bottles with “Aglo Corks” at the same price

points as screwcaps. Perhaps a few more bartenders and waiters would have to re-learn how to use a corkscrew, but at least we could put the problems of large percentages of wines being ruined by permanent reduction under screwcaps (or accelerated oxidation, once the oxygen-permeable liners become standard fare) in the rearview mirror.

Of course, most of the folks who I drink wine with regularly (not to mention those who read this newsletter) do not frequently drink the level of German wines that are increasingly being bottled under screwcaps, so on a certain level, this discussion is academic in nature. I know that a lot more people would be pissed off about this closure if all the Meursault “Perrières” or Barolo “Monprivato” was now being bottled under screwcaps and the same problems were affecting these wines as routinely mar Estate bottlings from Germany. In fact, if the phenomenon were confined simply Germany’s to “Estate Wine” levels, I would probably be content with my couple of cases of QbAs that I currently have sealed under cork and aging in my cellar and not keep beating this dead horse of an issue. However, the inroads that screwcaps have made in Germany in just the last couple of years with wines at the Kabinett Prädikat level are truly alarming (often led by US importers such as Terry Theise, who conspicuously pushes his growers to bottle the US allocation of Kabinett level wines under the screw), and we now see one of the great and most individualistic types of wines produced in the world- and ageworthy as hell when sealed under natural cork- now in very dire threat of disappearing from our experiences as a well-aged wine. The delicate, ethereal and filigreed style of classic Kabinett is already getting harder and harder to produce in this day and age of global warming- (must weight levels of a great many wines bottled as Kabinetten these days would have been Auslesen in the 1970s!)- but we have now had a couple of vintages where the possibility of making really fine and nearly classic-styled Kabinetten have been possible in 2011 and 2013. To drink a perfectly aged Kabinett wine at age thirty is a very special moment (I have had the good fortune to drink Egon Muller’s brilliant 1983 Scharzhofberger Kabinett twice in the last three months!) and is an experience that cannot be replicated with any other type of wine from any place else in the world of wine. If in the future all of the wines at this Prädikat level end up being bottled under screwcaps, then we will reach the age of extinction for aged Kabinetten, and that would be a tragedy. I know that I am a crazy minority (perhaps of one, or two, counting Belgium’s own Jean Fisch?) who wants to age QbA level wines for a decade or more, but are not most serious fans of Kabinetten planning to age at least a significant percentage of their bottles of this Prädikat level for an extended period of time? Unless we start declining to buy Kabinetten under screwcap now, then it seems very likely that there simply will not be any wines at this Prädikat level sealed under cork in the future, other than those produced by Klaus-Peter Keller, who seems to understand better than most German winegrowers what are the fatal flaws of this closure.

There is another unsatisfactory element to wines sealed under screwcap that should be addressed, before turning out attention to the 2013ers from Germany (though I imagine a hearty percentage of you have already skipped down to the tasting notes ☺), and this is the dramatic differences of textural palate impression and evolution of the wines in bottle, for the percentage of screwcapped wines that are lucky and escape from the scourge of permanent reduction. For the wines that avoid reduction, there is still a very evident degradation in the textural harmony of the wine under this closure after a bit of bottle age, as the wines often seem more tensile, superficial, lacking in depth and clipped, like music sounded in the first iterations of CDs, where the digital sound technology was still in its infancy and “scalping” all of the depth and warmth

out of the analog recordings. Back in those days, most of us still had plenty of LPs to compare to these shallow-sounding CDs, so the dramatic inadequacies of the early CD technology were vividly apparent. The analogy is sound for screwcapped versus natural cork-finished wines these days, as when one has the chance to sample the exact same wine under the two closures side by side (as I recently had the opportunity to do with a fine bottle of 2007 Kabinett that had been laid down in the cellar by a conscientious producer to follow the evolution of the two wines under different closures), the dramatic differences in quality are readily apparent. The screwcapped wine, when tasted alongside its natural cork counterpart is shorter, shallower, lacking in textural “warmth” and dimension and quite angular in comparison to its natural cork version. Additionally, there often seems to be CO₂ trapped in the screwcapped version (whether this is part of the bottling regimen to try and fend off reduction I am not sure, or if CO₂ somehow just gets trapped more readily under this closure), and the wine is far more angular and lacking in harmony from a textural standpoint. Additionally, the development of secondary layers of complexity on both the nose and palate is stunted under screwcap, and this is very dramatic if sampled alongside of the natural cork version of the same wine. Whether or not there is any development of the screwcapped wine I am not sure, but it is absolutely certain that it is not the same development as under the cork. And this is for a screwcapped wine that has not yet fallen into the clutches of permanent reduction!

The risk in the future is that if the expansion of the screw continues on unabated, we will have an era upon us in the near future where there will no longer be any cork-finished German wines at certain Prädikat levels or price points with which to make comparisons with the screwcapped versions, and all we will have left are these eviscerated, scalped, harsh and unnaturally-evolved wines for fans of these categories. It seems quite certain that if this occurs, it will be the first step in the extinction of certain types of wines, such as Kabinetten, as far as wine collectors are concerned who may wish to age these wines in their cellars and follow their blossoming complexity and breed with extended bottle age. It will be a Hobbesian spiral downward in quality expectations and it will happen briskly, if this faulty closure continues to be pushed by oblivious importers and lazy restaurateurs who simply want to promote the path of least resistance (and superior profits over the short-term) and do not give a damn about the long-term implications of their self-serving agendas. Again, this is generally of only peripheral interest to most readers of this newsletter today, but if the screw can conquer Kabinetten and QbA level wines in Germany, it will then turn its attention to *villages* and Premier Cru level Burgundies and the like, and a generation or two down the road, perhaps everything in the world of wine will be bottled under the screw and aging wines will be as extinct as the brontosaurus. The impetus to stop the spread of this flawed closure will have to come from consumers, as the aforementioned importers will never look further than their pocketbooks, and German wine producers, for the most part, have been in search of greater market appreciation of their wines for so long now that they are not going to have the gumption to go against the wishes of their hard-won clients to use screwcaps, even if they are quite aware that it compromises the ability of the wines to evolve well in the bottle. If a brilliant and highly-regarded winemaker such as Helmut Dönnhoff, with a stunning career of magical wines already behind him, does not have the leverage to stop the screw, then it is clearly not going to be a possibility for producers with less tenure to do so. But, if wine consumers who may have screwcapped wines aging in their cellars, start tasting the wines, finding them flawed, and returning them to these same importers for a refund (ask for the cost of storage too!), then perhaps the tide will start to turn and the ultimate

quality of a wine's ability to age gracefully will once again be taken into account when a closure is decided upon and perhaps even take precedence over short-term profitability of distributors and importers. In the meantime, I would not be buying any wines sealed up under the screw with an expectation that they will age normally, as the research is unequivocal that this simply will not happen. And now, (at long last) back to the surprisingly lovely 2013ers from Germany.

Rheinhessen

Weingut Keller (Flörsheim-Dalsheim)

Klaus-Peter Keller turned forty in 2013, so he had extra incentive to try and pull off something special this year to commemorate this landmark birthday. Happily, the Rheinhessen was probably one of the most blessed regions in all of German wine country this year, as there was less rain during the critical months of August, September and October, and the flowering was not as badly affected in many of the plots here as was the case in regions such as the Mosel, Nahe or Saar. The poor flowering here mostly affected the less exalted parcels in 2013, so Weingut Keller's yields ended up being down by nearly twenty-five percent for some of their more basic bottlings, but only from five to eight percent in their impressive array of grand cru vineyards in the Hügelland and Nierstein. This is good news for the estate's growing legion of followers around the globe, but perhaps not so good news for their local clientele, who are spoiled with such impressively high quality wines from the more basic Keller bottlings. At the time of my visit, there were already a steady stream of local customers stopping by to see when they would be able to pick up their allocations of the 2013ers such as the Grüner Sylvaner Trocken or the Riesling von der Fels, as seemingly the word was already out that there were not going to be a large quantity of those bottlings and people wanted to make sure not to miss those wines, which are indeed very, very fine in 2013. Not only are the yields smaller for the more basic dry wines because of a short crop, but also because the style and quality of the vintage dictated that more wines were produced in the sweeter Prädikat-styled wines in 2013, as this is simply where the strength of the vintage was in many of the vineyards this year. As Klaus-Peter observed, "we have never made more off-dry and sweet wines as we have in 2013, and especially in Nierstein, but I think this was the right choice, as high acidity (like we have this year), in combination with twelve or thirteen or fourteen grams of residual sugar can be a great combination."

The quality of the non-grand cru wines at Weingut Keller in 2013 is truly outstanding, as the low yields in these parcels has really given the wines a depth and mineral precision that is very special. As Klaus-Peter Keller noted, "the basic wines are really good this year, because the yields in these vineyards were forty-five hectoliters per hectare, instead of the usual seventy, so you have an extract level that is very, very rare for most these bottlings." And of course, the quality of the upper level wines are truly stellar as well, with the combination of high extract, high acids and excellent ripeness providing another set of absolutely stellar dry wines and some monumentally beautiful sweeter-styled wines as well. Klaus-Peter reflected that 2013 was a perfect year for Kabinett wines- particularly in their vineyards in Nierstein- because "the long and slow vegetation cycle in this year makes this the next excellent vintage for Kabinetten" and it is interesting just how many of their clients are now asking for early allocations of wines at this Prädikat level. He continues, "ten years ago, no one asked for Kabinett, but now, even prior to bottling, everyone is asking about Kabinett from the Hipping and Pettenthal- it is really incredible just how fast things can change." The upper Prädikat wines here are also superb in

2013, as the botrytis that arrived came late and was very, very clean, so that stunningly beautiful sweet wines were produced at Weingut Keller in 2013. In fact, given the brilliance of the range all the way from basic Sylvaner and Estate Dry Riesling, up through the brilliant Grosses Gewächs, and then through the extraordinary Kabinetten and sweeter-styled wines, it is easy to conclude that Klaus-Peter and Julia Keller have crafted, as a group, the finest wines of the vintage in 2013. There is simply nothing in any of these wines that is going to make German wine lovers crave another vintage over its corresponding 2013er, as each and every wine is a wine of great quality for its level and shows beautiful personality and the potential to age very long and gracefully. The Grosses Gewächs bottlings here this year all came in with alcohol levels between 12 and 12.9 percent, making them another very beautifully filigreed and precisely mineral set of wines, with the beauty of each underlying terroir very much defining the wine. As is the case with other outstanding examples of 2013, the very high dry extracts here beautifully buffer the high levels of acidity, so that the overall impression is of wines that are far more harmoniously balanced out of the blocks than other recent vintages of very high acidity, such as 2010. In 2010, one often had the sense that the wines were doing a “high-wire act”, with sugars and acids both very high and the wines almost electric in palate impression, but in 2013, the overall sense of harmony and balance right out of the blocks is more suave, as the dry extract simply buffers these tensile acids seamlessly. This is very much apparent when one tastes through the range of brilliant wines from Klaus-Peter and Julia Keller in 2013.

My spring visit here of course did not focus exclusively on white wines, as it was also my first look at the 2012 Keller Spätburgunders, which is the inaugural vintage for the new pinot noir from the Morstein vineyard, which readers may recall, was grafted over to pinot noir onto sixty-five year-old sylvaner rootstocks. The wine has turned out brilliantly, but as 2012 is truly an extraordinary year for pinot noir in the Hügelland, all three of the Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs bottlings are stunning in this vintage. The Kellers are currently at the very top of their game and making some of the most amazing wines in the entire world of wine, and as a retrospective tasting of dry 2004 Rieslings from Alsace, Austria and Germany showed (that I attended on my last evening in Germany on this trip), Weingut Keller was making awfully good wines back in the 2004 vintage as well. But, the precision, elegance and filigree in the wines here since 2010 is second to none anywhere in the world and the 2013 vintage has produced another absolutely magical lineup of Weingut Keller wines. The only bad news is the relatively small quantities available of some of these bottlings, so make sure to make your reservations early on for these beautiful wines!

Pinot Noir

2012 Bürgel Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2012 Bürgel Spätburgunder was not chapitalized in this beautifully pure and ripe vintage, and came in at 12.5 percent natural alcohol. The wine is truly lovely, wafting from the glass in an aromatic blend of sweet dark berries, black cherries, bitter chocolate, smoke, chalky soil tones and a touch of lead pencil in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and tangy, with lovely intensity of flavor, great focus and transparency and a very long, pure and primary finish of seamless balance and a suave base of ripe tannins. A beautiful bottle in the making. 2020-2045+. **93+**.

2012 Frauenberg Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs (Selection Massale)- Weingut Keller

The 2012 Frauenberg Spätburgunder is even more polished and refined. These French pinot clones are now fourteen years of age in this vintage, and are starting to edge closer to their profile at maturity. Like Burgundian *vignerons*, Klaus-Peter is convinced that twenty will be a very good age for these vines and that they will not really come into their prime until twenty-five years of age, but one can already sense the superior depth and sappiness in this wine as the vines reach fourteen. The outstanding bouquet is a mix of black cherries, plums, cocoa, beautifully complex soil tones, woodsmoke, a touch of fresh herbs and a nice framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nascently complex, with a sappy core of fruit, ripe acids, beautiful focus and balance and a long, tangy finish that closes with a nice backbone of fine-grained tannins. Stellar juice! 2020-2045+. **95.**

2012 Morstein Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs “alte Reben”- Weingut Keller

The 2012 Morstein Spätburgunder, the very first vintage of pinot noir from these old vines, has turned out even more beautifully than I imagined based on a taste of this wine a year ago, when it was just out of malo. The wine was open-top fermented in three old barrels, and then raised in a one wine barrel, with twenty percent of the stems retained in this vintage (sorry about incorrectly reporting forty percent whole clusters last year for this wine, it is twenty percent) The wine is absolutely brilliant and unequivocally the most beautiful bottle of young pinot noir that I have ever tasted from Germany, soaring from the glass in a complex and sappy mélange of black cherries, red plums, a touch of raspberry, gamebirds, cocoa, chalky soil tones, a touch of cedary wood and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and flawlessly balanced, with great focus and grip, a sappy core of fruit, stunning soil signature, tangy acids and a very, very long, pure and dancing finish of moderate tannins and brilliant potential. Stunning wine. 2022-2060. **97.**

Scheurebe

I only tasted this single bottling of 2013 Scheurebe Trocken from the Morstein vineyard from Weingut Keller this year, as the remainder of the Scheurebe grapes here were glazed with a beautiful sheen of botrytis and produced a magical Beerenauslese, which I have included at the end of the tasting notes with the other dessert wines from the Kellers in 2013.

2013 Scheurebe Trocken- Weingut Keller

As I noted last year, the Scheurebe Trocken comes from a parcel of vines right adjacent to the new Pinot Noir parcel in Morstein vineyard, and the 2013 has turned out superbly well. This is twelve percent alcohol in 2013, has 8.6 grams per liter of acidity and 2.8 grams per liter of residual sugar. The bright and very precise nose offers up scents of tart orange, grapefruit, stony minerality, a nice touch of saltiness (from the very low yields and high extract levels?), smoke and currant leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully defined by its minerality, with a superb core, snappy acids, great buffering extract and a very, very long, racy and seamless finish of impeccable balance. A beautiful wine that would make Hanz-Günther Schwartz proud! 2014-2030+. **92.**

Dry White Wines

2013 Grüner Silvaner Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Grüner Silvaner Trocken, made from these short yields of the vintage, has turned out beautifully and seems likely to sell out even faster than usual at the estate this spring.

The wine offers up a stunningly pure and mineral nose of peach, pink grapefruit, stony minerality, white flowers and citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and very suave on the attack, with a superb core of fruit, excellent focus and grip, tangy acids and excellent length and mineral drive on the pure and dancing finish. This has exceptional breed this year! 2014-2025. **90.**

2013 Sylvaner Trocken “Feuervogel” alte Reben- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Feuervogel from Klaus-Peter Keller is probably the greatest single example of Sylvaner I have ever had the pleasure to taste. The wine was fermented this year all in old oak fuders. The superb and very complex nose soars from the glass in a blaze of tangerine, pink grapefruit, smoky overtones, very refined stoniness, citrus zest and a touch of distant wild flowers like a spring meadow on the breeze. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely rock solid at the core, with racy acids, laser-like focus, brisk, utterly seamless acids and stunning length and grip on the poised and very classy finish. Brilliant Sylvaner! 2017-2035+. **93.**

2013 Riesling Trocken- Weingut Keller

Not to keep repeating myself, but the basic bottlings from Weingut Keller are amazingly good in 2013 and if you have a chance to buy some of these lower level wines, load up the cart! The 2013 Riesling Trocken comes in at an even twelve percent alcohol and delivers an absolutely stellar bouquet of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, wild yeasts, a complex base of minerality, smoke and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and gorgeously complex out of the blocks, with a great core of fruit, excellent focus and cut and a very long, racy finish that closes with impeccable grip and great refinement. And this is only the basic Estate Riesling Trocken in 2013! 2014-2030. **91+.**

2013 Riesling “von der Fels” Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2013 von der Fels is a beautiful bottle of dry Riesling in the making. In this vintage the wine is twelve percent alcohol, has 4.2 grams per liter of residual sugar and just over eight grams per liter of acidity, but with its high dry extract, it is absolutely seamless in its sense of balance and filigree. The gorgeous nose delivers a blend of blood orange, mandarin orange, stunningly complex, almost salty stoniness, lemongrass, citrus peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully reserved in profile, with a stunning core of fruit, ripe, snappy acids and a very long, minerally and completely refined, youthful finish. Outstanding wine and a great bargain! 2018-2050. **93.**

2013 Hipping Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Hipping Grosses Gewächs from Weingut Keller came in at twelve percent alcohol, with just over three grams per liter of residual sugar in acids in the low nines. It is a breathtakingly beautiful and elegant young wine, wafting from the glass in a mélange of white peach, tangerine, bee pollen, lemon blossoms, slate, citrus peel and a touch of lemongrass in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully filigreed, with a stunning core of fruit, laser-like focus, ripe, perfectly buffered acids and magical length and grip on the nascently complex and supremely elegant finish. A brilliant wine in the making! 2023-2060. **95.**

2013 Pettenthal Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

In 2013, Nierstein’s greatest vineyard, the Pettenthal, has turned out another dramatically beautiful young wine in the hands of Klaus-Peter Keller. This is a touch riper than the Hipping, coming in at 12.5 percent and offers up a stellar young bouquet of pink grapefruit, stony minerality, a touch of blood orange, wild yeasts, smoke and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is

deep, full-bodied and a bit more reserved in profile than the Hipping, with a rock solid core of fruit, great extract, ripe, snappy acids and simply stunning length and grip on the perfectly balanced and promising finish. 2025-2075. **95.**

2013 Kirchspiel Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

Klaus-Peter Keller's old vines in the Kirchspiel are forty-nine years of age in 2013, and 2014 is going to have to be another stellar vintage if the fiftieth birthday bottling of these vines is going to keep pace with this beautiful wine! The 2013 Kirchspiel offers up a wonderfully pure and refined nose that just exudes limestone minerality in its mélange of mandarin orange, gentle smoky tones, wild yeasts, kaleidoscopic minerality, orange zest and a nice dollop of dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and absolutely defined by its brilliant complex minerality, with superb mid-palate depth, electric acidity, seamless balance and laser-like focus on the very, very long, primary and dancing finish. A brilliant vintage of Kirchspiel GG. 2022-2065+. **95+.**

2013 Hubacker Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

As the entire range of Grosses Gewächs here in 2013 ranged from 12 to 12.9 percent, I am guessing that the red slate in the Hubacker have produced one of the riper examples in this racy and very pure vintage from Weingut Keller, and I would expect that this wine is closer to thirteen percent alcohol than it is to twelve. The exquisite bouquet is a mix of pineapple, orange, gentle notes of wild yeasts, beautifully complex soil tones, citrus oil and dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very elegant for a young Hubacker, with a salty impression of minerality, a great core of fruit, ripe, snappy acids and stunning length and grip on the seamless finish. Great juice. 2023-2065+. **95.**

2013 Morstein Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

As I noted last year, there is a little bit more Morstein in the Keller cellars these days, as Klaus-Peter and Julia purchased an additional parcel of Morstein planted with sixty year-old vines to augment their previous holdings (in addition to the old vine section that was budded over to Pinot Noir from Silvaner), and more Morstein GG in 2013 is a very, very good thing indeed! The 2013 is a stunningly beautiful wine in the making, offering up a magical bouquet of citrus zest, tangerine, an exotic hint of strawberry, crystalline limestone minerality, wild yeasts, gentle notes of petrol and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and focused, with kaleidoscopic complexity, a great core, again, very ripe and very racy acidity and a very, very long, impeccably balanced and utterly brilliant finish. Breathtakingly beautiful young Morstein! 2022-2075. **98.**

2013 Abtserde Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

In 2013, Klaus-Peter Keller noted that the berries in the Abtserde were half the size of those in Morstein, giving this wine an otherworldly quality to its textural profile and simply haunting aromatics. The brilliant nose delivers an aromatic constellation of white peach, lemon, clementines, again, a very crystalline expression of limestone, white flowers, lemon blossoms and a gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and primary, with magical purity, seamless balance, bottomless depth at the core and a very racy, elegant and endless finish of great refinement and backend energy. Simply brilliant! 2023-2075. **98+.**

2013 G-Max Riesling- Weingut Keller

2012 is an absolutely magical year for the Keller Grosses Gewächs bottlings, and the scary thing is that the 2013s here are every bit as stunning as their 2012 counterparts, with a few even surpassing their previous vintage! The 2013 G-Max is another absolutely flawless young

Riesling and I simply cannot imagine a finer bottle of dry Riesling. Whether it will eventually nose out the 2012 or vice versa is a question for the future, but there is no doubting that this is a monumentally beautiful and utterly refined young wine! The perfect balance and magical depth are evident right from the first sniff of the wine, as it soars from the glass in an aromatic constellation of lemon, tangerine, brilliantly complex limestone minerality, gentle notes of wild yeasts, smoke, citrus peel and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and stunningly complex out of the blocks, with such striking filigree, seamless balance and unbelievable length and grip on the perfect finish. The acids here are ripe and snappy, but buried in dry extract and the wine is clearly the most elegant, as well as the most complete of this absolutely stunning range of 2013 Grosses Gewächs bottlings. I can only imagine what it will be like fifteen or twenty years from now to compare the 2012 and the 2013 G-Max bottlings side by side! 2025-2075. **100.**



Tasters at Weingut Keller improvising seat restraints prior to tasting the 2013 G-Max.

Slightly Off-Dry Wines

In the last several vintages, Klaus-Peter Keller has been content to allow certain cuvées that do not ferment out to sufficient dryness to be labeled as Trocken bottlings (which must be ten grams per liter of residual sugar or less) to simply be bottled at the level where they stopped their fermentations naturally, so these are essentially still dry wines that are just above the legal threshold to be labeled as Trocken. In 2013, two of the three barrels of the Hipping vineyard's

production that was picked to go into the GG from this vineyard actually stopped fermentation just over the Trocken threshold, so there is a bit of Hipping “R” this year.

2013 Riesling “RR”- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Riesling “RR” from Klaus-Peter Keller came in at twelve percent alcohol, around nine grams per liter of acidity and thirteen grams per liter of residual sugar, so its overall impression is essentially of a dry wine this year. The deep and beautiful nose offers up scents of grapefruit, white cherries, wild yeasts, lemongrass, orange peel and a lovely base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, a nice dollop of backend sweetness to fold into the acidity and minerality and a very long, focused and zesty finish. Lovely juice. 2015-2030+. **91+**.

2013 Hipping “R”- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Hipping “R” from Weingut Keller has just a whisper more residual sugar than the lovely “RR”, coming in at fourteen grams per liter and about the same acidity. This was made from a selection of vines where the leaves were turning yellow a bit earlier and showed signs of being low in nitrogen this year, with the fruit from the vines all kept together for this cuvée. The beautiful and quite complex nose wafts from the glass in a mix of white peach, lemon, orange, salty slate tones, gentle notes of wild yeasts and petrol, lemongrass and citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and complex, with dancing acidity and great filigree, a fine core, laser-like focus and stunning cut and grip on the very long and elegant finish. A great, great wine! 2020-2060. **95**.

2013 Pettenthal “R”- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Pettenthal “R” is a touch drier than the Hipping (twelve grams per liter of residual sugar versus fourteen) and a touch higher in acidity, coming in at around ten grams per liter. This too in an utterly brilliant young wine, offering up a complex mélange of tangerine, blood orange, crystalline minerality, smoke, corn flowers, lemongrass and wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very complex, with a rock solid core, superb focus and grip and a very long, perfectly balanced and wonderfully filigreed finish. Stellar juice. 2020-2065. **95**.

Noble Sweet Wines

2013 Niersteiner Hipping Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Hipping Kabinett is a beautiful and utterly dancing example of this Prädikat, offering up a medium-bodied and utterly filigreed personality that is quintessential Kabinett. The bouquet is a vibrant blend of white peach, apple, spring flowers, sea salts, a touch of lavender, wild yeasts and orange zest. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, pure and shows off a great core, with beautiful complexity and intensity of flavor, ripe zesty acids and great bounce and grip on the very long, pure and ethereal finish. Classic! 2019-2040+. **95**.

2013 Niersteiner Pettenthal Riesling Kabinett (Auction)- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Pettenthal Kabinett will be sold at the auctions in Bad Kreuznach this coming September. The wine is simply gorgeous, offering up a pure and classy nose of apple, orange zest, peach, petrol, wild yeasts, slate and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and beautifully filigreed, with fine intensity at the core, vibrant acidity and superb focus and grip on the very, very long and very elegant finish. It is hard to say today that this is superior to the Hipping, but it is at least every bit as beautiful as that wine and the two will make brilliant bookend Kabinetten to drink over the coming thirty or forty years! 2019-2040+. **95**.

2013 Niersteiner Hipping Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Keller

There is only a single Spätlese in the cellar this year, which happens to hail from the Hipping vineyard in Nierstein. This too is gorgeous, soaring from the glass in a blend of pear, apple, acacia blossoms, petrol, bee pollen, a touch of white cherries, wild yeasts and citrus blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and laser-like in its focus, with very racy acidity, great grip and complexity and a very, very long, youthful and dancing finish. A great Spätlese! 2022-2050. **95.**

2013 Westhofener Morstein Riesling Auslese- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Morstein Auslese is utterly brilliant in this vintage. The bouquet is a celestial blend of pear, lime, orange, crystalline limestone minerality, bee pollen, orange zest and white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full, complex and succulent, with great focus and cut, stunning purity and grip and a very, very long, filigreed and utterly racy finish. From a preponderance of golden berries. 2020-2075. **96+.**

2013 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Auslese- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Auslese from the Abtserde is another absolute monument in the making and one can easily appreciate why Klaus-Peter and Julia Keller decided to make more sweet wines this year! The brilliantly pure and refined nose soars from the glass in a mélange of white peach, white cherry, chalky minerality, tangerine, bee pollen, orange blossoms and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and racy, with its personality utterly defined by its vibrant acids. The finish is very, very long, laser-like and brilliantly complex. A hauntingly elegant and electric bottle of Auslese! 2020-2075. **97.**

2013 Dalsheimer Hubacker Riesling Auslese *- Weingut Keller**

The 2013 Hubacker Three Star Auslese is essentially a Beerenauslese this year, as it wafts from the glass in a nobly rotten and beautiful bouquet of yellow plums, white cherries, honey, lavender, gentle smokiness, beautiful soil tones and an exotic topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite deep-pitched in personality from its heavy glaze of clean botrytis, with lovely, juicy acids, excellent focus and grip and a very long, pure and ultra clean finish. Great juice. 2018-2050. **94+.**

2013 Westhofener Morstein Scheurebe Beerenauslese- Weingut Keller

The 2013 Scheurebe BA from the Morstein is a brilliantly glazed, clean and magical wine that wafts from the glass in a blaze of tangerine, cherries, honeycomb, beautiful minerality, sweet grapefruit, citrus oils and orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with racy acids, great focus and grip, bottomless depth in the mid-palate and a fabulous synthesis of creaminess from the botrytis and absolutely electric acidity on the laser-like and stunningly long finish. A brilliant, brilliant wine! 2014-2060. **95.**

2013 Monsheimer Silberberg Rieslaner Beerenauslese- Weingut Keller

I have had a very warm spot in my heart for dessert wines made out of Rieslaner ever since the monumental 1986 version from Hanz-Günther Schwartz crossed my path, and the 2013 from the Kellers is very much cut from that fine tradition. The insanely beautiful nose soars from the glass in a stunning array of pineapple, orange, honey, citrus zest, a touch of blood orange, great minerality and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and loaded with tropical complexity, with a rock solid core, laser-like focus, Eiswein-like acids and simply stunning length and grip on the profoundly beautiful finish. 2019-2075. **97.**

2013 Westhofener Morstein Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Keller

There were only fifty-four liters produced of Morstein TBA in 2013, but this magical elixir will be worth a very special search to find in the market! The brilliant bouquet is a blend of

fresh apricot, orange, honey, pineapple, stunningly complex minerality, citrus zest and a dollop of new leather in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with brilliant focus and balance, a bottomless core, brisk acids and stunning length and grip on the celestial finish. Sheer brilliance! 2017-2075. **98.**

2013 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Keller

I did not write down how much Abtserde TBA was produced in the 2013 vintage, but I am sure this was a very short crop as well. The utterly magical nose delivers a kaleidoscope of desiccated peaches, guava, mango, honey, chalky minerality, citrus zest, hints of the leather to come and a pungent topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly refined, with stunning complexity, a great core, ripe, racy acids and an unbelievably long and simply flawless finish. What a magical interpretation of the Abtserde *terroir*. 2017-2075. **100.**

Nahe

Weingut Hermann Dönnhoff (Oberhausen)

I had the pleasure to taste with Cornelius Dönnhoff on this visit to the estate, and he had a very, very strong set of 2013ers to present this year. As I noted in the introduction, yields here were down between thirty and forty percent in 2013, depending on the vineyard, with most of the reduction due to the difficulties of flowering. The Dönnhoff family began picking on October 15th and finished on November 19th this year, but with the sweet spot in that window in the Nahe between October 28th and November 8th, when there was no rain at all. Earliest pickings were for the drier, basic, non-Riesling bottlings, but, as the botrytis here began in earnest in mid-October, selections began to be made for the Prädikat wines soon thereafter, as once the botrytis arrived and finally got a hold of the grapes, it spread fairly rapidly. The Felsenberg was the first of the Grosses Gewächs to be picked here this year, as the fruit from the section marked for this bottling began to show the very first signs of botrytis one morning and the grapes were picked immediately. The entire range of 2013ers from Weingut Dönnhoff are outstanding this year, as this is clearly a vintage where both the dry and the noble sweet wines are exceptional, but I have to say that I left with the impression that this was one of the most brilliant ranges of Prädikat wines to be produced here in a few years, as the combination of high acids and very, very clean botrytis makes for some absolutely brilliant wines. Of course, I have a sweet spot in my heart for great Spätlesen, and there are a couple of absolute timeless gems at this level in the estate's lineup in 2013. Kudos to the Dönnhoff family for their brilliant success in this vintage! All of the 2013ers from Weingut Dönnhoff have acids over eight grams per liter, and often the dry bottlings are also quite low in residual sugar, as the very high dry extract here this year has served to buffer the acidity very, very well. Because of the short yields, all of the production from the Türmchen section of the Felsenberg went into the Grosses Gewächs this year.

Sadly, the American importer of the Dönnhoff wines, Terry Theise, continues to insist on screwcaps for some of the bottlings for the US market (despite the private reservations of the Dönnhoff family about the ability of wines sealed under SC to age as well as those under natural cork), which is something I simply do not understand. If the family winemakers are not fans of the closure (and that family happens to be the Dönnhoffs!), why on earth would you insist on the wines being bottled under screwcap? Certainly someone of Terry's stature in the world of German wines should get his act together on this closure and at least take the time to read the copious amount of scientific studies on the viability of screwcaps (I have reams of them from the

Australian Wine Research Institute and the University of Bordeaux, if he wants copies!), as all of them show that, in a controlled environment, the closure is fatally flawed for aging wines and more than half of the samples are compromised by permanent reduction by age three or four- with the percentages of ruined wines by reduction moving up as time goes by. The research data is unequivocal as to the very high failure rate of this closure over time, and to put wines such as the beautiful 2013 Krötenpfuhl or Leistenberg Kabinetten under screwcap is, in my opinion, borderline criminal. This is not about how many bottles of corked German wine Terry has had in the past (perhaps he has not noticed that the quality of natural cork is up dramatically and TCA taint is way down since the nadir of the mid-1990s- which was now a long time ago?), but rather, that the scientific studies all show that screwcaps destroy a far larger percentage of wines through permanent reduction than were ever destroyed by TCA, even at the worst of times for cork quality. Terry Theise's past contribution here in the United States to the appreciation of fine German wine cannot be overstated, but he may well be on the way to completely obviating his very important past contributions by his continued push to have more and more of his estates bottle up a portion of their wines under this fatally flawed closure. In the meantime, if you are an American lover of Dönnhoff wines, in my opinion, you are well-advised to buy your Dönnhoff Kabinetten and Estate bottlings sealed under cork in Germany and ship them home, so that you can have the peace of mind to know that the wines are going to age in your cellar along the lines that the winemakers intend! For, as stunning as the entire range of 2013ers are from Weingut Dönnhoff, I would not want to own or drink a single bottle of their gorgeous wines from this vintage if they are sealed under screwcap.

Dry Wines

2013 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

This will be sealed up under screwcap for the American market (and perhaps in Germany as well?), which is too bad, as it is a lovely wine. The very pretty nose delivers a mix of white cherries, pears, a dollop of wild yeasts and a lovely base of quartzite minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely driven by its minerality, with fine focus and very good cut and grip on the impressively long finish. This was fermented in old fuders to round out its acidity this year, and the technique seems to have worked beautifully. 2014-2020+? **87+**.

2013 Tonschiefer Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

Ninety percent of the fruit for the Tonschiefer bottling hails from the Leistenberg vineyard. This too is going to go under the screw. The bouquet on the 2013 Tonschiefer is very expressive out of the blocks, offering up scents of cherry blossoms, apple, pear, a lovely base of slate and a gentle topnote of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very snappy this year, with again, a lovely base of minerality, great focus and cut and a very long, youthful and snappy finish. This will need a year to blossom, but should be a superb vintage for this bottling. Or, at least it could be under natural cork! 2015-2025+. **88**.

2013 Kahlenberg Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

According to Cornelius Dönnhoff, the Kahlenberg vineyard is probably the warmest microclimate that the family works with, and this has certainly not hurt the quality of the fruit here this year, where ripening was not easy to accomplish in the dismal growing season of 2013. The bouquet is excellent, wafting from the glass in a mix of tart orange, pear, quartzite minerality, citrus blossoms, wild yeasts and incipient notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and complex, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, racy acids, a lovely sense of

extract and a very long, refined and classy finish that closes with excellent grip and focus. Fine juice. 2014-2035. **90.**

2013 Höllenspfad Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Höllenspfad Trocken has only 2.3 grams per liter of residual sugar, acids over eight grams per liter, and yet comes across as perfectly buffered and balanced. The excellent bouquet delivers a blend of tangerine, apple, beautiful soil tones from the red sandstone here, a touch of mossiness, gentle notes of wild yeasts and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and a bit broader-shouldered in style than the lovely Kahlenberg, with a fine core and excellent focus, length and grip on the perfectly balanced and vibrant finish. A beautiful wine in the making. 2014-2035. **91.**



Cornelius Dönnhoff savoring the last sip of his brilliant 2013 Brücke Eiswein.

2013 Felsenberg “Türmchen” Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Türmchen Grosses Gewächs (of course the Türmchen name does not appear on the label, which would be against German wine law, but only its sketch) is really lovely this year, offering up a superb nose of spring flowers, apples, white cherries, complex minerality, gentle smokiness, wild yeasts, lilacs and a bit of *fleur de sel* up high. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and supremely elegant in 2013, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, snappy acids and a very long, soil-driven finish. A beautiful wine in the making. 2020-2050. **93.**

2013 Dellchen Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Dellchen Grosses Gewächs from the Dönnhoffs is outstanding this year, wafting from the glass in a deep, complex and very classy aromatic mix of apple, grapefruit, iris blossoms, wild yeasts, a beautiful base of slate, incipient notes of petrol and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with an excellent core of fruit, exquisite focus and balance and a very, very long, snappy and refined finish. Stellar. 2020-2060. **94+**.

2013 Hermannshöhle Riesling Grosses Gewächs – Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Grosses Gewächs from the Hermannshöhle is an absolutely brilliant young wine and one of the strongest vintages in recent times for this superb bottling (and there have been some stunning vintages of this wine over the last half decade!) and an absolute must have for lovers of dry Riesling. The superb bouquet offers up scents of pink grapefruit, white cherries, petrol, a touch of wild yeasts, tart orange, dried flowers, a brilliant base of slate and lilac blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly refined structurally, with a rock solid core, seamless balance and great cut and grip on the very, very long, laser-like focus. How great it will be down the road to compare the 2013 Hermannshöhle Grosses Gewächs with other recent great years here such as 2012, 2011, 2009 and 2007! This is an instant classic! 2020-2060. **96**.

Classic Off-Dry and Noble Sweet Wines

2013 Dönnhoff Riesling QbA

The 2013 Estate Riesling QbA is a Feinherb, but this will not appear on the label. Sadly, this too will go under the screw for some markets. The wine is really very lovely in 2013, offering up a fairly complex nose of white cherries, pears, wild yeasts, a touch of the petrol to come and a lovely base of slate minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and juicy, with a nice core of fruit, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the long and wide open finish. Fine juice. 2014-2020+? **88**.

2013 Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl Riesling Kabinett – Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Krötenpfuhl Kabinett will be bottled half under natural cork and half under screwcap, with of course the American market getting the screw! This is an absolutely beautiful wine in 2013 and will age extremely well, with its high acids and dry extract and exquisite balance- or at least that will be the case for the half of the cuvée that is bottled under natural cork. The stellar bouquet offers up scents of pear, white cherries, gentle notes of petrol, lovely minerality, an exotic touch of fresh mint and a topnote of iris blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and very complex, with a lovely core, ripe, snappy acids and excellent focus and grip on the long, poised and classy finish. A gorgeous Kabinett that shows just how strong this vintage was for wines at this Prädikat level! 2014-2030+? **92+**.

2013 Oberhäuser Leistenberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 vintage has produced the most brilliant Leistenberg Kabinett from the Dönnhoffs since the brilliant 2007, and this likely to be destined to be one of the greatest vintages ever for this lovely bottling. The simply stunning bouquet soars from the glass in a vibrant blend of apple blossoms, white cherries, a touch of tangerine, a gloriously complex base of slate and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and filigreed, with lovely intensity of flavor, superb complexity, snappy acids and great bounce, cut and grip on the very, very long and dancing finish. An utterly stunning young Kabinett. It makes me sick to my stomach to think that the US will only get this great wine in a totally compromised

condition, as it will arrive under the screw! The rest of the world will get the real deal. 2014-2040. **95.**

2013 Norheimer Kirschheck Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Kirschheck Spätlese is the fiftieth anniversary for these vines, and the wine has turned out beautifully this year, with the typically ethereal personality of this bottling very much to the fore. The delicate and refined nose delivers scents of pear, white cherries, slate, bee pollen, fruit blossoms and lemon zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright, pure and focused, with good depth in the mid-palate, lovely filigree and a long, focused and dancing finish. *Tout en finesse.* 2014-2035+. **92+.**

2013 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Dönnhoff Brücke Spätlese is pure magic in the making. The brilliantly complex nose soars from the glass in a blaze of pears, white cherries, pink grapefruit, clementines, stunningly complex minerality, perhaps a whisper of petrol, bee pollen and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully reserved in profile, with a great core, stunning filigree, racy acids, laser-like focus and simply stunning length and grip on the electric finish. This is the best vintage of Brücke Spätlese since the twin gems of 2011 and 2007. Really a beautiful wine in the making. 2018-2040. **96+.**

2013 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Spätlese from Weingut Dönnhoff is as brilliant as the Brücke and had no troubles following hard on the heels of that great wine in our tasting in mid-March. The bouquet is highlighted again by a beautiful sense of refinement and filigree, as it offers up a smorgasbord of apple, white cherry, hints of petrol, a complex base of slate minerality, wild yeasts and a pungent floral topnote redolent of lavender and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very elegant, with dancing acids, great focus and grip, laser-like delineation and a very, very long, pure and electric finish. What is so impressive about this wine is its very snappy acids are absolutely buried in the structure of the wine and the high extract here gives this wine such a suave and seamless palate impression that it is effortless to drink and seems likely to last for decades and decades. Another absolutely classic bottle of Spätlese! 2018-2040. **96+.**

2013 Norheimer Dellchen Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Dellchen Auslese is utterly remarkable for the great purity and transparency of the wine- this despite the wine being comprised of eighty percent botrytized grapes. The marvelous bouquet is a blend of tangerine, a hint of mango, bee pollen, a lovely underpinning of slate, incipient notes of honeycomb, white cherries and a topnote of iris blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and filigreed, with wonderful precision and lightness of step, an excellent core and a very, very long, zesty and marvelously balanced finish. A very beautiful and exquisitely glazed Auslese. 2017-2050+. **94.**

2013 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Goldkapsel Auslese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Brücke Auslese from the Dönnhoff family is also a very refined example of clean botrytis and perfectly ripe fruit. The wine soars from the glass in a glazed mélange of pineapple, apple, bee pollen, lovely minerality, clementines, just a whisper of wild yeasts and a topnote of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with a rock solid core, racy acids, laser-like focus and a very long, precise and scintillating finish. 2019-2065+. **95.**

2013 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Goldkapsel Auslese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Hermannshöhle Auslese from Weingut Dönnhoff is another absolutely monumental example of the vintage. The wine is very heavily glazed, but once again, the absolutely pristine nature of the botrytis in the Dönnhoff wines gives this wine a clarity and refinement that is very rare with such heavily glazed wines. The gorgeous bouquet is a stunning mix of sweet grapefruit, tangerine, candied violets, great minerality, citrus zest and a very gentle note of petrol. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and the most filigreed of these three amazingly beautiful Auslesen, with a great core of fruit, ripe, electric acids, seamless grace and beauty on the backend and a very, very long and magical finish. A great, great wine in the making! 2022-2065+. **97.**

2013 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Eiswein- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2013 Eiswein from the Brücke was picked on November 27th of this year, and Cornelius Dönnhoff reports that it was made “from one hundred percent healthy grapes.” The wine is pure and world-shattering in its beauty, soaring from the glass in a stunning aromatic constellation of apple pie, pineapple, tangerine, a lovely base of slate and a potpourri of floral scents that run the gambit from violets to lilacs to orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very racy in personality, with bottomless depth, great complexity, laser-like focus and great balance and cut on the nearly endless and utterly racy finish. Stunning juice. 2018-2075. **99.**

Weingut Emrich-Schönleber (Monzingen)

We showed up egregiously late for our appointment with Frank Schönleber, as it took far longer at our previous tasting with Tim Fröhlich than I had anticipated this year, and Frank was very generous in handing us a corkscrew and a few of the superb 2012ers here to revisit while he wolfed down a quick lunch, so that we could tackle the 2013ers in a more leisurely fashion after he had dined. The 2013ers were still all in tank or fuder at the time of our visit, with everything already filtered, with the exception of the Grosses Gewächs bottlings. All of the wines up to the level of Mineral and Lenz had been de-acidified in this vintage, with everything above this level left with its natural acidities intact. We did not taste the Weissburgunder or Grauburgunder bottlings from 2013, as we were so late, but rather launched right into the excellent range of Rieslings here this year. I was particularly impressed by the cut, precision and mineral drive of the two Trocken bottlings this year from the Frühlingsplätzchen and Halenberg, as the very high acidities and high extract of the vintage have really given these wines electric personalities, and they should be two of the really finest values out there for dry Rieslings in 2013. From the range of wines that we tasted in the cellars here this year, it is very clear that the Frühlingsplätzchen vineyard has done exceptionally well in 2013. While the estate is best-known for its superlative dry Rieslings, the range of 2013 Prädikat wines that we sampled here this year were particularly strong and filigreed in style, and they should most emphatically not be ignored in an effort to snap up as many of the beautiful dry 2013ers from the Schönleber family.

Dry 2013ers

2013 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2013 Estate Riesling Trocken is going to be a lovely wine right out of the blocks this year. The bouquet is a fine blend of lime, quartzite minerality, smokiness, a bit of mossiness and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure on the attack and zesty, with a good core,

lovely focus and grip and a long, well-balanced and wide open finish. Fine juice for a basic bottling. 2014-2025. **87+**.

2013 Riesling “Mineral” Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2013 Mineral is going to be lovely, as it wafts from the glass in a blend of grapefruit, white cherries, petrol, a fine base of slate, lemongrass, gentle notes of wild yeasts and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very elegant out of the blocks this year, with a fine core, bright acids and impressive length and grip on the classy finish. 2014-2030+. **89+**.

2013 Riesling Halbtrocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber (Part of Lenz)

This cuvée settled into balance with fourteen grams per liter of residual sugar and will be bottled as a component of the Lenz this year, as it is really quite harmonious at this balance point. The wine offers up lovely aromatics of pear, breadfruit, lilacs, a fine base of slate, spring flowers and lime zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long, pure and very vibrant on the backend, with impressive focus and a lovely interplay of residual sweetness and striking minerality. This is lovely on its own and I am sure it will be a superb component of the 2013 Lenz. 2014-2030. **89+**.

2013 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

I tasted two components of the 2013 Frühlingsplätzchen Trocken, and both are lovely and the expected blend should be exceptional this year. Part one, which came from the very last grapes picked this year by the estate and was fermented in fuder, offers up an excellent bouquet of grapefruit, a touch of mint, beautiful minerality, smoke, dried flowers and lime peel. Part two, which was fermented in stainless steel, delivers a more opulent fruit expression in its aromatic mix of lime, green apple, smoke, slate and lemongrass. On the palate both wines are full-bodied, crisp and vibrant, with excellent mid-palate depth, impressive cut and mineral drive and excellent length and grip on the focused finish. The approximate blend of the two, when we combined them, should merit as score of **90-91**, and there may also be a bit of the Grosses Gewächs that also finds its way into this cuvée, which would only make it better still! A fine example of the vintage in the making here. 2015-2035. **90-91+?**

2013 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

In 2013 the Halenberg Trocken will hail from the younger vines in the Auf de Lay section of the vineyard and will be lovely this year. The bouquet is beautifully precise and focused, wafting from the glass in a blend of grapefruit, petrol, wild yeasts, slate, lime peel, smokiness and a nice touch of water cress in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very racy, with a fine core, lovely filigree and outstanding length and grip on the focused and very promising finish. Superb juice in the making. 2017-2035+. **91+**.

2013 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

We tasted three different constituent components of the 2013 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs this year in the cellars, as the final blend was not yet completed. Part one hails from the best section of the vineyard and has just a whisper of botrytis, as it offers up a smoky bouquet of lime zest, grapefruit, wild yeasts, slate and tart orange. This has only 2.5 grams per liter of residual sugar, but the acids are perfectly buffered by dry extract, and the wine is full, quite structured and racy. Part two is a bit higher in residual sugar, at 5.5 grams per liter, and offers up strikingly beautiful and pure fruit tones as its central pillar. This is the most seamless and longest of the three parts on the palate, with great purity and precision. Part three, which will only be partially used for the GG blend, has 15 grams per liter of residual sugar and is very vibrant, smoky and floral in personality, with great length and grip and gives an impression of being far

drier than its 15 grams per liter, as the acids and extract simply devour the impression of residual sweetness on the palate. The approximate blend of the three that Frank Schönleber put together for us showed a wine of immense potential and should come in between **93-94+** points when it is finally blended, and should drink well from 2018-2050. **93-94+**.

2013 Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2013 Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs was also not settled on for its final blend, but we tasted two components and then Frank put together an approximation of the final cuvée. Part one is a touch sweeter at 10.7 grams per liter of residual sugar and is really lovely on both the nose and palate, offering up a vibrant nose of lime, tangerine, a beautiful base of slate, gentle notes of petrol, wild yeasts and lemongrass. The second component is drier, and offers up lovely smokiness, plenty of lime zest, grapefruit, botanical overtones and a great base of slate and petrol. The overall blend should come in around 6.5 grams per liter of residual sugar and approximately at eight grams per liter of acidity, and offers up a lovely aromatic blend of grapefruit, petrol, gorgeous slate minerality, cress, tart orange and gentle smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very precise and mineral in personality, with excellent focus and great cut and grip on the youthful finish. This will be dynamite as well. 2020-2050. **93-94+**.

2013 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen “Auf de Lay”- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

As is the Schönleber family’s custom, the Auf de Lay parcel will be bottled on its own and is going to be exceptional in 2013. We tasted the primary component of this wine, which has only one gram per liter of residual sugar and 8.2 grams per liter of acidity, and yet the wine seemed perfectly balanced and had not trouble buffering its acids, due to its beautiful dry extract. There is one smaller component that will also go into this cuvée in 2013, which is just a whisper sweeter in style, so the final wine should be around two grams per liter of RS! The first component offers up a lovely and nascently complex bouquet of grapefruit, lime, refined smokiness, wild yeasts, wonderfully complex minerality and a fistful of botanicals that most recall water cress and moss. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and utterly seamless in balance, with these racy acids brilliantly integrated and buffered. The core of the wine is rock solid, the purity exceptional and the cut and grip stellar. This will be special, as it always is! 2020-2050+. **93-95+**.

Prädikat 2013ers

2013 Monzinger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2013 Monzinger Kabinett all hails from Frühlingsplätzchen fruit this year and this is going to be a really beautiful bottle of Kabinett. The very lovely and refined bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of pear, lime zest, slate, a dollop of wild yeasts, lemongrass and the vineyard’s signature smokiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and racy, with lovely cut and grip, excellent focus and a very long, dancing and perfectly balanced finish. This wine carries nearly 50 grams per liter of residual sugar and 9.2 grams per liter of acidity, and the balance is just perfect and the result is an utterly refined expression of Kabinett. 2014-2035. **92.**

2013 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2013 Frühlingsplätzchen Spätlese is another absolutely beautiful wine in the making, with its 9.5 grams per liter of acidity fully devouring its 90 grams per liter of residual sugar! This is very 2010-like in personality, offering up a beautiful nose of white cherries, lime zest, wild yeasts, bee pollen, violets, a lovely base of slate and of course, upper register smokiness. On the

palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and vibrant, with lovely core and bounce, excellent focus and grip and impressive filigree on the long and dancing finish. Delicious juice. 2014-2035. **93.**

2013 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2013 Halenberg Spätlese is also beautiful, delivering a pure and vivid aromatic constellation of pear, lime, gentle notes of honeycomb, a touch of botanicals, smokiness, bee pollen and white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep and pure, albeit a touch fuller in style than the Frühlingsplätzchen Spätlese, with a great core, fine balance, but just a touch less precision and raciness than the above wine. However, this wine is very long on the palate and will drink very well from a young age. 2014-2030+. **92.**

2013 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Auslese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

Sixty percent of the blend for this bottling came from very cleanly botrytized grapes, with the rest golden berries with no noble rot. This is really a beautiful bottle of Auslese in the making, jumping from the glass in a wonderful aromatic mix of white cherries, a touch of papaya, honeycomb, lovely minerality, lilacs and gentle smokiness in the upper register (this is the Frühlingsplätzchen after all). On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very racy in personality, with a great core of fruit, vibrant acidity, excellent focus and balance and a very long, pure and dancing finish that closes with a magical synthesis of glazed fruit and beautiful minerality. Delicious. 2017-2040+. **94.**

2013 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Auslese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

This lovely Auslese was also a blend of sixty percent botrytized berries and forty percent golden berries, and it too is absolutely lovely in 2013. The deep, smoky and very refined bouquet delivers a blend of pear, white cherries, candied violets, bee pollen, gentle smokiness and a touch of mossiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp on the backend and very creamy on the attack, with a fine core, nascent complexity and excellent grip and bounce on the long and refined finish. A beautiful bottle of Auslese in the making. 2017-2040. **94.**

Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich (Bockenau)

Tim Fröhlich has once again turned out absolutely brilliant wines in 2013, though I am sure that he would be very quick to point out that he was given a much easier time by Mother Nature in this vintage than some of his colleagues in other parts of German wine country. I can only imagine how folks in the Saar or middle Mosel would have felt about the possibility of only being off five percent from a “normal” crop in 2013, as was the case at Weingut-Schäfer-Fröhlich, but the Nahe clearly had the best conditions to work with in this growing season and Tim Fröhlich has not wasted the opportunity that nature provided here and has another stellar range of wines in his cellar from 2013. He told me that he had very little botrytis to deal with in this vintage, which was contrary to some of his neighbors such as Weingut Dönnhoff, but this was the heterogeneous nature of the 2013 vintage. Some of his “estate” bottlings were de-acidified this year, as he felt that several of these cuvées would be much more palatable early at 8.5 grams per liter acidity, rather than the ten that they came in with naturally. For his Grosses Gewächs and Prädikat wines in 2013, he chose not to de-acidify. At the time of my visit, everything had been assembled, with the “estate bottlings” already filtered, and the remainder of the lineup awaiting filtering after Prowein (which was to begin three days after my visit to the estate). As I noted in the introduction, Tim Fröhlich commented that “here in the Nahe, there was a window between October 28th and November 8th, and the vast majority of the Grand Crus were picked during this period of time.” In addition to the wines reported on below, I also tasted

Prädikat wines of great promise from the Felseneck vineyard at the Kabinett, Spätlese and Auslese level, but they had only just finished their fermentations a day or two before my visit, so I did not take precise notes on these wines. But, do not ignore them when they arrive on the market, as their potential was exceptional! We finished up our tasting with a handful of 2012ers that had not finished up their fermentations at the time of my visit last year, so this was the first time I had seen them- also brilliant wines! Tim Fröhlich is making some of the most compellingly beautiful wines in the world of wine today and his 2013ers are reference point quality for the vintage.



Tim Fröhlich has once again produced one of the most magical lineups of wines in Germany in 2013.

2013 Fröhlich Blanc de Noirs Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

Tim Fröhlich was very happy with the quality of the pinot noir fruit in 2013, and his Blanc de Noirs Trocken has turned out very nicely indeed. The wine offers up an excellent nose of white cherries, pink grapefruit, stony soil tones, a nice dollop of wild yeasts and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and precise, with snappy acids and lovely focus, length and grip on the classy finish. A lovely wine. 2014-2022+. **89.**

2013 Fröhlich Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2013 Fröhlich Trocken, which comes from forty year-old Müller-Thurgau vines that are planted on volcanic soils, was produced entirely from very small, golden berries this year and came in between 11.2 and 11.5 percent alcohol (the analyses were not yet completed for the wine

at the time of my visit). This is a very stylish example of Müller-Thurgau, delivering a nose of lemon, grapefruit, petrol, wet stone, lime zest and a gently smoky touch in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very nicely balanced, with a precise and elegant personality, good grip and fine focus on the long finish. Really a lovely bottle from this grape. 2014-2025. **88.**

2013 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2013 Riesling Trocken, which is made from the very youngest vines in the estate's grand cru vineyards (five to twenty years of age), was harvested between the 20th and the 28th of October and will make a lovely bottle of dry Riesling for early consumption. The bouquet is a fine blend of grapefruit, tart orange, lovely minerality, citrus zest and incipient notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, crisp and complex, with a good, solid core, fine delineation and a long, elegant and zesty finish. What a great pour by the glass this would make in a Riesling-savvy restaurant! 2014-2030. **88.**

2013 Bockenaur Weissburgunder Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2013 Weissburgunder Trocken from Schäfer-Fröhlich all hails from red slate vineyards in the village of Bockenau, and in this vintage was made from a fifty-fifty blend of young and old vines, with a small percentage of the blend barrel-fermented and none of the constituent components allowed to go through malo. The very pretty and complex nose wafts from the glass in a mix of pear, grapefruit, spring flowers, smoke, a nice base of soil tones and just a touch of straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and nicely light on its feet, with good balance and bouncy acids, fine focus and a long, succulent finish. Lovely juice for immediate drinking. 2014-2022. **88.**

2013 Bockenaur Weissburgunder "S" Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The old vine, Weissburgunder "S" Trocken bottling in 2013 was picked fully a week and a half later than the grapes for the regular bottling and came in about a half a degree higher in alcohol (around thirteen percent). The wine has turned out beautifully in this vintage, delivering a deep and serious nose of white peach, apple, wild yeasts, a complex base of soil, a touch of wheat chafe and a gentle topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and offers up a lovely, expansive mid-palate, bright acids and a very long, juicy and wide open finish. A really fine bottle of Pinot Blanc. 2014-2030. **90.**

2013 Bockenaur Grauburgunder "S" Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

I did not taste the regular Pinot Gris bottling this year, but the 2013 Grauburgunder "S" bottling has turned out beautifully. This is from old Pinot Gris vines that are planted primarily in porphyry soils and the wine is truly exceptional in this racy vintage. The first class nose delivers a fine mélange of apple, grapefruit, excellent minerality, a nice touch of red berry, wild yeasts and a touch of straw up high. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, very light on its feet this year, with lovely focus and mineral drive, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the classy finish. 2014-2030+. **91.**

2013 Vulkangestein Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

As readers will recall, the Vulkangestein Trocken bottling hails from selected volcanic soils in the estate's grand cru vineyards of Felsenberg and Stromberg, with the vines all forty year-old vines. The 2013 Vulkangestein is going to be a terrific bargain, as the wine is excellent, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of tart orange, grapefruit, wild yeasts, petrol, lovely minerality, smoke and a touch of *fleur de sel*. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and very intensely flavored, with a lovely core, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the

nascently complex finish. A wonderful estate bottling this year from Tim Fröhlich! 2014-2040. **91+**.

2013 Schiefergestein Bockenaur Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Schiefergestein bottling all comes from the grand cru of Felseneck, but from the less steep sections and the wine is picked earlier than for the Grosses Gewächs. As Tim Fröhlich commented, “we like to pick the fruit for this bottling just as the leaves are turning from green to yellow and a few are just starting to fall, as this moment gives the resulting wine a nice mineral kick.” The 2013 is excellent, delivering a deep and vibrant nose of grapefruit, a touch of gooseberry, almost flinty soil tones, wild yeasts, a bit of currant leaf and a very smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure and precise on the attack, with a lovely core, impressive complexity, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the zesty finish. This will be accessible early and offer up lovely drinking, but there is also plenty of structure to carry it far into the future. Another bargain. 2014-2040. **92.**

2013 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2013 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs is going to be a beautiful wine in 2013, as its very elegant and complex nose offers up a blend of grapefruit, lemongrass, a touch of exotic herb tones, wild yeasts, a beautifully complex base of slate minerality, bread fruit and white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very soil-driven this year, with an excellent core of fruit, racy acids and flawless balance on the very long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. A gorgeous wine in the making. 2019-2050+. **93+**.

2013 Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2013 Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs from the estate is all made from old vines, with the range from forty-five to sixty-plus years of age, with the very steepest section of the vineyard providing the fruit for the GG. The red slate soils of this vineyard give a lovely mineral drive to the wine in 2013, as it jumps from the glass in a beautiful blend of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, wild yeasts, a gorgeous base of slate, a touch of lavender, smokiness and a bit of lime leaf in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very elegant in 2013, with excellent mid-palate depth, crisp, ripe acids and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly focused finish. A very, very elegant vintage for the Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs this year. 2020-2050+, **94.**

2013 Kupfergrube Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

Tim Fröhlich’s small, half a hectare parcel in the great Kupfergrube vineyard in Schlossböckelheim have produced an absolutely brilliant Grosses Gewächs in 2013, as this wine is utterly stunning and quite exotic in personality this year (in fact, I put in my order for some bottles prior to leaving the tasting!) and is as fine an example of this great *terroir* as I have ever had the pleasure to taste from the estate. The beautiful and utterly captivating nose soars from the glass in a blend of pineapple, fresh coconut, petrol, wild yeasts, tangerine, citrus zest and a beautifully complex base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and stunningly elegant, with a rock solid core, laser-like focus and great length and grip on the racy and utterly seamless finish. A beautiful rendition of the Kupfergrube! 2019-2050. **94+**.

2013 Felsenberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2013 Felsenberg Grosses Gewächs bottling is outstanding, with the volcanic soils here really giving this wine a minerally-defined personality in this high extract vintage. The deep and reserved nose delivers a mineral bath of tart orange, grapefruit, petrol, wild yeasts, plenty of smokiness and a kaleidoscope of porphyry minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite a bit more reserved out of the blocks than the preceding GGs, with a

great core, superb structure, brisk, nicely buffered acids and excellent length and grip on the still very primary finish. This will be stellar, but will need a few more years in the cellar before it starts to blossom. 2022-2050+. **93+**.

2013 Stromberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

As I quoted Tim Fröhlich observing last year, “the volcanic soils here (in the Stromberg) are more rocky here than in the grand crus in Schlossböckelheim (Felsenberg and Kupfergrube, which are also porphyry), making for a far different style of wine.” He expanded on this theme in the spring, noting that “there is very little topsoil here, with the hard rock not very far below the surface, and our parcel is on a seventy percent grade, so this always results in a very mineral wine.” The 2013 Stromberg GG is going to be great, as the wine delivers an aromatic constellation of grapefruit, petrol, orange peel, beautifully complex minerality, wild yeasts, laurel and a quite understated touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly seamless in structure, with a great core of fruit, striking soil signature, ripe, racy acids and a very, very long, tightly-knit finish. Great wine. 2020-2050. **94**.

2013 Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

Even though I placed my order for the 2013 Kupfergrube GG as I was walking out the door, there is no doubting that the very finest Grosses Gewächs in this stellar lineup this year is this magical Felseneck. The young, very complex and simply brilliant bouquet is a blend of tart orange, pink grapefruit, petrol, kaleidoscopic slate nuances, wild yeasts, lemongrass, smoke, citrus peel and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and supremely elegant, with a rock solid core, ripe, perfectly integrated acids, laser-like focus and a very, very long, refined and perfectly balanced finish. A stunning wine in the making! 2022-2055+. **95+**.

A Handful of Stellar 2012ers

2012 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Auslese- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich AP #29

The 2012 Felseneck Auslese is a beautifully filigreed and refined wine on both the nose and palate. The beautiful bouquet is a blend of white cherries, clementine, lilacs, a refined base of slate, a touch of smokiness, bee pollen and gentle notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very refined, with a lovely core, bright, zesty acids, great focus and grip and a very, very long, primary and dancing finish. Gorgeous wine. 2020-2050. **94**.

2012 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich AP #32

The 2012 Goldkapsel from the Felseneck is far more botrytized in style and is utterly magical in its purity and exotic beauty. The magical nose soars from the glass in a mix of mango, pear, tropical flowers, still a nice bass-note of slate, violets and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and utterly suave on the attack, with a great core, stunning purity and filigree for this level of botrytis, vibrant acids and a very, very long, vibrant and stunning finish. This is an utterly brilliant wine! 2018-2050. **97**.

2012 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Eiswein- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich AP #30

The 2012 “regular” Eiswein is gorgeous, wafting from the glass in an electric mélange of orange, pineapple, lovely minerality, a hint of the apple pie spices to come, acacia blossoms and orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full, pure and vivid in its flavor spectrum, with a great core, superb focus and cut and a long, racy and pure finish. A simply stellar example of Eiswein. 2019-2060. **94+**.

2012 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Eiswein Goldkapsel- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich AP #31

The 2012 Goldkapsel Eiswein is even better (though I am not sure how Tim has managed this!), as the wine is more exotic on both the nose and palate, but every bit as precise and

electric. The stunning bouquet is a glorious mélange of mango, mandarin orange, a beautiful base of minerality, orange blossoms and a lovely and quite exotic topnote of lavender. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and dancing, with a superb core, laser-like focus, magical complexity and an endless, pure, long and electric finish. Just magnificent and utterly refined. 2019-2060. **96.**

Mosel

Weingut Reinhold Haart (Piesport)

Johannes Haart has produced a very fine lineup of 2013ers, and his was one of the few cellars that I visited in the middle Mosel on this trip where he has crafted some high quality dry Rieslings from the vintage. Yields here were down forty percent in 2013 from a normal crop, and Johannes brought all the fruit in during a very short window between October 28th and November 3rd, during a spell of dry weather. As is customary during my late March visit here, the final decisions on cuvées were not yet taken, and so there are not yet any AP numbers for various bottlings. Johannes Haart prepared samples of what he expects to be the different bottlings produced this year at the estate, but he was still fine-tuning blends and making decisions about how many small lots of wine he would want to keep separate in 2013, and which might blend well together, so where I have tasted multiple examples of things such as Goldtröpfchen Spätlese, I have simply labeled them as the first or second example of each Prädikat level, given that it was too early for AP numbers for the wines.

2013 Piesporter Riesling Trocken- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2013 Piesporter Riesling Trocken is a very fine example for this estate bottling. The excellent and quite complex nose wafts from the glass in a mix of pear, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, slate, petrol, orange peel and a touch of currant leaf in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and shows a fine core of fruit, with brisk acids and excellent length and grip on the focused finish. A high class basic bottling of Trocken. 2014-2025+. **89+.**

2013 Kreuzwingert Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

This is the first vintage that I can recall tasting a Grosses Gewächs bottling from the Kreuzwingert vineyard, which is a one hectare monopole of the Haart family that lies up above Goldtröpfchen on the hillside. Johannes Haart notes that these deeper soils are quite loamy in composition, and the 2013 GG from the Kreuzwingert has come in with 6.5 grams per liter of residual sugar. The wine is going to be superb, as it offers up a beautifully exotic nose of pear, white cherry, lots of mossy botanicals, a fine base of soil tones, petrol and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, ripe acids, and excellent length and grip. This is really lovely and I like the complexity of green elements of mossy aromatics and flavors that probably hail from this loamy base of soil. A superb food wine with a couple of years of bottle age. 2017-2040+. **92+.**

2013 Ohligsberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

Johannes Haart observed that the “Ohligsberg GG probably was made with the very best fruit we picked this year”, and the wine was showing beautifully at the time of my visit. This is just a whisper sweeter than the Kreuzwingert, coming in at 6.7 grams per liter of residual sugar, to nicely buffer its snappy acids. The excellent nose offers up scents of lime, apple, lovely smokiness, wild yeasts, slate, orange peel and a gentle touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with a fine core, seamless balance and a very long, vibrant and snappy finish. Lovely juice. 2018-2040+. **93.**

2013 Goldtröpfchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2013 Goldtröpfchen GG may not actually get a chance to wear the Grosses Gewächs title on its label, as the wine currently sits at 11.5 grams per liter of residual sugar, which is just above the limit for Trocken wine and a Grosses Gewächs has to be Trocken! However, as Johannes Haart commented, “I am really undecided about this wine, as I just love the balance of the wine as it is right now, and perhaps it makes no sense to work on the blend to try and bring down the sugars below ten, as it really is extremely harmonious right where it is right now.” So it is possible that this wine will just be labeled as Goldtröpfchen, without any mention of Grosses Gewächs. The wine is indeed stellar as it is, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of white peach, a touch of gooseberry, petrol, lovely slate tones, citrus peel and a gentle topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, reserved and quite stunning in potential, with a rock solid core, brisk acids, excellent focus and grip and a very long, pure and classy finish. A superb bottle. 2020-2040+. **94.**

2008 Goldtröpfchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

As we were chatting about how well the 2013 GGs would age here, Johannes very kindly went down to the cellar and grabbed a couple of older bottles of Goldtröpfchen GG to show their evolution. In addition to this really outstanding 2008er, he also pulled a bottle of the 2004, which I have added to the notes from the tasting of Alsace, Austria and dry German 2004ers that will appear in the next issue. The 2008 Goldtröpfchen Grosses Gewächs has reached a beautiful point to start drinking the wine, as it offers up a deep and wide open nose of pear, currant leaf, beeswax, a touch of sea salts, sweet herbs and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and really classy, with excellent mid-palate depth, lovely complexity, superb focus and grip and a very long, precise and refined finish. Just a beautiful bottle of GG for drinking over the next several decades! 2014-2040. **95.**

2013 Haart to Heart- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2013 Haart to Heart had only been bottled two weeks prior to my visit, but had not shut down and was showing quite well. This is a very nice everyday wine with a nice dollop of residual sugar, but, like so many of these entry level bottles on the Mosel these days, it is bottled under screwcap. The wine right now offers up a pretty nose of tart orange, lime, a nice touch of minerality, a hint of botanicals and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and shows a nice interplay of sweetness, minerality and zesty acids, with good length and bounce on the finish. Good juice for near-term drinking, as the closure will get it down the road. 2014-2016. **87.**

2013 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett #1- Weingut Reinhold Haart

This is a single tank of two thousand liters that Johannes kept apart and plans to bottle on its own, as it is quite different stylistically from the second example of Kabinett. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a blend of white currants, gooseberry, slate, petrol, wild yeasts and a nice topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and racy, with lovely filigree, fine depth at the core, tangy acids and simply superb complexity on the long and vibrant finish. Just an utterly classic example of Goldtröpfchen Kabinett. 2018-2040. **94.**

2013 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett #2- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The second example of 2013 Kabinett from the Goldtröpfchen is a blend of a two thousand liter lot and a one thousand liter lot and the wine is a bit sweeter in style than the above. The bouquet is still very pretty, offering up scents of peach, white currant, spring flowers, a fine base of salty slate soil tones, a touch of petrol and a bit of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and a bit more broad-shouldered in style, with a good

core, bright, tangy acids and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is not quite as filigreed as the above, but will drink better out of the blocks and is also a very pretty wine. 2014-2035. **91.**

2013 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese #1- Weingut Reinhold Haart

There will likely be two different Goldtröpfchen Spätlesen this year, with this one the larger cuvée and just about ready for bottling. The beautiful and gently glazed nose delivers a fine mélange of peach, white cherries, bee pollen, a lovely base of salty slate, currant leaf and citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and already quite creamy in the mid-palate, with a fine core, lovely focus, vibrant acidity and excellent length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. This will be lovely right from the start, but I would be inclined to try and keep my hands off of it for three or four years and allow its secondary layers to emerge. 2018-2040+. **92.**



2013 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese #2- Weingut Reinhold Haart

This wine is from a five hundred liter lot that was picked right up behind the domaine (which sits at the base of one section of the Goldtröpfchen) and was more heavily botrytized than the remainder of the Spätlese blend- it is quite likely that this will be bottled as Spätlese Goldkapsel as a result. The wine offers up a very cleanly glazed bouquet of white cherries, tangerine, pear, fine minerality, bee pollen and orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and vibrant, with the concentrating effect of the botrytis giving the wine even a bit more

zip than the above. The wine has a lovely core of fruit, impressive complexity and focus and a very long, snappy and dancing finish. This is really a lovely, lovely wine. 2019-2045+. **94+**.

2013 Wintricher Ohligsberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2013 Ohligsberg Spätlese is another really outstanding example of the vintage, with a more filigreed and less glazed personality than the above, but every bit as much complexity and style. The elegant nose wafts from the glass in a blend of white cherries, pears, smoky overtones, currant leaf, wild yeasts and a fine base of slate. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and quite refined, with a fine core, ripe, vibrant acids and simply superb length and grip on the focused and filigreed finish. Great juice. 2017-2040. **94+**.

2013 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese #1- Weingut Reinhold Haart

There are two distinct Auslesen from the Goldtröpfchen in this vintage, with this one the less botrytized of the two. The wine is going to be another stunner from Johannes Haart, as it soars from the glass in an excellent mix of white peach, clementine, bee pollen, lilies, slate, a bit of petrol and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and quite ethereal in style, with a fine core, impressive filigree, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and very pure finish. I really like these 2013 Auslesen that are more the product of golden berries and just a faint touch of crystal clean botrytis. 2019-2050. **93**.

2013 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese #2- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The second Goldtröpfchen Auslesen from 2013 is more obviously glazed, though again with the noble rot clearly very clean. The heavily botrytized nose offers up a fine blend of yellow plum, white cherry, honeycomb, a gentle base of soil, lavender and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and again, very elegant, with a creamy attack of botrytis, again, very impressive filigree (particularly for this level of glazing!), vibrant acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, pure and complex finish. Fine, fine juice! 2019-2050. **94+**.

Weingut C. A. Immich Batterieberg (Enkirch)

This is one of the oldest estates on the Mosel, as wine cultivation here can be traced back the Middle Ages and the Immich family first purchased this fine estate (which had been started by the monks in the region) back in 1495 (or three years after Columbus sailed to the new world). The Immich family ran it for a great many generations and earned a very fine reputation for the high quality of their wines, but the estate was sold in 1989, and the new owners promptly changed the style of the wines, sullied the estate's reputation and eventually had to file for bankruptcy in 2007. In 2009, the estate was purchased by Gernot Kollmann and a pair of investors, who promptly set about returning the style of the wines to their roots and resurrected the reputation of the property. Herr Kollmann had worked at nearby Weingut Dr. Loosen and at Weingut van Volxem prior to purchasing Immich Batterieberg. The wines are now again fermented in old oak fuders for the most part, with indigenous yeasts, and neither chapitalization nor de-acidification is practiced. The focus now is primarily on dry wines, or slightly off-dry, Feinherb wines, with an occasional Auslese tossed in if the conditions dictate such. However, Herr Kollmann has been quoted as saying that he feels very fortunate that their vineyards in Enkirch are not particularly prone to botrytis, so it is a fairly rare occurrence here not to have clean grapes for making the drier styled wines that he prefers. The estate has a 1.1 hectare monopole vineyard known as the Batterieberg (from which it takes its name), which lies within the larger grand cru vineyard of the Zeppwingert, as well as a parcel outside the Batterieberg here, a parcel in the Steffensberg vineyard and another in the superb terroir of the Ellergrub. The Steffensberg (which lies in one of the side valleys off of the river proper) is planted to sixty

year-old vines and the remainder of the estate's parcels are eighty years of age and above, with fully eighty percent planted on ungrafted rootstocks. I only had a chance to taste three wines from the estate on this trip, as Gernot Kollmann is friends with Konstantin Weiser and Alexandra Künstler of Weingut Weiser-Künstler in nearby Traben-Trarbach and sent along a few samples to be tried during my tasting at the estate. I would love to have a look at the entire lineup of wines here at this important estate, and these three bottles certainly served to whet my appetite and I will make it a point to visit the estate and taste in the cellars on future visits to German wine country.

2012 C. A. I. Riesling Kabinett- Weingut C. A. Immich Batterieberg (screwcap)

The C. A. I. bottling is named for Carl August Immich, the family member who created the great Batterieberg vineyard by constant dynamiting of the rocky mountainside in the early 1840s- eventually making it possible to build terraces and plant vines here. This is an entry level wine for the estate, done in a Feinherb style (though this is not stated on the label) and produced from the fruit at the base of the Batterieberg vineyard (complemented with a bit of purchased fruit that also hails from organically-farmed, ungrafted vines). The 2012 shows off lovely raw materials, but has already begun to be compromised by its closure, as it is clipped on the backend and fairly short- solely from the screwcap I believe. The nose is pretty, offering up scents of peach, pear, slate-derived minerality and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely focused, with a bit of spritz and the slightly tinny aspect on the scalped finish that is so much the expression of German Riesling under the screw. I have little doubt that this would be a lovely wine under cork, but it is marginally uninteresting at this point in time under its faulty closure. 2014-2016. **85.**

2012 Escheburg Riesling- Weingut C. A. Immich Batterieberg

The Escheburg bottling is a blended Riesling that is produced from the top vineyard sites that the estate owns in the village of Enkirch, so this is in effect their premier cru bottling, with the individual vineyard bottlings representing their grand crus. This wine is sealed under natural cork and is quite good in 2012, wafting from the glass in a mix of white peach, wild yeasts, a fine base of minerality, citrus zest and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and nascently complex, with crisp acids, good focus and very good length and grip on the still fairly youthful, but open finish. This was tasted alongside of the wines from Daniel Vollenweider and Weiser-Künstler, and my note finished with the comment that this is a very good bottle that is not quite as refined as the bottlings sampled from the other two estates during this visit, but perhaps that is simply the nature of tasting a blended wine from a handful of different *terroirs* in comparison to single vineyard bottlings. 2014-2025+. **90.**

2012 Batterieberg Riesling- Weingut C. A. Immich Batterieberg

The dry Riesling from the Batterieberg came in at 12.5 percent in the 2012 vintage and is a lovely and quite serious wine. The bouquet is deep, complex and still youthful in its constellation of white cherries, apple, a lovely base of slate soil tones, white flowers and just a touch of creaminess from relatively young oak barrels. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, and quite classy on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, good acids, nascent complexity and a bit of oak influence also showing up on the long and zesty finish. This is quite unique in its incorporation of a bit of oakiness to the personality of the wine, and though I respect the wine's quality, I am not particularly enamored of oak influence in my dry Riesling. But, it is certainly very well-made and others may like this more than I do. 2014-2025. **92.**

Weingut Schloss Lieser (Lieser)

Weingut Schloss Lieser had some of the worst luck in the middle Mosel in 2013, for in addition to all the problems with bad flowering, shot berries and the like that affected everyone in this section of German wine country, they also got hit hard with hail damage in June. There were three hailstorms in their vicinity during this month, with the worst one occurring on June 16th, and with the focal point of all three storms Lieser, so that the Niederberg Helden vineyard was pummeled. Of course, the hail hit when the grapes were still tiny, hard and green, so the primary damage was to just further reduce what were already tiny yields down to the level of near catastrophe. Fortunately, at least the hail did not bleed over into neighboring village of Brauneberg, so those vineyards were only depleted by bad flowering and shot berries. Overall, this meant a loss of two-thirds of a normal crop for Schloss Lieser in 2013, so there is going to be painfully short quantities of these wines in the market this year. That is the bad news. However, there is some good news here as well, as the estate will start producing wines from Wehlener Sonnenuhr in 2014, as they will have a half hectare of vines in this great site with which to work. The estate has purchased 25 ares of vines and contracted to buy the production from another 25 ares here, so we will have a new terroir to look forward to next year in the Schloss Lieser lineup. In addition, the 2013ers here are indeed stunning, as has been the case for several vintages running, and for those lucky enough to secure allocations of any of the wines from this estate in this vintage, you will be very, very happy to add them to your cellars. I visited here on March the 20th, and all of the 2013ers had been assembled and filtered in preparation for bottling only two week prior to my visit, but seemed in good form and showed very well indeed. Bottling was scheduled to begin the second week of April. I only noted the AP numbers on one or two samples during my visit (I cannot recall if the list was not decided upon yet or I just got carried away with the beautiful quality of this range of 2013ers and forgot to write down the numbers), but where I had the AP number noted, I have included it below.

2013 Schloss Lieser Riesling QbA Trocken- Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

A portion of the blend for this cuvée was de-acidified in 2013, but the final wine still has plenty of zip to it and shows lovely potential. The bouquet is a fine blend of lime, apple, slate, petrol, a nice touch of wild yeasts and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and very well-balanced, with good depth, fine focus and bounce and a long, vibrant finish that closes with good complexity and lovely grip. Of course, this is bottled up under the screw, so it will demand drinking early. 2014-202. **88.**

2013 Lieser Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Schloss Lieser

For fans of more basic dry wines from Schloss Lieser, the 2013 Estate Spätlese Trocken will be bottled entirely under natural cork, so this is one that you will be able to age. The truly lovely bouquet is a mélange of green apple, lime, a touch of fresh mint, petrol, wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate and citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a good core, racy acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and really exceptional finish. This will be a great, great value! 2016-2035+. **91.**

2013 Niederberg Helden Grosses Gewächs- Schloss Lieser

The 2013 Niederberg Helden GG is absolutely superb, wafting from the glass in a classy aromatic constellation of lime, pink grapefruit, fresh mint, a beautiful base of slate, citrus peel, a touch of mossiness, petrol and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and gorgeously balanced, with an utterly seamless personality, a rock solid core, ripe, perfectly-

integrated acids and stunning length and grip on the laser-like and youthful finish. A beautiful wine in the making. 2020-2045+. **93+**.

2013 Schloss Lieser Riesling QbA Feinherb- Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The Feinherb designation for this wine does not appear on the label. This wine carries twenty-one grams per liter of residual sugar in 2013, but with its high dry extract and high acids, it comes across as barely sweet. The lovely nose is a blend of slate, green fruit, smoky overtones, lime zest and a nice touch of mossiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and focused, with a good core, ripe acids and lovely length and grip on the poised and very well-balanced finish. It is a pity that this too goes under the screw, as it has the balance to age quite a long time if it had a better closure. 2014-2020. **89**.

2013 Schloss Lieser Riesling Kabinett - Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

It is wines like this excellent 2013 Schloss Lieser Kabinett that really get my goat when they go under screwcap, as this wine has stunning potential that most likely will never be realized. Kind of like the Barry Bonds saga and steroids- what might have been if other choices were made! In any event, the wine offers up an absolutely superb bouquet of apple, lime, lovely, salty minerality, white flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp, complex and nicely filigreed, with excellent focus and balance, superb cut and grip and a long, dancing finish. This wine could have last thirty years under cork! 2014-2020+? **92**.

2013 Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Kabinett- Schloss Lieser

Happily, the 2013 Juffer Kabinett will go under natural cork and this wine is even more stunning than the above! The brilliantly precise and filigreed bouquet delivers scents of white cherries, lime, crystallized slate-derived minerality, a whisper of mossiness and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, fullish and very light on its feet, with laser-like focus, outstanding grip, lovely intensity of flavor and beautiful, blossoming savory flavors on the very long, rapier-like and completely seamless finish. This is simply a breathtakingly beautiful bottle of young Kabinett! 2016-2040+. **95**.

2013 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Spätlese- Schloss Lieser

The extremely low yields of 2013 in the Niederberg Helden have produced some of the most ethereal and stunning young wines from this vineyard that I can recall tasting. The 2013 Spätlese is a beautiful wine, wafting from the glass in an extremely elegant mix of pear, bee pollen, white cherries, orange zest, spring flowers, lovely notes of slate and a whisper of lilacs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very filigreed this year, with lovely purity and balance, a fine core, zesty acids and laser-like focus on the long and dancing finish. Just a stunningly refined expression of the Niederberg Helden! 2014-2040. **94**.

2013 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese- Schloss Lieser

The 2013 Juffer-Sonnenuhr Spätlese is a lovely wine that will drink with great style and purity right out of the blocks. The bouquet is a fine blend of white cherries, pear, wild yeasts, a touch of petrol, white flowers, a nice dollop of lime zest, incipient notes of mossiness and a beautiful base of slate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a fairly broad-shouldered profile this year, lovely focus and balance, excellent mid-palate depth and a long, bouncy and succulent finish. A very, very charming bottle of Spätlese. 2014-2035+. **92**.

2013 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese AP #11- Schloss Lieser

According to Cellar Master Phillip Vesper, the regular Auslese from the Niederberg Helden included only a tiny percentage of botrytized grapes, as the vast, vast majority of this blend came from beautiful golden berries, untouched by noble rot. The resulting wine is

hauntingly brilliant and one of the finest wines I had a chance to taste from 2013, as it soars from the glass in a deep, pure and utterly electric bouquet of lime, white cherries, bee pollen, incipient notes of mossiness, slate and a potpourri of citrus blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and very racy, with a great core, superb focus and grip, seamless balance and a very long, dancing and endless finish. Brilliant juice. 2017-2075. **97.**

2013 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Schloss Lieser

The 2013 Goldkapsel Auslese from the Niederberg Helden is a much more glazed example, with a lovely coating of clean botrytis giving this wine a more opulent personality, though the wine today is quite primary and in need of time in the bottle to blossom. The superb bouquet offers up a youthful blend of pear, white cherries, honeycomb, slate, lavender, lilacs and a lovely topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and nicely round from its glazing, with a superb mid-palate intensity, great acids and outstanding length and grip on the focused and lively finish. This is decidedly less evolved at the present time than the regular Helden Auslese, and perhaps it will continue to close the gap as it has a chance to blossom with bottle age. Whether or not it eventually catches the magical wine above does not really matter, as this is another *tour de force* in its own right! 2020-2060+. **93+.**

2013 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Auslese Goldkapsel - Schloss Lieser

The 2013 Goldkapsel Auslese from the Juffer-Sonnenuhr is another star in the Schloss Lieser lineup this year. The youthful and exceptional bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of pears, white cherries, slate, bee pollen and an exotic and perfumed floral component redolent of cherry blossoms and violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very light on its feet, with excellent focus, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex and very classy finish. The bouquet here is fairly deep-pitched in profile from its botrytis, but the wine is really very racy and has a lovely energy on the backend from its extraordinary acids. A lovely wine, 2020-2060+. **93+.**

2013 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese Lange Goldkapsel- Schloss Lieser

Of the botrytized wines in the cellar this year at Schloss Lieser, the Helden Lange Goldkapsel is probably my favorite, as the botrytis here is really very clean and gives the wine a beautifully tropical veneer. The gorgeous nose jumps from the glass in a mix of mango, tangerine, gentle mossiness, lime blossoms, a lovely underpinning of minerality, honeycomb and violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully glazed, with a very elegant and focused profile, fine depth at the core, snappy acids and laser-like focus on the complex and electric finish. Beautiful wine. 2018-2060+. **95+.**

2013 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Beerenauslese- Schloss Lieser

The 2013 BA from the Niederberg Helden is another exceptional wine. The very pure and beautifully exotic nose delivers a fine constellation of pineapple, pear, fresh mint, honey, citrus zest and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very clean in its glazing, with a rock solid core, excellent focus and grip, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the vibrant and marvelously complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2014-2060. **95.**

Weingut Willi Schaefer (Graach)

Christophe Schaefer has made an absolutely superb range of wines in 2013, but there will be virtually no dry wines here this year. As I noted in the vintage introduction, yields here were off fully fifty percent in 2013, though most of this was the result of a very poor set during the flowering and shot berries, as I do not believe there was any hail in Graach or Wehlen this

year (unlike nearby Lieser). The estate commenced their harvest in the middle of October, as the botrytis was just beginning to take hold in the vineyards, and finished just before the first of November, collecting all the berries that were out there (not nearly as many in a normal year) over the course of thirteen days, generally picking between rain showers or during openings in the clouds. Despite the struggles of the growing season and the very miniscule yields, Christophe Schaefer was very happy with the overall quality of the wines that the family produced this year, though virtually everything was Prädikat level wines in 2013. As he noted, “when a vintage comes along, like 2013, where the raw materials are just perfect for making classic off-dry and sweet wines, it just does not make sense to try and force the vintage in another stylistic direction to try and make dry wines- to do so would just be to waste the possibility that nature has given you to make great wines in sweeter styles.” With the rainy weather throughout September and October, botrytis would have liked to have gotten started earlier in the vineyards, but the berries were simply not ripe enough and the skins were too tough for noble rot (or less noble rot) to get started until late in the growing season. As Christophe observed, “because the ripeness came late in this year, the skins were still thick and resisted botrytis until very late in the season, so when it finally got started, it arrived very quickly at the end of the year and was very, very clean as a result.” And what absolutely beautiful, off-dry and noble sweet wines comprise the Weingut Willi Schaefer portfolio this year, as this a star-studded lineup of beautiful wines from Kabinett right up to the four magical Auslesen of 2013. A great many of the wines have almost a salty element to their minerality, from the very high dry extracts here. There is only single Kabinetten this year from each of the two vineyards in Graach, the Himmelreich and the Domprobst, a pair of beautiful upper Prädikat wines from the Himmelreich (one Spätlese and one Auslese), two stunning Spätlesen from the Domprobst and three magical Auslesen from this vineyard as well. This is the smallest crop in the history of the domaine, so there will not be large quantities of any of the wines (and what a shame that Terry Theise will probably sacrifice his allocation of Kabinetten by insisting on its being bottled under screwcap!) of any of the wines, but for those fortunate enough to find any of the 2013ers from Weingut Willi Schaefer, do not hesitate to buy all that you come across, as this is a monumentally beautiful vintage from the Schaefer family!

2013 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett AP #2- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2013 Himmelreich Kabinett is really a lovely and absolutely classic example of Kabinett, with superb filigree and delicacy on both the nose and palate. The very stylish bouquet is a mix of green apple, tangerine, complex, minerally slate tones, a touch of petrol, hints of sea salts and a floral topnote redolent of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely ethereal, with a lovely core, superb focus and grip and a long, zesty and filigreed finish. Supremely elegant wine that will charm from the moment it is released. 2014-2040. **92+**.

2013 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett AP #3- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2013 Domprobst Kabinett is also a classic example of this Prädikat level, offering up a superb nose of apple, orange, gorgeously crystalline slate, smoke, petrol and again, a topnote of sea salts. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, complex and beautifully transparent, with a superb core, crisp, ripe acids and outstanding length and grip on the youthful finish. As is so often the case, the Domprobst Kabinett will want a few years in the cellar to start to blossom, whereas the Himmelreich will drink beautifully from the outset. A stellar bottle in the making. 2018-2040. **93+**.



2013 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #8- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2013 Himmelreich Spätlese is absolutely brilliant. The stunningly pure and precise bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of lime, orange, crystalline slate, smoke, lime blossoms, orange zest, the vintage's gentle saltiness and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very vibrant, with a succulent personality on the attack, a lovely core, excellent interplay of minerality and pure fruit, bright acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very long, complex and dancing finish. Happily, this wine is out of the long reach of screwcap fanatics! 2014-2045+. **94+**.

2013 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #5- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2013 Domprobst AP #5 Spätlese is also a beautiful wine in the making, delivering a deep and very pure bouquet of apple, tangerine, pear, a superb base of slate, just a hint of pineapple, incipient notes of petrol and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and absolutely effortless in its superb balance, with a great core of fruit, outstanding focus, vibrant acidity and excellent grip on the very, very long and youthful finish. Tuck this beautiful wine away for five years in the cellar before digging in. 2019-2045+. **94+**.

2013 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #13 (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer

If the 2013 Auction Spätlese from the Domprobst does not shut down at all between now and September, this is going to be a wine that incurs some very spirited bidding, as it is brilliant! The fruit is absolutely as ravishing as in the above wine, but more reserved behind its superior structure at the present time, offering up scents of lime, tangerine, a touch of pink grapefruit,

crystalline slate, smoky overtones, citrus peel and a bit of bee pollen in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and simply electric in personality, with a great core, snappy acids, laser-like focus and a very, very long, seamless finish. This is decidedly more reserved on the nose at the present time, but its pedigree is so readily apparent on the palate that it seems destined to be one of the greatest Auction Spätlesen produced here in the last fifteen or twenty years, and there have been some absolute classic made at this level at Weingut Schaefer since then! Given how youthful this wine is today, I am probably underrating it a bit. Sheer brilliance! 2020-2045+. **96+**.

2013 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese AP #4- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The sole Himmelreich Auslese in the cellars this year is stunning. Christophe Schaefer notes that this was made from between twenty and thirty percent botrytized grapes, with the remainder made up of perfectly ripe, golden berries, and this is one of those old school Auslesen of that do not really on noble rot for its immense beauty and complexity. The gorgeous nose offers up a mélange of lime, a gentle glazing of orangey fruit, beautiful minerality, citrus blossoms, bee pollen and a vibrant topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and filigreed, with great mineral drive on the backend, laser-like focus and outstanding complexity and intensity of flavor on the snappy and very, very long finish. This is not overly sweet or opulent, but brilliantly precise and intense. Magical juice. 2002-2060+. **96**.

2013 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #11- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The less botrytized of the two Domprobst Auslesen in the cellars this year, the AP #11 offers up a lovely bouquet of pear, tangerine, bee pollen, crystalline minerality, hints of the yellow plum to come, a touch of sea salts and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and vibrant with pure fruit on the attack, with a rock solid core, snappy, perfectly buffered acids, stunning focus and a very long, nascently complex and utterly seamless finish. This gorgeous wine mirrors the same transparency and filigree of the Himmelreich Auslese this year, but of course, with the far different *terroir* of the Domprobst producing a slightly more reserved wine out of the blocks. Another great Auslese! 2023-2065. **96**.

2013 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #14- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2012 Domprobst Auslese AP #14 is far more marked by its glaze of botrytis than the AP #11 version, but it too is a very pure and perfectly balanced wine. The deep and very cleanly glazed nose wafts from the glass in a mix of white cherries, pears, smoky overtones, a beautiful base of slate, iris blossoms, orange zest and a gentle topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and flawlessly balanced, with a lovely core, supreme elegance and focus and a very long, crisp and utterly seamless finish. This is a bit less far along in its evolution in the cellar than the AP #11, so perhaps I am underrating it just a touch, but for the moment, I have a very slight preference for the above. However, this too is a stunning wine in the making. 2025-2075. **94+**.

2013 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2013 Auction Auslese from the Domprobst is going to be one of the greatest wines produced in the vintage. The bouquet is beautifully marked by ultra-clean botrytis, delivering a glorious blend of pear, a touch of pink grapefruit, clementines, a fabulous mineral bath of slate, citrus zest, incipient notes of petrol and a pungent topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a great core of fruit, flawless balance, racy acids and stunning focus and grip on the endless and dancing finish. Breathtakingly beautiful. 2023-2075+. **99**.

Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch (Bernkastel)

I had the pleasure on this visit to the famed Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch estate by both Sofia Thanisch-Spier and one of her lovely daughters, Christina, also joining us for the tasting. I felt a wee bit guilty tasting at the estate this year, as it was a glorious spring day on March the 20th and we sat out in the garden, with the sun bouncing off of the glistening Mosel at our feet, the first flowers of spring already opening, and back in New York, there had been yet more snow only a couple of days earlier as part of the endless winter of 2013-2014 on the eastern seaboard. As I noted in the introduction, yields here were down fifty percent from a normal crop, but the overall quality of what I tasted was as fine as anything from this great estate in the last seven or eight years. And, lest we forget, this domaine has been on a stunningly successful hot streak throughout the new millennium and continues to quietly make some of the most exciting and ageworthy wines in all of Germany, so for the 2013ers to stand out amongst the stellar recent history of great Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch wines says a great deal about how beautiful these wines have turned out! In addition to the wines noted below, there is also a Doctor Auslese in the cellars from 2013, but it was just finished fermenting and was not yet ready for tasting. A couple of the first wines tasted this year also seemed quite a bit behind their customary pace of evolution at the time of my visit (hardly a rare occurrence this year!) and I have scored them within a range, as they were still clearly evolving towards their finished stage prior to bottling- though I would certainly expect all of them to place at the top end of the range. Everything was still in tank here after the assemblage, in preparation for bottling in the not too distant future after my visit in March. A truly marvelous range of 2013ers from Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch.

2013 Estate Riesling QbA Trocken- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch (screwcap)

I continue to hold out hope that screwcaps will fall out of fashion soon on the Mosel, as there is nothing basic about the “basic bottlings” these days at Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch, other than their closures! A good chunk of the composition for these first three wines hails from the family parcels in the Domprobst and Juffer-Sonnenuhr vineyards, so these are first rate raw materials and they have produced excellent wines in 2013. The Estate Riesling Trocken is deep and quite snappy in personality, jumping from the glass in a mix of green apple, grapefruit, petrol, slate and a lovely topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite reserved in personality at the present time, with brisk acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, balanced and very promising finish. 2014-2020+. **87-89.**

2013 Estate Riesling Kabinett Feinherb- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch

The Estate Kabinett Feinherb in 2013 is another lovely wine and a bit more evolved in its *elevage* than the Estate Trocken this year. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, slate, gentle notes of petrol, lime zest, dried flowers and just a touch of wild yeasts in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and beautifully balanced, with ripe, zippy acids, excellent focus and grip and a long, minerally and pure finish. Though this has more residual sugar to it than what would be allowed as a Trocken wine, the combination of excellent dry extract and snappy acids really gives this wine the impression of being pretty dry in profile. Fine juice in the making. 2014-2025. **88-89+.**

2013 Estate Riesling QbA- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch (screwcap)

The 2013 Estate Riesling QbA is another absolutely lovely everyday Riesling in the making, delivering a pure and classic bouquet of apple, white cherries, lilacs, a touch of mossiness, a lovely base of soil, gentle notes of petrol and smoke in the upper register. On the

palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with a fine core, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and racy finish. Sealed under natural cork, this wine would last twenty-five years, but I am not sure I would bury it in the cellar under the screw. 2014-2025+. **89-90.**

2013 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch (screwcap?)

The 2013 Badstube Kabinett is excellent, and I really hope that this wine ends up being sealed under cork, as it has the potential for a long and very refined development in bottle if given the chance. The beautiful bouquet delivers scents of green apple, pear, lime blossoms, slate, gentle notes of petrol and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full, pure and primary in profile, with a lovely core of fruit, ripe acids and excellent length and grip on the long and filigreed finish. There is a beautiful lightness of step to this wine on the palate that is just classic Kabinett. 2014-2035+. **91+.**

2013 Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

I have had some absolutely glorious bottles of Doctor Kabinett from this estate over the years, but the 2013 version looks likely to be one of the future greats in the making. The absolutely stunning nose soars from the glass in a youthful blend of pear, white cherries, a hint of the yellow plum to come, a brilliantly complex base of soil tones, lilacs, a bit of wild yeasts and the faintest whisper of petrol. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very deep at the core, with laser-like focus, beautifully buffered, ripe and snappy acids, a great sense of extract that gives the wine an almost tactile feel on the palate, great grip and stunning purity and focus on the extremely long finish. A legend in the making! 2023-2075. **95.**

2013 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Spätlese - Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2013 Badstube Spätlese is another absolutely stellar success for the vintage, and I cannot recall a more impressive young bottle at this Prädikat level from this vineyard. The first class bouquet is a classic mélange of green apple, lime, wild yeasts, slate, a touch of petrol and a lovely floral topnote redolent of iris blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and still youthfully primary in personality, with great structure and mid-palate intensity, excellent focus and grip and superb mineral lift on the backend that gives the wine stunning precision and vibrancy on the long finish. This is simply a beautiful bottle of Spätlese in the making! 2020-2050. **93+.**

2013 Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese - Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2013 Doctor Spätlese is brilliant. The wine is still young and all in potential at the present time, but what a cellar treasure this is going to be ten years down the road! The stellar bouquet offers up a quintessentially Doctor blend of yellow plum, white cherries, orange blossoms, wild yeasts, a marvelously complex base of soil tones, lilacs and a gentle topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly classic, with a rock solid core, stunning soil signature, ripe acids and outstanding length and grip on the seamless, primary and oh, so promising finish. Another absolutely classic Doctor in the making! 2025-2075. **95+.**

Weingut Vollenweider (Traben-Trarbach)

Daniel Vollenweider is a Swiss gentleman who fell in love with classic German Riesling back in the 1990s and eventually decided that he just had to make wine from an estate in the Mosel. As his website tells it, the blame for this falls primarily on the shoulders of Egon Müller, whose stunning 1990 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese was the final straw that “forced” Daniel to search out his own estate on the Mosel and start producing classic Riesling. In 1999 he founded Weingut Vollenweider, based in the twin villages of Traben-Trarbach, but focused

primarily on the great vineyard of the Goldrube in the nearby village of Wolf. Traben-Trarbach are often considered the lower limits of the Middle Mosel area, and Wolf lies between these two villages with Erden and Ürzig, just a bit further upstream. Wolf lies at one of the serpentine twists of the Mosel, with the village across the river from the gloriously positioned, Goldrube vineyard, which had been one of the most famous and prized vineyards on the Middle Mosel in the nineteenth century, but which had been largely forgotten before Herr Vollenweider founded his estate and purchased vines in this great site. The Goldrube has a beautiful exposition to the southwest at one of the Mosel's most dramatic bends, with the soils a mix of red and grey weathered slates. As Goldrube had fallen off the map during the twentieth century, it was never subjected to the German wines laws regarding consolidation of parcels, and consequently, it had remained planted primarily on ungrafted old vines. In fact, a majority of the vines that Daniel Vollenweider works in the Goldrube are in excess of one hundred years of age.

The estate started out with a single hectare of vines in the Goldrube, and has subsequently grown to just over four hectares of vines, with three of them lying in the Goldrube and the others in the Kröver Steffensberg and a small parcel of vines just above the Goldrube known as the Schimbock. The Steffensberg lies directly upstream to the Goldrube, at the apex of the Mosel's bend in this area and with an exposition that faces due south. Its soils are very similar to the Goldrube. The Schimbock is a tiny vineyard just downstream from the Goldrube, with a southwesterly exposition and fine slate soils. Today, Weingut Vollenweider owns nearly all of the Goldrube vineyard, and the renaissance of this great terroir is largely credited to the efforts of Herr Vollenweider. I have been a fan of Daniel's wines for several years now, since German friends introduced me to one of his first vintages, and I was very happy to see that we would have a chance to visit with him on this recent spring trip. As this was the day before Prowein started, Daniel was on his way to Düsseldorf that afternoon and we decided to meet and do a joint tasting with his friend, Alexandra Künstler of Weingut Weiser-Künstler, so that Daniel could jump out the door when it was time to catch his train (which he did with about five minutes to spare according to my watch). As this was a joint tasting, I only sampled a handful of 2012ers and 2011ers from Weingut Vollenweider, but the wines were lovely (particularly those under cork) and I look forward to the next visit to Traben-Trarbach, when I intend to do a proper cellar visit with Herr Vollenweider.

2012 Felsenfest Riesling- Weingut Vollenweider (screwcap)

The Felsenfest bottling is a dry Riesling designed as one of the entry level wines from Daniel Vollenweider, with the grapes for this bottling hailing from steep slopes in the vicinity of Traben-Trarbach. The 2012 is clearly a wine of superb raw materials, but by March of 2014, this wine was already starting to feel the effects of its first twelve months under this unrepentant closure and was texturally a bit shredded from the screw on the backend, and the wine was already bit reduced on the nose. Once it gets a chance to open up, there are notes of tart orange, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, slate, lovely smokiness and a nice touch of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and nicely focused, with good depth at the core, bright acids and a tensile, slightly clipped finish. I have no doubt this was a wonderful wine out of cask, but it is falling an early casualty to its closure and will need immediate drinking up. Do decant it if you have a chance. 2014-2016. **87.**

2012 Wolfer Riesling- Weingut Vollenweider

The 2012 Wolfer Riesling is a lovely dry wine that hails primarily from the Goldrube vineyard. The 2012 offers up a beautifully refined bouquet of tart orange, breadfruit, wild yeasts, dried flowers, a complex base of minerality, orange peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very classy, with a fine core of fruit, crisp acids and simply superb length and grip on the focused and beautifully balanced finish. Fine juice. 2014-2030+. **91.**

2011 Schimbock Riesling- Weingut Vollenweider

The 2011 Schimbock is a beautiful expression of this tiny, slate vineyard, with an alcohol content of 12.5 percent and 8.5 grams per liter of residual sugar. Daniel allows a bit of skin contact here prior to the onset of fermentation, and this can be felt in the great depth at the core and the almost tannic hints on the backend. The bouquet is excellent, offering up a deep and complex mélange of white cherries, bread fruit, leesy tones, orange peel, wild yeasts, slate, a touch of lemongrass and plenty of smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and very well-balanced, with excellent mid-palate depth, crisp acids and a very long, almost chewy finish. An absolutely superb bottle. 2015-2035+. **93+.**

2011 Kröver Steffensberg Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Vollenweider

The 2011 Steffensberg Goldkapsel is a stunningly beautiful bottle of botrytized Auslese, soaring from the glass in a tropical constellation of mango, pineapple, honey, lovely minerality, orange zest and a pungent topnote of acacia blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and marvelously complex, with a superb core, zesty acids and simply magical length and grip on the dancing and light on its feet finish. A brilliant wine! 2014-2050. **96.**

Weingut Weiser-Künstler (Traben-Trarbach)

Weingut Weiser-Künstler is a new estate on the Mosel, having been established in 2005 by Konstantin Weiser and Alexandra Künstler in that year in the villages of Traben-Trarbach. Neither is a native resident of the Mosel, with Alexandra having been raised in Franconia and Konstantin originally Bavarian, but they arrived here in 2005 with a vision to make great, classic Mosel wines. The couple exploits 2.8 hectares of Riesling vines on long-term leases, and their arrival in Traben-Trarbach was particularly timely, as it is very likely that the parcels which they now exploit would have been abandoned and not cultivated if they had not arrived in the nick of time to lease them and take over the vineyard husbandry. Their parcels are in the vineyards of Ellergrub and Steffensberg in the village of Enkirch, and the Gaispfad in Traben, with nearly all of the plots planted with ungrafted rootstocks and several of the parcels in excess of one hundred years of age. The estate is part of a small, but very important group of growers, the “Der Klitzkleine Ring”, which is dedicated to help saving old vineyard parcels, planted on ungrafted rootstocks and steep slopes in this region of the Mosel, as amazingly, these parcels with great terroir are often abandoned, as they are far less desirable for the more commercially-oriented estates in the area who wish to have flat vineyard land that can be worked and picked by machines to turn out every day, industrial plonk. Konstantin runs the cellars and Alexandra the business side of the estate, with both of them sharing the vineyard management, which is done as naturally as possible. As the couple likes to say, “the work in the vineyard is done in harmony with nature, not against it” and no herbicides or pesticides are used in their increasingly organic style of viticulture. In the cellars, Konstantin uses only indigenous yeasts, and ferments in a variety of both stainless steel tanks and old fuders, with an occasional aged barrique also utilized as the need arises. Konstantin has done staves as winemaker at nearby

Immich Batterieberg and Joseph Leitz in the Rheingau, as well as working abroad in New Zealand. The couple produces wines across the complete range of classic German Rieslings (including a very good example of sparkling wine), and they are happily not shy about producing traditional, noble sweet wines at the upper Prädikat levels and it is probably these off-dry and sweeter wines which are their primary focus. This is a welcome change from so many of the newer estates in the region, who choose to primarily focus on dry wines, as they are very much easier to sell in the German market at the present time, whereas the noble sweet wines are virtually dead as a category in Germany and must be sold on the export market. As this was my first visit to taste at the estate, where Alexandra Künstler graciously received us (as well as hosting Daniel Vollenweider, so that he could show some of his bottlings as well, and pouring a few wines from their friend, Gernot Kollmann over at Weingut C. A. Immich Batterieberg), I only tasted a fairly small sampling of their wines across the 2013, 2012 and 2011 vintages, but everything I tasted was very fine and I will be back in the future for a more in-depth visit and do not intend to leave a visit to Traben-Trarbach in the future without tasting through the entire roster of the couple's exceptional wines. This is a terrific estate and I was very, very happy to have been talks into visiting here on this trip and will be back with great regularity in the future!



Alexandra Künstler and Daniel Vollenweider at Weingut Weiser-Künstler in Traben-Trarbach.

2011 Riesling Sekt Brut- Weingut Weiser-Künstler

This is a very good bottle of Sekt, offering up a bright and stylish nose of pear, a touch of nutty, slightly oxidative, leesy notes, a fine base of complex soil tones and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and frothy, with fine focus and freshness, zesty acids and a long, well-balanced and vibrant finish. A very good example. 2014-2020+. **88.**

2012 Trabener Gaispfad Riesling Kabinett Trocken Weingut Weiser-Künstler

The estate has fifty-five year-old vines in the fine Traben vineyard of Gaispfad, with seventy percent of these on ungrafted, original rootstocks. Gaispfad is a very steep site with a mixture of blue and red slate (as there is a significant section with a high percentage of iron in the soils). The 2012 Kabinett Trocken from Gaispfad came in at 11.5 percent alcohol and offers up a very pretty and lithe expression of Mosel Riesling, wafting from the glass in a mix of green apple, lime, a lovely base of slate, dried flowers, incipient notes of petrol and a nice touch of *fleur de sel* in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, crisp and very tightly-knit at the moment, with a fine core of fruit currently a bit buttoned up behind its significant girdle of acidity, but with lovely focus and bounce on the long finish. All this needs is a bit of bottle age to blossom from behind its acids and really start to sing. A fine bottle. 2017-2030+. **89+.**

2013 Weiser-Künstler “Estate” Riesling- Weingut Weiser-Künstler (screwcap)

This wine had only been bottled the day before my visit, but was still showing quite well, though of course, I find the choice of closure questionable for the medium-term health of the wine. This finished off with about fourteen grams per liter of residual sugar, so it will not be labeled as Trocken, but with the combination of high dry extract and the racy acids of the vintage, this comes across as essentially a dry wine. The bouquet is a pretty blend of apple, citrus peel, a nice touch of wild yeasts, slate and smokiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and shows just a whisper of RS, with a good core and a long, stylish and vibrant finish. This would have been an awfully good, basic bottling to seal up under natural cork, as it has the balance to age. But, it is now under the screw and will need early consumption. 2014-2017. **88.**

2012 Ellergrub Riesling “GE”- Weingut Weiser-Künstler

The “GE” designation on the label at Weingut Weiser-Künstler is their version of Grosses Gewächs, as the couple prefers not to be tied to residual sugar levels under ten grams per liter to qualify as Trocken. The GE stands for “*Grosse Eule*” (or Great Owl) in German, as the owl is the emblem of their estate. The couple’s parcel in the Ellergrub is planted with sixty-five to one hundred year-old vines, in the deep blue, Devonian slate of this top *terroir* in Enkirch. The 2012 GE is absolutely stunning, soaring from the glass in a blend of tart orange, pink grapefruit, a touch of fresh rosemary, hints of cherry, smoke, wild yeasts, citrus peel and a brilliantly complex base of slate minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with laser-like focus, great grip, a superb core, ripe and tangy acids and a very long, complex and utterly refined finish. Not a bad bottle of dry Riesling from an estate who specializes in sweeter wines! 2014-2030+. **94.**

2011 Enkircher Ellergrub Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Weiser-Künstler

The 2011 Spätlese from the Ellergrub was a bit shut down in hibernation when I visited in March, but all this lovely wine needs is some bottle age to blossom. The reserved nose reluctantly offers up a fine aromatic constellation of white cherries, a gentle touch of wild yeasts, a very refined base of slate, bee pollen and an exotic topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is medium-full, young and zippy, with a fine core, lovely focus and bounce, plenty of

nascent complexity and a very long, primary and very promising finish. Fine juice, just give it a bit of patience in the cellar. 2018-2040. **92+**.

2012 Enkircher Ellergrub Riesling Auslese- Weingut Weiser-Künstler

The 2012 Ellergrub Auslese from Weiser-Künstler is stunning, as it offers up a vibrant and utterly classic bouquet of peach, orange, great minerality, honey, citrus blossoms and orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, clean and scintillating in its purity and shimmering complexity, with laser-like focus, a lovely core and a very long, pure and filigreed finish. An absolutely superb bottle of Auslese! 2014-2040. **94+**.

Saar

Hofgut Falkenstein (Konz-Niedermennig)

This was my first visit to the lovely estate of Erich Weber of Hofgut Falkenstein, though I had the pleasure to taste one or two of his wines up in the Boston area a couple of years ago and liked what I sampled at that time. Erich started Hofgut Falkenstein on his own in 1981, piecing together old vine parcels in this back section of the Saar as opportunity allowed, so that today he has 7.5 hectares of vines scattered amongst the villages of Niedermennig, Krettnach and Falkestein. These villages are actually in a valley away from the Saar River, about equidistant between Wiltingen and Oberemmel, with most of the soils of these hillside vineyards either blue or red slate, though there is a bit of Diabas (as in the Saarburger Rausch) in the Altenberg. As this is a bit off the beaten path these days (though this was a very highly-regarded section of the Saar in the nineteenth century, when German wines were more fashionable on the international market and demand was sufficient for sites such as these to be cultivated), Eric Weber was able to buy prime parcels in these largely forgotten vineyards, planted with old vines (vine age ranges from forty to eighty years of age), and seventy percent of the vineyards are on ungrafted rootstocks. One has to imagine that there are plenty of other opportunities for great terroirs such as these that are also currently forgotten and largely abandoned scattered around the back valleys in German wine country these days. The estate is housed in a beautifully restored old press-house that used to belong to the Friedrich Wilhelm Gymnasium estate, and which Eric and his wife Marita restored themselves. It is a beautiful site and a wonderful place to visit, with the Niedermennig Herrenberg vineyard descending down from the cellar door and offering a beautiful view of this lovely back valley in Saarland.

The wines of Hofgut Falkenstein are wonderfully old school: everything fermented and aged in old fuders, using exclusively indigenous yeasts, with no de-acidification, no chapitalization and most of the range fermenting out to quite dry editions of Saar Riesling. The cellars are really more in line with what one expects in a small domaine in Burgundy from yesteryear, with plenty of mold on the walls, dark, damp and decidedly “low tech” in the best traditions of old school winemaking. Erich has been resistant to the recent changes in the wine laws that encourage dry Rieslings to be bottled without Prädikat information on the label, as he prefers to use the old system from the 1971 wine laws and bottle his wines with both a Prädikat level (to indicate must weight) and a designation of Trocken or Feinherb. In addition to a fine array of Rieslings, the estate also produces a bit of Pinot Blanc (which I did not sample on this visit) and Pinot Noir, which does not go through malolactic fermentation and is not chapitalized, so it is rather an individual expression of this grape. I had a chance to taste a bottle of the Pinot Noir a bit later in my trip in Germany, but managed to lose the note in the subsequent two and a half weeks on the road, so proper notes on the Spätburgunder from Hofgut Falkenstein will have

to wait for subsequent visits. Herr Weber describes the 2013 vintage as the “hardest of my career”, but the wines have turned out very well indeed and there were some very, very promising wines in the cellars awaiting bottling at the time of my visit in late March. Erich does not like to blend casks, so he will often have two distinct bottlings of Kabinett Trocken from the same vineyard in a given vintage, as is the case in 2013, with the Niedermenniger Herrenberg in this year. I have designated the two casks simply as numbers one and two, as it was too early for AP numbers. This is one cellar in 2013 where one can be certain that no de-acidification was undertaken for any of the wines (which will be quite rare in this vintage), but the wines are beautifully balanced and handle their snappy acids very well indeed, as there is plenty of dry extract to buffer them. This is a very fine estate producing impeccably well-made wines and they deserve an even wider audience than they currently have- though I do notice that some of the finest merchants in both New York and Boston are now stocking the Hofgut Falkenstein wines these days, so recognition of the fine work of Erich Weber is not going unnoticed!

2013 Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett #2 Trocken- Hofgut Falkenstein

The Herrenberg vineyard in Niedermennig (which cascades down from the cellar doors here) has a section of blue-grey slate and a section of red slate, and Erich Weber prefers to bottle each section on its own. He has sixty to eighty year-old vines in both sections, so the primary difference here is simply soil composition. The 2013 Kabinett Trocken #2 is from the blue slate portion of the vineyard and offers up a lovely nose of green apple, grapefruit, wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate, citrus peel and just a whisper of the botanicals to come in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, crisp and complex, with lovely balance and grip and a long, focused and classy finish. A lovely wine in the making that will drink well right out of the blocks, but also age quite well. 2014-2030+. **90+**.

2013 Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Kabinett #1 Trocken- Hofgut Falkenstein

The Herrenberg Kabinett Trocken #1 hails from the red slate portion of the vineyard, and this is a bit more reserved in personality today than the bottling from the blue slate section. The bouquet is deep, bright and very promising as well, wafting from the glass in a mix of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, again, a lovely base of slate soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and snappy, with a fine core, lovely balance and raciness and a long, pure and still quite primary finish. This will need at least a few years of bottle age to unwind, but it possesses fine balance for the long haul and should have no trouble blossoming with a bit of cellaring time. 2016-2030+. **90**.

2013 Krettnacher Altenenberg Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Hofgut Falkenstein

The Altenberg vineyard in Krettnach is a mix of grey slate and a bit of Diabas, and in 2013, the Spätlese Trocken from Herr Weber came in at a cool 10.5 percent alcohol. This is going to be an excellent bottle with a few years bottle age, but it is even racier and more structured than either of the Herrenberg Kabinetten Trocken in this vintage. The bouquet is an excellent blend of pink grapefruit, lime zest, tart orange, a beautifully complex base of minerality, a fine touch of wild yeasts, petrol and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very pure and precise, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and grip, very snappy acids and a long, nascently complex and very poised finish. This will be an outstanding bottle in the fullness of time. 2019-2035+. **91+**.

2013 Niedermenniger Sonnenberg Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Hofgut Falkenstein

The Sonnenberg vineyard in Niedermennig is a very stony, grey slate hillside, and as the name might suggest, it has produced a slightly riper Spätlese Trocken (eleven percent alcohol) in

2013 than the Altenberg. This is the very finest of a stellar range of Trocken wines in the Hofgut Falkenstein cellars this year, soaring from the glass in a very vibrant mélange of lime, tangerine, a very precise and complex expression of slate minerality, wild yeasts, lime zest, smokiness and a whisper of sweet grapefruit. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and very pure on the attack, with lovely complexity and focus, a fine core, brisk, ripe acids and outstanding length and grip on the dancing and perfectly balanced finish. Fine, fine juice. 2017-2035+. **93.**



The beautifully restored estate of Hofgut Falkenstein; the cellars lie under this courtyard.

2013 Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling Feinherb- Hofgut Falkenstein

In very non-Falkenstein tradition, there are two casks of Herrenberg Feinherb and Erich will blend them in 2013. This is going to be a lovely wine, as the first component (which is the slightly drier portion of the blend) offers up a fine nose of orange, sweet grapefruit, bee pollen, slate, wild yeasts and a topnote of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp, complex and nicely mineral, with lovely buffering sweetness to absorb the racy acids and fine cut and grip on the long and vibrant finish. The second component is a bit sweeter in style, but also showed lovely minerality and piquancy of acidity, but it was still quite reduced at the time of my visit, so it was not possible to put together a projected blend of the two. However, I am sure that this will be quite lovely. 2014-2030+. **90-92?**

2013 Niedermenniger Herrenberg Riesling “alte Reben” Feinherb- Hofgut Falkenstein

The 2013 Herrenberg Feinherb “alte Reben” bottling comes from a parcel of ungrafted, eighty year-old vines in the vineyard. Erich intends to bottle this up for some of his long-term private clients in Germany, so if you want some of this stellar wine, it is time to pick up the phone right now and start wrangling for an allocation! The wine is a superb example of 2013, soaring from the glass in a stellar blend of green apple, salty slate minerality, white flowers, citrus zest and incipient notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and rock solid at the core, with vibrant acids, great focus and cut and a very long, racy and extremely classy finish. Great juice. 2014-2035+. **94.**

2013 Falkensteiner Hofberg Riesling Auslese- Hofgut Falkenstein

Hofberg is another grey slate *terroir* and Erich Weber has produced a truly superb Auslese from this vineyard in 2013. This carries ninety grams per liter of residual sugar and ten grams per liter of acidity, but is not particularly affected by botrytis (at least to my palate) and is really a terrific, old-fashioned style of Auslese that harkens back to the style of a great many 1988ers that I have cherished in the past. The very refined bouquet delivers scents of tangerine, lemon, slate, bee pollen, citrus blossoms, a nice touch of wild yeasts and lime peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp, very pure and vibrant, with a fien core, laser-like focus and a very long, precise and racy finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Auslese from golden berries and old vines. 2017-2040. **93.**

2013 Krettnacher Euchariusberg Riesling Auslese- Hofgut Falkenstein

Euchariusberg in Krettnach is a blue-grey slate *terroir*, and Erich’s parcel of eighty year-old, ungrafted vines in this section of the vineyard are responsible for this stunning Auslese in 2013. (I also tasted a Spätlese Trocken from this parcel during my visit, but the wine was quite reduced and I did not take a note on it.) The 2013 Hofberg Auslese is another excellent wine in the making, soaring from the glass in a blaze of pineapple, white cherries, honeycomb, a beautiful base of slate minerality, white flowers, a touch of wild yeasts and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and quite crystalline in personality, with a great core, outstanding focus and balance and a very long, racy and complex finish. Again, this has old school Oechsle for an Auslese and is really a stellar example of the vintage. 2017-2040+. **94.**

Weingut Peter Lauer (Ayl)

This was my first visit to Florian Lauer, whose wines I was introduced to at the Rieslingfeier here in New York last year and vowed at that time that I would visit his family estate in Ayl on my next visit to Germany- which naturally I forgot when I was putting together my itinerary. Fortunately, I was visiting Germany this year with friends who told me that they were going to taste with Florian on this trip, and we would have to split up if I wanted to follow my customary schedule, as they really wanted to stop by and see his estate and sample his 2013ers. I was of course happy to switch my schedule around to join them (rather than schlepping everywhere in two cars so that we could split up on the last day of the week of tasting), as I have really been impressed with the wines I have tasted in the past from Herr Lauer and the visit was everything that I could have hoped for. Almost all the 2013ers were still in cask at the time of my visit, with only a couple of examples already bottled, and Florian observed that he had probably de-acidified about a third of his wines in this vintage, “but not dramatically so, just to take a bit of an edge off of the most aggressively acidic examples.” As this was our first visit to the estate, we tasted through a representative sample of 2013ers, and then augmented this with a handful of 2012ers and finished up with a brilliant 2011 Trockenbeerenauslese that

had just finished fermenting and will be offered for the first time at auction this fall. Florian Lauer likes to use cask numbers for his wines, and hence several of them will notate the “Faß” number on the label. As the domaine also has significant holdings in the famous Kupp vineyard in Ayl, their practice is to bottle different historic sections of this vineyard on their own, rather than make larger blends from different sections of the Kupp. A few examples of these sectional names within the Kupp would include Stirn, Unterstenberg and Kern. All the wines here are fermented with indigenous yeasts, as Florian observed that he likes that “indigenous yeasts are less efficient than cultured, taking 16 to 18 grams of sugar to make one degree of alcohol in the finished wine, whereas cultured yeasts only need 13 to 15 grams of sugar to make each degree of alcohol.” So, by using indigenous yeasts exclusively, he is able to keep the finished alcohol lower in the dry wines here. Yields were down fully fifty percent at Weingut Peter Lauer in 2013, but the resulting wines are excellent. Herr Lauer has come up with the very creative method of alerting clients to the residual sugar in his drier wines by putting a small “T” at the bottom of the label if the wine is Trocken, a small “F” if it is Feinherb and a “TF” if it falls between the two stylistically. It is a nice shorthand way to let his clients know how dry the wine will be, without having to explain that a particular wine is a touch over official Trocken levels of residual sugar, but essentially still a dry wine.

2013 Saar Riesling “Faß 16”- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2013 Saar Riesling “Faß 16” had already been bottled and was under screwcap (sadly), but offered up a nice nose of tart orange, green apple, a nice base of slate, petrol and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely focused, with a good core, good balance and lovely length and grip on the focused finish. This is really a lovely basic bottling (other than its choice of closure, of course). 2014-2020. **87+**.

2013 “Barrel Alt Scheidt” Riesling Feinherb- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2013 Barrel Alt Scheidt” Riesling Feinherb had also just been bottled, and naturally, as it is one of the less expensive wines in the lineup, it is under the screw. The wine, having just been bottled, was showing surprisingly well, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, tangerine, plenty of smokiness, salty minerality and a nice touch of lime zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and succulent on the attack, with very good focus and grip, good balance and just the faintest touch of screwcap textural pinching on the long finish. Perhaps this is just a function of the recent bottling and the wine will offer up nice textural elements after a couple of months in bottle- at least until the other problems start here with this closure twelve to eighteen months down the road. Drink it young. 2014-2018. **87**.

2013 Ayler Riesling “Faß 25”- Weingut Peter Lauer

The Ayler Riesling “Faß 25” bottling in 2013 is a Trocken wine, as it comes in around five grams per liter of residual sugar, but this moniker does not appear on the label. This wine was still in cask awaiting bottling and showed excellent potential, by this too is destined to go under the screw, so it will likely end up stillborn and fail of its promise. Right now, the wine offers up an excellent bouquet of tart orange, a nice touch of wild yeasts, smokiness, a bit of cherry skin, slate and gentle notes of petrol. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, fine textural sophistication (how long will this last-bottling?), superb focus and lovely length and grip on the poised and classy finish. My score reflects the wine as I saw it, pre-bottling, what the closure will do to it is anybody’s guess. What a waste to put this fine wine under the screw! 2014-2020+? **90+?**

2013 Ayler Kupp Riesling “Faß 6 Senior” TF- Weingut Peter Lauer

The “TF” designation on the labels of certain bottles from Florian Lauer are a reflection of wines that are essentially between Feinherb and Trocken in nature, but where the fermentation stopped with slightly more residual sugar than what would be officially allowed for a Trocken designation on the label. The 2013 “Faß 6 Senior” will be in the twelve to fourteen grams per liter of residual sugar, but coupled with the minerality and acidity of this vintage, comes across as a dry wine. It offers up a very refined bouquet of pink grapefruit, tart orange, wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate, lemongrass, a touch of rosemary and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and complex, with a fine core, lovely focus and balance, ripe acids and excellent grip on the long and classy finish. A lovely bottle that will happily be treated to natural cork at bottling! 2014-2030+. **91.**

2013 Stirn Riesling “Faß 15”- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2013 Stirn Riesling “Faß 15” from Florian Lauer will come in around thirty grams per liter of residual sugar this year, and at the time of my visit, this seemed very good, but a touch lacking in backend grip and a tad on the easygoing side. Perhaps this was just the point of evolution of the wine when I caught it? The nose is certainly lovely, wafting from the glass in a mix of orange, a touch of honeycomb, wild yeasts, slate, a nice touch of spiciness and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and quite creamy on the attack, with sound acids, a moderately sweet finish and good length on the well-balanced, gentle finish. Perhaps this was one of the wines that was de-acidified this year? This is good, but seems a bit out of character in comparison to all the other “sectional” bottlings that I tasted from the Kupp vineyard here in both 2012 and 2013. 2014-2035? **89+?**

2013 Kern Riesling “Faß 9”- Weingut Peter Lauer

The Kern section of the Kupp lies over on the western side of the hill, with the Lauers’ parcel running from the top to the bottom of the hillside in this section. There was no botrytis here in 2013 according to Florian, and the wine is going to be stellar, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of grapefruit, citrus peel, wild yeasts, a touch of petrol, a beautifully complex base of salty minerality and lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and nascently complex, with a rock solid core, great backend mineral drive and a very long, vibrant and snappy finish. A superb wine. 2016-2040. **93.**

2013 Ayler Kupp Riesling Kabinett “Faß 8”- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2013 Ayler Kupp Kabinett will carry around fifty grams per liter of residual sugar this year, but this, in combination with the great minerality and acidity of the vintage, comes in with perfect balance and does not seem particularly sweet at all for this Prädikat level. The very refined nose delivers scents of apple, tangerine, lovely slate underpinnings, citrus blossoms and just a whisper of its wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very classic in terms of weight and filigree, with a lovely core, bouncy acids and wonderful cut and grip on the very long and complex finish. A beautifully ethereal Kabinett. 2014-2035+. **94.**

2013 Ayler Kupp Riesling Spätlese “Faß 7”- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2013 Kupp Spätlese is also a very pretty wine, but it is a bit more one-dimensional today than the glorious Kabinett. The lovely nose offers up a mix of peach, orange, slate, bee pollen and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very well-balanced, with fine bounce and grip, vibrant acids and a long, pure and stylish finish. A very good bottle of Spätlese, but it is the Kabinett from the Kupp that is really special this year. 2014-2035. **90.**

2012 Ayler Kupp Riesling “Faß 2” Trocken- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2012 Ayler Kupp Trocken “Faß 2” is really a lovely wine (and cork-finished, so it will stay that way), which came in at an even twelve percent alcohol and offers up a superb bouquet of pink grapefruit, a touch of white cherry, lemongrass, lovely slate undertow, orange peel and incipient notes of sea salts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very elegant in profile, with a fine core, ripe acids and a very long, youthful and promising finish. A superb bottle of dry Riesling. 2016-2035+. **92.**

2012 Unterstenberg “Faß 12” TF- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2012 Unterstenberg “Faß 12” TF hails from fifty-four year-old vines that are found on the lower slopes of the Kupp, right in the heart of the vineyard and below those of the Stirn bottling. The 2012 came in at twelve percent alcohol and is a deeper and more refined wine than the Faß 2 bottling. The bouquet offers up a fine aromatic constellation of clementines, white cherries, beautiful, shimmering minerality, a touch of rosemary, smoke and lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very complex, with affine core, ripe acids and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and very classy finish. Fine juice. 2014-2035+. **92+.**

2012 Neuenberg “Faß 17” TF- Weingut Peter Lauer

According to Florian Lauer, the 2012 Neuenberg “Faß 17” TF included about ten percent botrytized berries in this vintage, which is quite typical of this section of the Kupp vineyard. Neuenberg lies over on the western side of the hill (though not quite as far over as the Kern), on the lower section of the slope in deeper soils. Despite this section’s tendency to noble rot, the 2012 was not really showing any real influence from the noble rot at this early stage and was really a stellar bottle, wafting from the glass in a mix of green apple, pink grapefruit, complex, slate-derived minerality, a bit of sea breeze, orange peel, smoke and lemongrass in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary in personality, with a superb core of fruit, great balance, ripe acids and a very long, pure and focused finish. Great wine! 2018-2035+. **93+.**

2012 Kupp Grosses Gewächs “Faß 18”- Weingut Peter Lauer

The 2012 Grosses Gewächs from the Kupp vineyard comes from a parcel in the upper section of the vineyard, in what Florian Lauer calls “the middle of the filet section of the hill” and in 2012 this stellar wine came in at a cool 12.3 percent alcohol. The wine delivers a beautiful and youthful bouquet of pink grapefruit, tart orange, plenty of smokiness, a refined base of slate, wild yeasts and again, that signature topnote of lemongrass that I have found in most of the drier-styled wines from the best sections of the Kupp under the direction of Herr Lauer. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very complex, with a superb core, ripe, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the beautifully balanced and laser-like finish. Give this excellent Grosses Gewächs at least another five or six years in the cellar to fully blossom. 2020-2045. **94.**

2011 Ayler Kupp Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Peter Lauer (Auction)

The 2011 Ayler Kupp Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese had just slowly bubbled along in the cellars here for a couple of years, before finally finishing up its fermentation early this spring. The wine is truly beautiful, soaring from the glass in an exuberant bouquet of peach, apricot, tangerine, honey, lovely minerality, a bit of smokiness and a topnote of orange oil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very, very racy, with bottomless depth, a very, very clean glaze of botrytis, laser-like focus and a very long, complex and electric finish. This will make quite a splash at the auctions! 2014-2050. **97.**

1991 Riesling Sekt Reserve- Weingut Peter Lauer

I am told that this superb Sekt has a cult following in New York these days, and I can certainly understand why, as this is a lovely wine. The bouquet is a refined blend of grapefruit, stony minerality, a touch of menthol, lime peel and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core of fruit, sound *mousse* and a long, classy and beautifully balanced finish. Fine juice. 2014-2020+. 92.



Florian Lauer in the tasting room and wine shop at the estate in the center of Ayl.

Weingut Egon Müller (Scharzhof)

The 2013 vintage for Egon Müller will never be looked back on with affection, as this was just a brutal year at the estate. As I mentioned in the introduction on the vintage, this is the shortest crop here since 1945, when the region was just coming out of World War II and Egon's father returned from the war in time for the harvest, but was only able to produce eight hundred hectoliters of wine in this vintage! The beautiful hillside vineyard of Scharzhofberg had been completely neglected during the war and, as the hostilities were winding to their conclusion, and American fighter plane had also crashed into the vineyard, so there was very little of the vineyard that had not been damaged or run wild during the war and it was really a bit of a miracle that even those eight hundred liters of wine were produced in 1945. So, when one sees that the yields here in 2013 are the worst since 1945, one can start to get a sense of just how brutal the growing season was here in the Saar this past year! As Egon Müller and his family

down through the generations have always maintained that low yields are the key to making great wines, this is the estate that typically will have the lowest yields year in and year out in German wine country, so when Mother Nature steps in and produces a year like 2013, where so many difficulties are thrown at producers that adversely affect the crop size, this can be even more threatening to production levels here, as they are already starting from a much lower baseline than so many of their colleagues. This was indeed the case in this vintage, as the production at Weingut Egon Müller ended up at a miniscule eleven hectoliters per hectare in 2013. The list of problems here is very typical of the vintage at its worst- very poor weather during the flowering caused a serious diminution of the crop right out of the blocks, shot berries in the vineyards a bit later in the season, hail, a constant threat of mildew during the rainy season, and the customary draconian approach of Egon Müller and his team to only use the very best of the best of the crop for their wines, and it is very easy to imagine just how little wine will be produced here in 2013! For example, there will not be a single bottle of 2013 wearing the Le Gallais label this year, as the crop was so tiny in their parcel of Braune Kupp that all of the grapes were earmarked to flesh out the small cuvée of the Scharzhof QbA bottling! Just how short is the crop? There will be two Kabinetten, the Scharzhof QbA, one Spätlese and one Goldkapsel Auslese, and that is it in 2013 from Weingut Egon Müller. Herr Müller was not at the Scharzhof this year at the time of my visit, as the harvest in Australia commenced just before I was in Wiltingen, and he had to be Down Under for his project there, so we were hosted by his very lovely wife, Valeska Müller. The good news about 2013 here, is that at least the very small selection of wines in this vintage are all outstanding, and there are a couple of absolute classic and reference points wines in the cellars this year, so for those persistent and lucky enough to find a few bottles of these, they will be in for wines of historic quality!

2013 Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett AP #3- Weingut Egon Müller

The 2013 Scharzhofberger Kabinett AP #3 will be the regular bottling, as the AP #4 seems likely to find its way to auction in Trier in September. This is a lovely and utterly classic Egon Müller Kabinett, offering up a lovely nose of pear, violets, slate, petrol, lime zest and a gentle topnote of water cress. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and strikingly mineral out of the blocks, with a palpable sense of dry extract, excellent focus and cut, and a long, pure and vibrant finish. Really high class Kabinett that reminds me quite a bit of the 2001 version out of the blocks. 2020-2055+. **92+.**

2013 Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett AP #4- Weingut Egon Müller

The AP #4 Kabinett from Egon Müller is even more chiseled and mineral than the AP #3 version and in fact, is really a liquid bath of salty slate minerality. The youthful and very, very promising nose offers up scents of white cherries, lilacs, citrus peel, petrol, *fleur de sel* and a kaleidoscope of slate-derived minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and absolutely laser-like, with a rock solid core of fruit, racy acids, superb balance and grip and a very, very long, pure and primary finish. This will be just monumental Kabinett in the fullness of time, but it will need close to a decade to start to stir and should be at its best from age twenty forwards. 2023-2070. **95.**

2013 Scharzhof Riesling QbA AP #1- Weingut Egon Müller

This will be the bargain of the 2013 lineup from Weingut Egon Müller, as this wine is absolutely stellar and really shows the additional pedigree of all the Braune Kupp fruit having been added to the cuvée. The truly beautiful bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of green apple, lime, a superb base of slate minerality, iris blossoms, petrol, incipient notes of mossiness

and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with great acid cut, excellent focus and balance and a very refined, pure and vibrant finish of outstanding length and grip. Very, very high class juice! 2019-2040. **93.**

2013 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese AP #4- Weingut Egon Müller

The one, lonely bottling of 2013 Spätlese from Egon Müller is excellent. The superb nose offers up a mélange of pear, white cherries, violets, bee pollen, lovely slate undertones, a touch of fresh mint and a topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, zesty acids and outstanding length and grip on the pure and dancing finish. Outstanding wine. 20225-2075. **94.**

2013 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel AP #10- Weingut Egon Müller

To the best of my knowledge, this is the only botrytis wine in the cellars this year at the estate, but what a breathtakingly beautiful bottle it is! The simply stunning nose soars from the glass in a superbly glazed and very clean constellation of white cherries, pears, violets, honeycomb, fresh mint, lime zest and a beautiful bass note of slate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, very pure and racy, with a marvelous core, seamless balance, laser-like focus and a stunningly long, electric and magically glazed finish. An utterly profound wine! 2025-2075+. **97+.**

Weingut Forstmeister Geltz-Zilliken (Saarburg)

Hanno and Dorothee Zilliken had a brutally short crop here in 2013, as the yields were down fully sixty percent from a normal year and Hanno reported that this is the smallest harvest at the estate since 1980! Besides the customary twin problems of the vintage of a very poor flowering and shot berries, there was also the added insult of June hail in the Rausch vineyard, to further shorten and already very short crop load. The Zillikens took a very laudable decision in 2013, despite the fact that all of their grapes were well up into Prädikat must weights and they could have made some beautiful Auslesen, to focus on the styles of wines that were already in very short supplies in the cellars, so that there are not wines above Kabinetten in the lineup this year, no Grosses Gewächs or Diabas bottlings, and the lion's share of their production went into producing truly exceptional versions of Butterfly, Estate Trocken and Saarburger Trocken this year. Hanno and Dorothee reasoned that they still had goodly supplies of upper Prädikat wines in the cellars from previous vintages (the Zilliken family has one of the most magnificent backlog of older vintages in their cellars, as they have always retained a percentage of each vintage to make available to clients down the road), and since the magical 2005 vintage here, there have been an awful lot of great upper Prädikat wines produced by this estate. So, the family will dig a bit deeper in the cellars this year to offer some more mature upper Prädikat wines to go along with their limited range of 2013ers, including a never before released example of 1995 Saarburger Rausch Auslese AP #1, which had been reserved in the cellar since 1996 for some future auction in Trier, but as there has been such an embarrassment of riches with wines at this level in the last decade, the wine has happily remained resting in Saarburg until this coming release, when this utterly brilliant wine will make its market debut. You will not want to miss this legendary wine when it emerges from the cellar! The family was in the midst of bottling at the time of my visit on the 20th of March, and I am sure they were very tired by the time we stopped by at the estate for a tasting and dinner in the evening, but this did not stop the Zillikens from raiding the cellar for a few additional old treasures to savor with the meal, after we had worked through the 2013ers and that magical bottle of the 1995 Rausch Auslese. I hope they were not too fatigued to remember I wanted to order some of that 1995er for my cellar!

Dry Wines

2013 Zilliken Riesling Trocken- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2013 Estate Riesling Trocken from the Zillikens is a very pretty wine, which was showing very well indeed at the time of my visit, despite having been bottled that same day! The bright and stylish nose offers up scents of green apple, grapefruit, a nice touch of wild yeasts, orange zest, slate and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and vibrant, with lovely mineral drive, fine focus and grip and a long, classy finish. This is really a very strong basic bottling this year and will be a great value. 2014-2025. **89.**

2013 Saarburger Riesling Trocken- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2013 Saarburger Trocken (the premier cru bottling of dry Riesling here, if you like the analogy) was also bottled today and is absolutely stellar, clearly showing that the very strong raw materials of the vintage have produced some monumentally superb wines at these lower levels. The gorgeous nose jumps from the glass in a very refined mélange of lime, grapefruit, a very complex base of slate minerality, a gentle touch of wild yeasts, white flowers, incipient notes of petrol and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and absolutely rock solid at the core, with outstanding focus and grip, suave acids and a very, very long, pure and supremely elegant finish. A brilliant wine that will outdistance some Grosses Gewächs in this vintage. Bargain City! 2016-2040. **93.**

Off-Dry Wines

2013 Zilliken Riesling Butterfly- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The Zilliken estate's Butterfly is an extremely popular restaurant wine, and it is consistently fine, but the 2013, due to the very short nature of the crop this year and the outstanding raw materials that were committed to it is going to be one of the best they have ever produced. The wine is very pretty aromatically, offering up a complex mélange of green apple, tart orange, petrol, lovely minerality, dried flowers and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with lovely balance and focus, bright acids and very good length and grip on the wide open finish. Good juice. 2014-2020. **89.**

2013 Saarburger Riesling Feinherb- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

Like the 2013 Saarburger Trocken, the Saarburger Feinherb is absolutely stellar this year and really shows that a lot of "grand cru caliber" fruit went into the "premier cru" bottlings this year! The outstanding bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of lime, a touch of white cherry, salty minerality (from high dry extract), orange zest, petrol, smoke and a gentle topnote of botanicals. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and really beautifully balanced, with a fine core, ripe, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the focused and filigreed finish. Stellar juice. 2016-2035. **92+.**

Traditional, Prädikat Wines

2013 Saarburger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2013 Saarburger Kabinett is an excellent wine, offering up a very classic and complex profile in its bouquet of lemon, fresh apricot, salty minerality, citrus peel, smoke and a lovely topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and beautifully filigreed, with a good core, fine intensity of flavor, ripe, vibrant acids and great focus and balance on the long, pure and ethereal finish. A truly lovely bottle of Kabinett that will drink beautifully right out of the blocks. 2014-2035+. **92+.**



Dorothee Zilliken in the tasting room at the estate, showing the superb, but painfully small range of 2013ers.

2013 Bockstein Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

There are only five hundred liters of this magical Kabinett from the Bockstein in 2013, so make your reservations early! The wine offers up a stellar aromatic constellation of orange zest, lemon, salty, slate-derived minerality, gentle notes of petrol, smoke and wild yeasts and a lovely topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and quite a bit more primary in profile than the Saarburger Kabinett, with gorgeous filigree, great mineral drive, a lovely core of fruit and a very, very long, suave and utterly refined finish. A brilliant Kabinett. 2017-2040+. **94.**

2013 Rausch Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken

The 2013 Rausch Kabinett is even more primary at the present time than the superb Bockstein, but its ultimate quality is very, very evident. The reserved nose offers up great potential in its blend of pink grapefruit, smoke, lemon, wild yeasts, a brilliantly complex base of slate and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and absolutely rock solid at the core, with brisk acids, laser-like focus and stunning grip and length on the very pure and electric finish. Another absolutely reference point example of Kabinett! 2019-2045+. **95.**

1995 Saarburger Rausch Riesling Auslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #1

I am amazed that the Zillikens could keep a wine this beautiful secret in the cellars for so long, without either being tempted to offer it out to clients or drink it all up themselves! There was an AP #2 Auslese from the Rausch in 1995 that was offered at the auctions in Trier back at the tail end of the 1990s, but AP #1 has never seen the light of day until it will be offered as part of the 2013 list this spring. Do not miss this monument to Saar Riesling brilliance! The utterly magical bouquet offers up a very complex mélange of mandarin oranges, pineapple, a nice touch of mossiness, gentle notes of honeycomb, blazing minerality, smoke, lemon and a myriad of exotic botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and utterly seamless, with breath-taking complexity, tangy acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the flawless finish. Simply a brilliant wine that has now reached its apogee, but will continue to drink in all its beauty for another twenty-five years or more. 2014-2040. **98+**.

CHÂTEAU D'ISSAN- MARGAUX'S RISING STAR



Château d'Issan is one of the great historic estates of the commune of Margaux. Its history stretches far back into the Aquitaine's history, when the estate was known as La Mothe-Cantenac, and the first recorded mention of the estate lies back in the twelfth century, when the Aquitaine was still under English rule. In fact, the property's records state that wine from d'Issan was served at the wedding of Eleanor of Aquitaine to Henri Plantagenet in 1152. Château d'Issan was also the site of the last, short-lived battle fought by English soldiers in the region, before they relinquished control of the Médoc and retreated back across the Channel, in 1451. According to Edmund Penning-Rowsell, the English soldiers, prior to their departure, raided the cellars at d'Issan and brought back a significant quantity of the estate's wines to England, which assisted the London wine trade in developing an affinity for the wine earlier on than many of the estate's neighbors in the Médoc. D'Issan is home to the oldest château in the entire Left Bank, as it was first built, complete with watchtowers and moat, *circa* 1600, and a significant part of the old castle still remains extant and has been incorporated into later additions to the château. This beautiful château replaced a medieval fortress at the same location, that probably dated back to the thirteenth century and which was razed by its owner of the time, Chevalier d'Essenault, from whom the property eventually acquired its name. The estate is truly spectacular, as one approached the château down a long, tree-lined driveway in much the same manner as one approached Château Margaux (which was the other dominant estate in this commune back in the

middle ages, when it was known as La Mothe Margaux), and Château d'Issan is truly one of the most beautiful properties in the entire Médoc.

In the 1855 Classification, Château d'Issan was ranked as a Third Growth, alongside that of its neighbor, Château Palmer. Both estates lie in the commune of Cantenac, just to the south of Margaux proper, with d'Issan lying to the east of Palmer and a bit closer to the Gironde River. I am not familiar with the quality of the wines from the various classed growths in the commune during the mid-nineteenth century, but I have often wondered why these two exemplary properties would be ranked as Third Growths, but estates such as Brane-Cantenac, Durfort-Vivens and Lascombes all ranked above these as Second Growths. Perhaps their situation in Cantenac, rather than in Margaux proper, had something to do with this, as amongst the Second Growths in the commune, only Brane-Cantenac lies outside of the Margaux section of the appellation, and it was owned after 1830 by the highly-respected and well-connected Brane family, who were former owners of Mouton and had settled at Brane-Cantenac after selling their First Growth in Pauillac. Certainly the mid-nineteenth century was a high point for the reputation of the d'Issan's wines, which were very popular throughout the major markets for claret at this time, and particularly so in England. However, the fortunes of the property rose and fell depending on the *bourgeois* families who owned the property, as the estate changed hand a few times from 1825 onwards (the aristocratic owners of the property, the Foix-Candale family, had met their demise during the French Revolution under the blade of the guillotine and the estate had been a *Bien Nacional* for some period before being auctioned off), when d'Issan was purchased by a Monsieur Duluc. His successors eventually sold the property to Gustave Roy in 1866, and the Roy family created a corporate entity to manage the property and oversaw its management until it was sold to the Cruse family in 1945, just after the end of hostilities of the second world war.

When Emmanuel Cruse Sr. and his wife Marguerite purchased Château d'Issan in 1945, the estate had already seen its vinous fortunes fall, as the reputation for the wines here had slipped rather dramatically since the turn of the twentieth century. Though I have never had a chance to taste them, both the 1899 and 1900 d'Issans have a marvelous reputation for wines from this epoch, but the quality of the wines and the fortunes of the estate seemed to have slipped from that point forwards, as the Roy family did not succeed in maintaining the vitality of their ownership over succeeding generations. More than likely, the growing number of cousins with a stake in the ownership of Château d'Issan during the first half of the twentieth century led to strategies to maximize the outflow of income from the estate to all the different branches of the family that owned a piece of the property, and to minimize the amount of money spent in investments for the ultimate quality of the wine. However, one does have to remember that there were plenty of crises to occupy the owners during this time period, with a pair of world wars, the eventual economic collapse of France (later than in England and the US it must be remembered) in the latter half of the 1930s, and the amazingly obtuse and self-serving political leadership that defined the end of the Third Republic and kept so much of the upper *bourgeois* of France collectively wringing their hands or actively looking to subvert the republic and bring about a governmental system more in line with Mussolini's Italy. It was not a great time to be investing in Bordeaux properties with an eye towards turning out the finest wine possible.

In any event, the advent of the Cruse family's ownership of Château d'Issan marked a point of departure upwards for the quality of the estate's wines and a general infusion of *élan* and capital for the property. The Cruse family had already been very important players in the Bordeaux wine trade for a century and a half when they purchased d'Issan, having owned several other properties during this time period, as well as being very important merchants on the *Quai des Chartrons*. The family firm had been established as Bordeaux traders in 1819 by Herman Cruse, who was originally from Denmark, and who began his business at the age of twenty-nine. The family was an important trader in claret, particularly to the markets of northern Germany, and their fortunes were truly made in the vintage of 1847, which as Edmund Penning-Rowsell observes, the entire wine "trade was thrown into confusion by the rumblings and then the Revolution of February of 1848, when Louis-Philippe fled to England." The Bordeaux market dropped precipitously in the wake of this revolution and political instability in Germany at the same time, and prices for the 1847 clarets collapsed. Herman Cruse stepped in and bought very large quantities of the vintage at bargain basement prices, and when the market began to revive a couple of years later, he made a serious windfall for the family firm. This led to expansion into château ownership, so that the Cruse family business at one time or another during the second half of the nineteenth century or early twentieth century owned Châteaux Laujac (a stellar Haut Médoc property which a cousin of d'Issan's current proprietor still owns), Pontet-Canet, Giscours, du Taillan, Rauzan-Ségla, Haut-Bages-Libéral, Certain-Giraud and Corbin.



Emmanuel Cruse Jr. in the chais at Château d'Issan.

Emmanuel Cruse Jr. the current director of Château d'Issan recounts that when his grandfather, Emmanuel Cruse Sr. was looking for a property to purchase after the close of the Second World War, he was initially interested in buying the then available, Château Cheval Blanc in St. Émilion, but his wife Marguerite could not conceive of living that far away from the city of Bordeaux! They had been very close to completing the deal, but the Right Bank in 1945 was considered very much "out in the countryside", whereas properties in the Médoc were quite a bit more accessible to the city center, where most of the families that owned châteaux lived. So, instead of Cheval Blanc, Château d'Issan was purchased from the Guy family in 1945 and extensive work was undertaken in both the vineyards and the buildings on the property to return it to the luster it once knew so well in the mid-nineteenth century. Emmanuel Cruse Jr. is quick to point out that when his grandfather and grandmother were looking for an estate to purchase in the 1940s, it was the Cruse family business which already owned several different estates in the Médoc, but they wished to own a property themselves, rather than as part of the family firm. In addition to the near miss at Cheval Blanc, the Cruse couple also came close to purchasing Ducru-Beaucaillou at this time, before finally completing the deal for Château d'Issan, which presented the perfect blend of great *terroir*, a magical château (albeit in need of some rehabilitation) and close proximity to the city center of Bordeaux. Emmanuel Cruse Sr. set about replanting vineyards and making the wines, while his wife plunged into the refurnishing and decorating of the buildings on the estate with a passion that would last the rest of her life. D'Issan became the family's summer home and would remain so for Emmanuel Sr. and Marguerite Cruse for the remainder of their lives, for they would pack up everything at the end of the school year and move out to d'Issan for the summer and remain there through the harvest every year. Up until Madame Cruse's passing away in 2001 (at the age of ninety-nine), she could still be found every summer at her beloved Château d'Issan.

That Château d'Issan in 1945 was in need of an infusion of oversight and cash cannot be overstated, for there were only two hectares of vines still in production by this time and the very first Cruse vintage here in '45 produced all of one hundred cases of *grand vin*! At the time of the Cruse family's purchase of d'Issan, Emmanuel Cruse Sr. was also a part owner of Château Rauzan-Ségla in Margaux as well, and as there were no functioning cellars at d'Issan when he and his wife arrived here in 1945, the first ten vintages of d'Issan were made in the cellars at nearby Rauzan-Ségla. It was not until he had sold his half of Rauzan-Ségla in 1956 that he could really focus full-time on the rehabilitation of Château d'Issan. Madame Cruse had already done wonderful work redecorating the château, but renovations of the buildings had been done in 1953, as some of the ancient stonework of the original château was then in need of serious attention by this time. The replanting of the vineyards had commenced in 1946, with the twenty hectares that surround the château itself in an enclosed wall the first section to be focused on, and the "Clos" was fully replanted and in production by 1955. This is the heart and soul of the *vignoble* of d'Issan, and Emmanuel Cruse Jr. estimates that today these twenty hectares probably account for seventy percent of the production that goes into the *grand vin* each year up to this day.

Monsieur Cruse Sr. passed away in 1968 and the direction of d'Issan passed on to his son, Lionel, who split his time between management of the estate and directing the family *négociant* business on the *Quai des Chartrons*. Lionel Cruse shared ownership of d'Issan with his brother, Roland Cruse, but it was Lionel that continued to run the estate after their father's passing away. In the wake of the Bordeaux market's collapse in 1973 and 1974 (due primarily to

a huge influx of speculators and their investment schemes, coupled with an absurd pricing policy for the vintages of 1971 and 1972 on the part of the *Bordelais*- sound eerily familiar?), and a scandal of non-Bordeaux wine blending at another of the family properties, Château Pontet-Canet, Lionel Cruse left his position at the head of the family trading firm and turned his attention full-time to Château d'Issan. The modern history of the estate can really be said to date from this moment. Lionel Cruse continued his father's programs for replanting vineyards at d'Issan, as there were several excellent vineyards on the property that lie outside the twenty hectares of the "Clos" that had also been neglected at the end of the Guy family's era, and the *chais*, cellars and vat rooms had been non-existent when the Cruse family arrived here in 1945. One of the big changes that occurred during the time of Lionel Cruse's leadership of d'Issan was the decision to grub up the eight percent of the vineyards that were planted to cabernet franc and replace these vines with either cabernet sauvignon or merlot, so that the present day composition of the vineyards here of roughly sixty-five percent cabernet sauvignon and thirty-five percent merlot was arrived at during the decade of the 1970s. As today's director at d'Issan, Emmanuel Cruse Jr. comments, "even from my youngest days at the property, I cannot recall ever seeing vats or tasting samples of cabernet franc from our vineyards, so my father moved briskly to replant the franc that had been on the property here early on after he assumed direction of d'Issan." Lionel Cruse continued to run the property until he began to suffer health problems in the mid-1990s and his son, Emmanuel arrived to assist in running the property.

Emmanuel Cruse Jr. arrived at d'Issan well-prepared to run a modern day property in Bordeaux with the pedigree of a Third Growth, as he had degrees from the University of Bordeaux both in Law and in Oenology. His first vintage sharing the helm of Château d'Issan with his ailing father was the 1995. Monsieur Cruse did not make a gradual transition here and take his time prior to making some major changes in the direction of the property, as his first vintage saw the creation of a second label, Blasson d'Issan for the estate, and the institution of a far stricter selection process for the *grand vin*. Additionally, in 1995 d'Issan also hired Jacques Boissenot, Bordeaux's most famous, "traditionalist" consultant, to assist with changes that Emmanuel Cruse wished to make here in both the vineyards and the cellars to help raise the quality of the *grand vin*. Monsieur Boissenot, who is now in his mid-seventies, has been ably assisted by his son Eric for many years now and the Boissenot family continues to consult here and add a degree of invaluable assistance to Emmanuel Cruse and his winemaking team at d'Issan, headed by Eric Pellon. Emmanuel Cruse Jr. eventually took over officially the position as Managing Director of d'Issan in 1998. Other changes that have taken place at Château d'Issan during the now sixteen year period of Emmanuel's direction of the property include directing a ten million euro investment project at the property (encompassing everything from redoing trellising in the vineyards, replanting, new barrel cellars and new winemaking facilities), the purchase of an additional four hectares of cabernet sauvignon vineyards in 2009, to augment the thirty hectares of vines that were previously planted for the *grand vin* and Blasson d'Issan and the official reclassification of an additional 9.8 hectares of vines on the estate from Haut-Médoc to the Margaux appellation in 2007 (bringing the total vineyards in the Margaux AOC on the d'Issan property up to forty-five hectares).

Prior to Monsieur Cruse arriving in 1995, Château d'Issan had certainly lagged behind many of its neighbors in making investments and modernizing the vineyards and winemaking facilities on the estate, as the boom years of the 1980s and early 1990s had to some degree been

missed by the property. Certainly the family firm's wine blending scandal of 1974 and Lionel Cruse's departure from all of the family businesses except Château d'Issan had most likely put a squeeze on the available budget for modernization at the property, but also many of the wines in the wake of this dramatic change of fortune had not been up to the quality of what the *terroir* here had been traditionally capable of delivering, and consequently, the boom wrought in the Bordeaux firmament by Robert Parker's championing of the region in the 1980s and early 1990s did not create the same impact at d'Issan as it did at so many of the estate's neighbors. In fact, Monsieur Parker went as far when writing his second edition of his book on Bordeaux, to suggest that Château d'Issan should be downgraded from a Third Growth to a Fifth Growth, so the wines of the 1980s here were clearly not to be numbered amongst his favorites. Add to this the likelihood that not all of the Cruse family members who had inherited a stake in Château d'Issan were of the mindset that the eventual investment of the property that began in 1995 was desirable, and a static period at the property throughout the 1980s is quite understandable. I would assume that some of the same inertia that troubled Château d'Issan at the end of the Guy family's era of ownership here prior to 1945 (when again, a number of cousins held different opinions on what was the proper course for the property), was also prevalent amongst the Cruse family cousins who owned pieces of Château d'Issan prior to Emmanuel Cruse Jr. arriving in 1995 and finally getting the long overdue investment in the property started. One imagines that there was no unanimity amongst the family members about these investment projects, though of course, in the wake of the dramatic changes in the quality of the wines here and with d'Issan's reputation now firmly established as one of the very finest wines of the Margaux appellation, there is little doubt that Emmanuel Cruse was absolutely correct on this score and that the changes were implemented with great success.

In any event, the family tension that may or may not have existed behind the scenes at Château d'Issan came to an end in February of 2013, when Emmanuel Cruse's cousins (the children of Roland Cruse), who had also retained fifty percent ownership in the property, were bought out by French real estate mogul, Jacky Lorenzetti, so that now Emmanuel has a very willing and able partner who shares his vision of excellence for Château d'Issan. Monsieur Lorenzetti is also owner of two other properties in the Médoc, Château Lilian Ladouys in Ste. Estèphe (which he purchased in 2008) and Château Pédesclaux in Pauillac, purchased in 2009. Since the deal in 2013, Emmanuel Cruse has become the Managing Director of both of these estates as well, which augurs very well for their future quality, as these are two smaller châteaux that may begin to offer some of the best values in their respective appellations in the years to come, once the changes that Messieurs Lorenzetti and Cruse have a chance to really take hold. Perhaps the most important asset that Monsieur Lorenzetti owned prior to his joining in partnership at Château d'Issan, was the Paris-based Rugby club of Racing Métro 92, as I have never met a more passionate rugby fan in my life than Emmanuel Cruse! The change in the ownership structure at Château d'Issan since 2013 seems poised to allow the property to continue on unabated in its quest for ever finer quality of its wines, which under the tenure of Emmanuel Cruse Jr. have certainly distanced themselves rather dramatically from the darker days of yesteryear here, when d'Issan was one of the relative laggards in the commune- particularly in the boom decade of the 1980s.



The *terroir* of Château d'Issan is quite typical of the commune of Cantenac, with gravel pockets layered over marl and bedrock, but the sands of *Les Landes* are not too far to the south, so that the transition from AOC Margaux to Haut-Médoc is not very far below the boundaries of the property. In this area, the lower-lying land tends to be quite marshy and unsuitable to the vine. As James Wilson, in his invaluable book, Terroir emphasizes, the gravel pockets in Margaux and Cantenac do not cover a very large area- less than three square miles in size- and are occupied by fully twenty classified growths, so that vineyards are crowded together wherever the gravel surfaces, which in this case of Cantenac, is mostly away from the river and towards the D2 road that runs through the heart and soul of the Médoc. This is the higher ground in the commune of Cantenac, and this is where the gravel is most concentrated and the *terroir* is the best. On the northern side of the village of Margaux, the gravel beds descend a bit closer down towards the river, but this is not the case in Cantenac, where d'Issan, as well as Palmer and Prieuré-Lichine are located, and good vineyard land tapers out before one gets close to the river. The vineyards of these three properties border each other in several locations. The wines of Cantenac have traditionally been thought to produce slightly more robust and black fruity wines than those from the commune of Margaux proper, which may be one of the reasons that Château Palmer has always included a fairly high percentage of merlot in its *cépages*. The wine style of Château d'Issan is an absolutely classic example of Cantenac, with a very black fruity personality, dark soil tones from its underlying gravel beds, and plenty of tobacco leaf and cigar smoke to be found in both its aromatic and flavor profiles. That said, it is also a very, very

elegant wine under the aegis of Emmanuel Cruse, and is quite a classically styled wine by the standards of today's Bordeaux. Since 1995, it has to be ranked right up there at the very pinnacle of the Margaux commune alongside of the wines from Châteaux Margaux and Palmer. With now forty-five hectares under vine from which to make selection for the *grand vin*, the team at Château d'Issan currently has excellent vineyard resources from which to fashion their wine (what a difference from when the family first arrived here in 1945!), and Monsieur Cruse aims in top vintages to produce roughly sixty percent *grand vin* and forty percent of the second wine, Blasson d'Issan.

Today, the vineyards are planted entirely to cabernet sauvignon and merlot, with the eight percent of cabernet franc planted here in the days when Edmund Penning-Rowsell was writing back in 1969 now long gone. As I briefly alluded to above, the vineyards are planted to sixty-five percent cabernet sauvignon and thirty-five percent merlot, or this was the distribution prior to the purchase of the additional four hectares of vines here in 2010, so perhaps the percentage of cabernet sauvignon is now just a bit higher than it was prior to the purchase. The new four hectares of vines, as well as the nearly ten hectares that were formally classified as Haut-Médoc and upgraded to Margaux AOC in 2007, are all planted to relatively younger vines, and most of the production from these parcels will continue to go into the Blasson d'Issan bottling for the foreseeable future. However, as Emmanuel Cruse notes, "the four hectares that were purchased in 2007 show great promise, and it is quite likely that these will become a staple of the *grand vin* twenty or twenty-five years down the road." These vines lie out in the direction of the village of Arcins, where both Châteaux Giscours and Monbrison have the majority of their vineyards, and this is a very strong *terroir*. For Monsieur Cruse, the challenge with these new parcels is that 1.2 hectares were planted with cabernet franc when they were purchased in 2009, and experiments were made with them in 2010, 2011 and 2012 to see how and where the cabernet franc might be fit into the blend at Château d'Issan. After three vintages, where the cabernet franc production eventually all ended up in the second wine of Blasson d'Issan, it was decided that these vines really did not fit into the blend of the *grand vin* and they were replanted to cabernet sauvignon.

The blend of the *grand vin* here seeks to mirror this varietal breakdown of the vineyards, but of course, the vintage's characteristics will always have a say in this regard. Since Emmanuel Cruse Jr. arrived here in 1995, the *grand vin* tends to be raised in roughly fifty to sixty percent new oak. As Emmanuel Cruse comments, "we are trying to make a very elegant wine these days at d'Issan, so we tend to adjust the percentage of new oak depending on the style of the vintage, so in more powerful years like 2005 or 2009, the new wood percentage will be closer to sixty percent, but in more classic years like 2008, fifty percent is better for the overall balance of the wine- one has to be flexible in this regard." *Elevage* of the first wine here tends to be sixteen to eighteen months in cask, with again, the more powerful vintages like 2005 or 2009 spending a bit longer in cask, and the less powerful years being bottled just a bit on the earlier side. As I noted above, a majority of the blend for the *grand vin* originates in the twenty hectare "Clos" section of vineyards that immediately surround the château. Not all of the production from these vineyards find their way into the first wine each year, as of course, some vines need replacing over the years and the estate's policy these days is to replace unproductive vines on a "vine by vine basis" wherever it is logical to do so, as to keep the overall average age of the vineyard as old as possible. When there are younger vines scattered within the "Clos", these are always relegated to the second wine up until they reach eighteen to twenty years of age. These twenty

hectares are amongst the highest elevation vineyards owned by Château d'Issan, and in the commune of Cantenac, the higher ground is the best *terroir*. In addition to the "Clos", there are also two prime hectares of vines located up on the other side of the D2 road (the château and most of its vineyards lie on the easterly side of the D2, but this parcel is on the west side of the road), sandwiched between prime parcels of vines belonging to Palmer and Prieuré-Lichine, and this plot of vines is also on higher ground and part of the heart of the *grand vin* blend in virtually every vintage. The remainder of the *grand vin* cuvée each year is usually taken from other sections of the estate's vineyard patrimony, with considerations of the age of the vines and how the blend fits most seamlessly together in a given vintage of equal concern. For example, in years where the merlot is particularly successful, the blend for the *grand vin* may need a bit more merlot to maximize the expression of the vintage, and the other parcels' vats of merlot are then considered for inclusion in the first wine.

The style of wine at d'Issan is truly excellent since 1995, and the first decade of the new millennium has certainly produced the finest string of vintages here in a very, very long time. I get the sense that it is in the last ten years that Emmanuel Cruse Jr. has truly realized the vision of his grandfather in restoring Château d'Issan back to the position this estate occupied in the firmament of the Médoc back in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The wines prior to 2000 can still be very good here (particularly once Emmanuel arrived in 1995), but there is little doubt that it is really in the twenty-first century that d'Issan has come fully back to its rightful place at the top of the hierarchy in the Margaux appellation. The ten million euro investments in the cellars, vineyards and *chais* have certainly returned great dividends for the winemaking team here and its very happy clientele. The overall age of the vines is getting older and older with each passing vintage, opening up more possibilities for fine-tuning the blend of the *grand vin* each year, and the new additions of four hectares of vines in Arcins in 2009 and the reclassification of nearly ten hectares in 2007 have given the estate and even better vineyard foundation for continued excellence in the future. The arrival of Jacky Lorenzetti as a partner also now means that there is a unified vision and commitment to excellence on the part of ownership at Château d'Issan, and Emmanuel Cruse is poised to continue on unabated this renaissance period for the estate. Monsieur Cruse also has other responsibilities to focus his energies on these days, as he is overseeing the wines at Monsieur Lorenzetti's two other properties in the Médoc, as well as recently assuming the position as the head of the worldwide Commanderie de Bordeaux organization, having been hand-picked by the outgoing *Grande Maître* of the Commanderie, Jean-Michel Cazes in the fall of 2008 to be his successor.

Blasson d'Issan

The Blasson d'Issan is a traditional second wine, as this is produced from the younger plots situated on the estate, with most vines averaging eighteen to twenty years of age that are relegated to the second wine. As Emmanuel Cruse notes, "first of all, we make a selection for Blasson based on the age of the vines, as we do not want any of the fruit from the younger vines included these days in the *grand vin*, and then we also try to select for *terroir*, with the best parcels of older vines going into the first wine and the other plots being saved for the second wine." Finally, there is also the consideration of how the final blend of the *grand vin* fits together in the end each vintage, so some casks from older vines will also inevitably find their way into the Blasson bottling, as the percentages of cabernet sauvignon and merlot may fit best at one ratio in a given year, and the remainder of the older vine production will be added to Blasson.

However, Monsieur Cruse still wants to give this wine some pedigree, so roughly one-third of the barrels used each year for this bottling are new. In most vintages, the *cépages* of Blasson will mirror that of the *grand vin*, with approximately sixty-five percent of the blend comprised of cabernet sauvignon and the remainder merlot. However, in years where the cabernet sauvignon really excels and distances itself from the merlot on the estate, more of the merlot may find its way into the blend of the second wine, so there are a few recent vintages where fully forty-five percent of the production for this wine hail from the merlot vines on the property. As the notes below will attest, this is one of the strongest second wines produced in the Médoc these days, the great success realized by Château d'Issan in the new millennium is certainly mirrored in the Blasson d'Issan bottlings as well over this time period.

2008 Blasson d'Issan

The 2008 Blasson d'Issan was comprised of a blend of sixty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon and thirty-two percent merlot and is a very strong vintage for this fine second wine. The deep and quite classic nose wafts from the glass in a mix of cassis, dark berries, espresso, cigar ash and a topnote of fresh herb tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary, with lovely focus and grip, solid depth, modest tannins and fine balance on the long and quite serious finish. This is one of my favorite vintages of Blasson in this decade and is only a couple of years away from really starting to drink well. 2016-2035+. **88.**

2007 Blasson d'Issan

The 2007 Blasson d'Issan has a similar *cépages* to the 2008, with the blend sixty-five percent cabernet and thirty-five percent merlot, but in this far more difficult vintage, the second wine of d'Issan is not quite as successful as in top vintages such as '08 or '05. The nose seems a bit overly concentrated (reverse osmosis?) for the year, as it offers up scents of roasted cassis, game, cigar ash, damp, dark soil tones and a distinct topnote of bell pepper. On the palate the wine is medium-full, weedy and a bit muddy in personality, with little tannin, but also not a whole lot of fruit and certainly rather modest sweetness to the fruit that is to be found. This is okay, but no better and probably the weakest vintage of Blasson since 2000. 2012-2022. **84.**

2006 Blasson d'Issan

The 2006 Blasson has quite a bit more merlot in its blend than either '08 or '07, as this is forty-five percent merlot and fifty-five percent cabernet sauvignon. The nose is still on the youthful side, as it wafts from the glass in a very black fruity blend of cassis, tarry tones, espresso, tobacco leaf, smoke and black soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and rather four-square in personality (2006 is not a great vintage for merlot on the Left Bank), with a bit of tannin, a solid mid-palate and a long, solid finish. Not a great example of the vintage, but a more complete wine than the 2007 Blasson, and maybe time will help this wine to develop a bit more polish. 2012-2030. **86+.**

2005 Blasson d'Issan

The 2005 Blasson is a good bottle in the making, but interestingly, it looks like the 2000 vintage will nose it out in the long run for the best Blasson of the decade. This vintage of Blasson had its more customary blend of sixty-five percent cabernet sauvignon and thirty-five percent merlot and offers up a deep, young and vibrant bouquet of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, gravel and tobacco leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite solid at the core, with still a quite primary personality, good focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. This still could use a few years to allow the wine to blossom fully, but it is going to be a very good bottle at its apogee, with impressive freshness from the vintage's

excellent acidities and the balance to age quite long and gracefully. A very fine second wine. 2015-2040+. **89+**.

2004 Blason d'Issan

The 2004 Blason d'Issan is drinking fairly well as it crosses the threshold of its tenth birthday, but it is not a particularly ripe wine and shows still a fair bit of structure that will likely always be part of its personality. The bouquet is deep and fairly black fruity, offering up scents of cassis, violets, tarry tones, a bit of cigarette ash, dark soil, walnuts and just a touch of red fruit that seems redolent primarily of blood orange. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, chewy and a bit angular, with respectable depth at the core, still a touch of recalcitrant tannin and good length and grip on the four-square and ever so slightly bitter finish. Stylistically, this just seemed a bit forced. 2014-2025. **84**.

2003 Blason d'Issan

The 2003 Blason d'Issan is, not too surprisingly, a fair bit darker in color than the other Blasons between 2005 and 2000, and it really is a pretty solid example of the vintage, avoiding some of the overtly overripe aromatics and flavors that define this torrid year. The bouquet is deep, black fruity and a bit roasted, but also reasonably clean and moderately complex, offering up scents of cassis, roasted game, cigar wrapper, coffee bean, a touch of pruniness, damp, dark soil tones and a topnote of chicory. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and decidedly low acid, but with a fine core of fruit, impressive complexity and fine length and grip on the chewy and slightly heavy-handed and borderline overripe finish. The tannins here are always going to be just a touch obtrusive, but this is the calling card of the vintage, and the wine is ready to drink today, despite its remaining bit of moderate backend tannin. The wine gets decidedly prunier with air, so I would definitely pop and pour this wine and serve it with alacrity, as its appeal falls off markedly as the wine gets more overripe after about an hour or so being opened. It is a pretty good effort for a 2003 (the most overrated vintage in Bordeaux since 1972?) and it is not too far off the quality of the first wine in this vintage. 2014-2020+? **85**.

2002 Blason d'Issan

The 2002 vintage of Blason d'Issan is one of the most red fruity of this series, with a nice sense of breed and complexity that mirrors the very successful *grand vin* in this vintage. The nose is a lovely blend of red and black cherries, cigar wrapper, a touch of menthol, a bit of new leather, summer truffles and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely balanced, with a perfectly respectable core, melted tannins, good acids and nice focus on the admittedly, not particularly long finish. This is not a particularly deep or long wine, but it does offer up some very good complexity and is really a pretty good drink today- what Michael Broadbent might have called a perfectly civilized luncheon claret. Not bad at all and drinking quite well. 2014-2020+? **86+**.

2001 Blason d'Issan

The 2001 Blason is a perfectly solid and very respectable example of this underrated vintage, but it does show some of the vagaries of a classic second wine in its slightly rustic structure. The wine certainly does offer up a very enticing, complex and mature nose of dark berries, cigar wrapper, dark soil tones, chicory, an exotic touch of red curry, woodsmoke and a bit of nutskin. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a very good core of fruit, a bit of remaining, chewy tannins, fine focus and grip and a long and balanced finish. One can clearly sense here on the backend that the selection for the *grand vin* was quite uncompromising, so some lots of less than stellar wine found their way into the Blason, but also

that the raw materials in this vintage were very strong, so this wine, despite its slightly rustic structural elements, is still a very good drink. 2014-2030. **88.**

2000 Blasson d'Issan

The 2000 Blasson d'Issan is the finest vintage of this very good second wine that I have had the pleasure to taste. The lovely and complex nose is now *à point*, offering up scents of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, fresh herb tones, a touch of nuttiness and a complex base of dark soil nuances. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and quite smoky in personality, with good complexity, lovely focus and balance, melting tannins and lovely grip on the long and quite classy finish. This is a superb vintage for Blasson and this wine had to be an absolute steal in price when it was released! 2012-2025. **90.**



Château d'Issan

2009 Château d'Issan

The 2009 vintage of d'Issan has a bit more merlot in the blend than is typical here in this most recent epoch, as the *cépages* is sixty percent cabernet sauvignon and forty percent merlot. The wine is a very strong example of the vintage, with a bit of the roasted character of '09 in evidence in its aromatic constellation of cassis, dark berries, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones, French roast and a stylish base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite classy for a 2009 claret (though a bit more muscular and less vibrant in style than the most classic vintages from this fine estate, such as 2008), with a good core, ripe tannins and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. A very strong 2009 Margaux, the '09 d'Issan is still a good eight to ten years away from full blossoming. 2022-2065. **93+.**

2008 Château d'Issan

As I wrote about way back in Issue Thirty-Four, the 2008 Château d'Issan is an excellent example of this outstanding and truly underrated vintage, and this most recent bottle showed even better potential than the bottle I sampled back in Bordeaux in preparation for that article. The bouquet is deep, pure and utterly classic in profile, offering up a fine mix of dark berries, cassis, cigar smoke, gravelly soil tones, fresh herbs and a nice framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and beautifully structured, with a fine core, suave tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and properly reserved finish. This will be every bit as fine as the more highly-touted 2009 d'Issan and is one of the great sleepers of this excellent year. 2020-2060+. **93+**.

2007 Château d'Issan

The 2007 d'Issan is one of my least favorite vintages for this estate in the first decade of the twenty-first century, as it seems just a touch uneven and animal in personality. The bouquet is a slightly lumpy mix of cigar ash, tar, dark berries, a bit of game, damp leather and herbal tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, gamy and a bit forced in personality, with solid length and grip, but not a lot of complexity likely to emerge with further bottle age. This is an okay wine, but my favorite 2007s are those that were perfectly content to embrace the more middleweight style of the vintage. 2015-2035? **85+?**

2006 Château d'Issan

The 2006 Château d'Issan is a very strong example of this very good vintage, wafting from the glass in a fine aromatic mix of cassis, blackberries, cigar smoke, a nice touch of fresh herbs, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones and new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and properly reserved for a young and serious claret, with a good core, ripe tannins and a long, well-balanced and utterly classic finish. The *cépages* here in 2006 was thirty-one percent merlot and sixty-nine percent cabernet sauvignon. All this lovely vintage of d'Issan needs is a bit more time in the cellar. 2018-2050. **91+**.

2005 Château d'Issan

The 2005 vintage at d'Issan is very strong indeed and this is likely to be viewed as one of the classic, great years at this property in the decades to come. Like the 2009 vintage, the blend here in '05 was sixty percent cabernet sauvignon and forty percent merlot, and the wine offers up a deep and very promising bouquet of cassis, dark berries, espresso, cigar smoke, tobacco leaf, a vibrant base of gravelly, dark soil tones and a bit of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and also quite reserved at the present time, with a rock solid core, ripe tannins, outstanding, tangy acids and great focus and grip on the very long, youthful and outstanding finish. Because of the higher acidity of the 2005 vintage, this will need a bit longer in the cellar to blossom that vintages like 2006, 2008 and 2009, but it will also be longer-lived and truly exceptional at its apogee. Fine juice. 2025-2075+. **93+**.

2004 Château d'Issan

The 2004 Château d'Issan is a more complete wine than the Blason from this vintage (which of course is the purpose of having a second wine in the first place, so that the less than ideal lots can find a home away from the *grand vin*), but it is not a particularly complex vintage for this consistent performer, and I wonder if a bit of concentrating techniques were used for this wine. The nose is not bad at all, offering up scents of black currants, espresso, a touch of game, dark soil, smoke and a touch of fresh nutmeg in the upper register. However, the wine is not as complex on the palate as the nose suggests, with its relatively full-bodied format blossoming without developing more complexity. The finish is pretty long and shows good grip, modest

tannins and pretty good intensity, but something seems to be missing here just a tad. A very respectable effort for the vintage, but not up to the quality of the 2002. 2012-2030. **87.**

2003 Château d'Issan

Château d'Issan has made a very good effort in the 2003 vintage- not that this wine would ever confuse anyone with a great, classic vintage for this estate- but, this is one of the stronger wines I have tasted from the year. The bouquet is borderline overripe, but does not (yet?) cross that threshold and offers up scents of sappy black cherries, cassis, dark chocolate, game, leather and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite fat on the attack, with reasonable balance, some firm, underripe tannins on the backend and a bit of pepper perking up the long, low acid finish. Like so many 2003s, this is chewy and probably will stay that way for life, but today, it does deliver some pleasure and is reasonably successful for the vintage. 2012-2030+? **88.**

2002 Château d'Issan

The 2002 Château d'Issan is a very real success for this vintage and the wine is drinking beautifully at the present time. This year had the highest percentage of cabernet sauvignon at the property that I have ever witnessed, as the *cépages* is seventy-eight percent cabernet sauvignon and twenty-two percent merlot. The wine is still a tad on the young side, but is showing really quite impressive promise in its bouquet of cassis, dark berries, singed tobacco, dark soil tones, fresh herbs and a judicious framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and moderately tannic still, with a good core and a fine, long and chewy finish. Structurally, this reminds me a bit of the 1983 clarets at a similar age and this wine is one of the sleepers of the last decade at d'Issan! 2018-2040+. **89+.**

2001 Château d'Issan

The 2001 vintage of Château d'Issan shares the same *cépages* as the 2003 (their only similarities I might add!) of sixty-nine percent cabernet sauvignon and thirty-one percent merlot, and this is a classic vintage from this fine property. The wine wafts from the glass in a blossoming, beautiful mélange of cassis, blackberries, cigar smoke, a touch of nuttiness, a really lovely base of dark soil tones and a gentle base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very suave on the attack, with lovely focus and grip, melting tannins and fine length and grip on the well-balanced and complex finish. A lovely vintage of Château d'Issan. 2012-2035+. **90.**

2000 Château d'Issan

Château d'Issan produced a very good wine in the 2000 vintage, but it is still several years away from starting to blossom and drink with generosity. The deep and still quite primary nose delivers scents of cassis, tar, herb tones, cigar smoke, coffee bean and a bit of toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and potentially complex, with a rock solid core, firm tannins, very good focus and a long, youthfully muscular and chewy finish. Like a great many examples of the 2000 vintage in Bordeaux, this wine is completely hunkered down at the present time and is a bit sullen, but it should prove to be very good with sufficient bottle age. Just how much charm it will eventually deliver is still an open question, but that is a question that really should be asked of the vintage in general! 2020-2060+. **92.**

1999 Château d'Issan

The 1999 Château d'Issan is really a very lovely example of the vintage and a fine middleweight for current drinking. The bouquet is blossoming nicely into its secondary layers of complexity, offering up a smoky mélange of blackberries, cassis, cigar ash, gravelly soil tones, a hint of chipotle pepper, tobacco smoke and a discreet base of cedar. On the palate the wine is

fullish, complex and intensely flavored, with tangy acids, good focus and grip, still a bit of backend tannin and a surprisingly long, well-balanced finish. Quite a fine success for a 1999, and with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2014-2030+. **88.**

1998 Château d'Issan

The 1998 vintage is far stronger on the Right Bank than it is on the Left, but the '98 d'Issan is a very good effort for what was a pretty tough year in the Médoc. The wine is not particularly ripe, and offers up an old-fashioned, tobacco leaf aromatic personality in its blend of dark berries, cigar wrapper, a bit of bell pepper, cigar ash, dark soil tones, a nice framing of new wood and a gentle topnote of crushed violets. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with a more broad-shouldered attack than the fine 1999, but without quite the same core and sense of overall balance. The finish is long, black fruity and smoky, with modest tannins and a bit of a hole in the backend, as the fruit steps off stage just ahead of the remaining tannins. This is not bad, but it seems a bit more forced stylistically than the lovely 1999, and though it is not a bad drink, it is not a top flight example of d'Issan in its new prime. 2014-2025+. **86.**

1996 Château d'Issan

The 1996 Château d'Issan is a superb, young vintage of this fine estate, with the substantial tannins of this vintage on the Left Bank quite well managed and buried in a fine depth of sweet and pure fruit. The bouquet is still on the young side, but beginning to offer up some secondary elements in its constellation of sweet cassis and dark berries, tobacco leaf, a complex base of gravelly soil, a touch of graphite, violets and a nice framing of smoky new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and focused, with a rock solid core of fruit, excellent soil signature, tangy acids, lovely balance and a firm, chewy and ripely tannic finish. The chewy tannins of this vintage are still very much present here, though very nicely integrated, and all this wine seems likely to need is a fair bit more bottle age to allow the tannic backbone to start to peel back. This will be excellent in the fullness of time. 2022-2075. **94.**

1995 Château d'Issan

The 1995 vintage of Château d'Issan was Emmanuel Cruse's first at the property, and the wine is aging gracefully and was certainly a harbinger of the good things to come here. The wine is a touch horsey on the nose, offering up scents of roasted cassis, cigar smoke, a bit of a medicinal overtone, gravelly soil, fresh herbs and singed tobacco leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still a bit unevolved, with a good core, moderate tannins and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Not bad at all, the 1995 d'Issan still needs a bit more bottle age to blossom. 2017-2045+. **89.**

1990 Château d'Issan

The 1990 vintage of Château d'Issan is quite emblematic of this era at the estate, as it is not as elegant an interpretation of the *terroir* here as the wine from 1995 forwards. As I have also found with the handful of wines I have tasted from the estate in the decade of the 1980s, the 1990 is a bit tarry in personality and was probably not produced from anywhere near as careful a selection as the wines from 1995 forwards. The bouquet is just a bit rustic in profile, but offers up very good complexity in its mix of cassis, bell pepper, a touch of road tar, sweet cigar wrapper, espresso, dark soil tones and a bit of charred wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite broad-shouldered for d'Issan, with a good core of fruit, a fairly extracted personality, firm, slightly hard tannins and good length and grip on the complex, but rustic finish. One gets the sense that with the same *savoir-faire* here in 1990 that existed in the new millennium, this would have been special, instead of just pretty solid. It is still a bit chewy, but certainly approachable at age twenty-four, and I suspect that a bit of these tannins are always

going to be part of the equation on the palate here, so it is not a bad time to be drinking this wine- though it still has plenty of years ahead of it. This is quite old-fashioned in style- particularly in comparison to the wines being produced today- but, it is not bad at all. 2014-2035+. **88.**



1989 Château d'Issan

The 1989 d'Issan is a bit more elegant than the 1990, but it too is stylistically still a bit caught up in the *ancienne regime* at the estate. The wine offers up a deep and slightly roasted bouquet of black cherries, cassis, woodsmoke, cigar wrapper, a bit of walnut, lovely soil tones, incipient notes of summer truffle and tobacco leaf in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely lively with sound acids. The core is deep and pure, the tannins, still a bit chewy, but better integrated than the 1990, with fine focus and good length and grip on the complex finish. Again, by today's standards, this is just a touch short of elegance, but it is a good drink and probably the best Château d'Issan of the decade of the 1980s. 2014-2035+. **90.**

1983 Château d'Issan

Château d'Issan was not making wines at the superb level it does today back in the '83 vintage, as Emmanuel Cruse did not arrive here until the 1995 vintage and his dramatic impact on the quality of the wines from this superb estate was still far in the future when the grapes were harvested here in 1983. I remember selling this wine back in its early days and it was not a bad bottle for earlier drinking, but it has not aged with the same grace as so many other 1983 wines

from this commune and is now fully mature and quite tertiary in style. The bouquet offers up a high-toned and slightly rustic blend of cherries, dried berries, saddle leather, some medicinal tones, cigar ash and cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and quite long on the backend, with a pretty modest core of fruit (particularly for an '83 Margaux), melted tannins and good intensity of flavor and complexity on the fully mature finish. This is not a bad wine for drinking over the next twelve to fifteen years, but it is a far cry from the quality level that is routinely found at d'Issan today. Those were different days. 2012-2030+. **88.**

1962 Château d'Issan

The 1962 vintage at Château d'Issan, to the best of knowledge, is not highly-regarded, but this particular bottle was a very nice example of this terrifically underrated Bordeaux year. The complex bouquet is a mature and a fairly red fruity mélange of cherries, woodsmoke, Cuban cigar wrapper, nutskin, a lovely base of soil tones, nice touch of autumnal leafiness and an exotic bit of red curry in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and intensely flavored, with a fine core, impressive complexity and focus, melting tannins, sound acids and lovely length and grip on the very well-balanced, long and vibrant finish. The 1962 d'Issan seems a bit cleaner and more delicately styled than the wines from the 1980s and is quite a positive surprise, as I bought this bottle at auction out of curiosity (knowing I was writing a feature on the estate), and was very pleasantly surprised by its excellent quality. It is not a blockbuster, but it is truly a lovely, middleweight bottle of mature claret that is still in its apogee and has years and years of life ahead of it. 2014-2030. **90.**

ROUND TWO OF THE 2012 BURGUNDY VINTAGE
ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF DOMAINES REVIEWED



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ANOTHER ROUND OF THE BEAUTIFUL 2012 BURGUNDIES: TINY YIELDS AND SUPERB QUALITY



The two ancient oak trees that reside in the center of the Clos des Mouches vineyard.

I had the chance to spend another ten days in the Burgundy region during my annual long spring trip through various European wine regions, as I started my trip out with a couple of days here to taste through some of the domaines I do not regularly visit during the bi-annual Les Grands Jours de Bourgogne tastings, and then at the tail end of the trip, after weeks spent in Germany and Champagne, I returned to Beaune for another eight days of tastings of the 2012 vintage in Burgundy. As I covered in quite some detail the weather and growing season vagaries that shaped this extremely short crop of superb wines back in Issue 48, I will not reprint all of the general vintage characteristics in this article, but would be happy to send new subscribers a copy of Issue 48 if they have not already had a chance to look at it in the database. If you happen to be one of the new subscribers who has not yet seen Issue 48's in-depth coverage of the 2012 Burgundy vintage, just email me and I will send the issue out promptly to you so that you also have the full background on this superb year. Suffice to say that this was a vintage that was extremely difficult throughout the Côte d'Or, but was much tougher in the communes in the Côte de Beaune who were saddled with blasts of hail during the summer, which primarily affected villages from Pommard south to Chassagne-Montrachet. Back in November, one could really

sense a different texture to the tannins of the red wines from this vintage that were produced in the communes hit by hail, as they did not share the same suave and supremely elegant tannin profiles of the wines in the villages that were not hit with hail in 2012. The Côte de Beaune reds from the hail-blasted communes still seemed to be very well-balanced back in November, just firmer and in need of more time before they would begin to drink well. However, by the time I was able to circle back round here for some extended cellar visits in the Côte de Beaune again at the end of March and early April, I did not sense the same great divide in tannin textures as was so evident in November, as the reds from the hail-affected villages seemed more suave and refined than they did back at the end of last year. I am sure that the Côte de Beaune reds will never quite deliver the same sense of unbridled elegance and refinement of structure as the very greatest wines of the Côte de Nuits in 2012, but they have closed the gap a bit in the six months between my tastings in November and these most recent visits to the cellars in late March and early April. The Côte de Beaune red wines are still quite concentrated from the extremely low yields of 2012 and plenty of them are quite chewy, but they seem to be gaining a degree of elegance to their structures with further time in barrel.

In the report that follows, I have listed all the wines that I tasted from my couple of days tasting at the Les Grands Jours events (before heading out to Germany to tackle the 2013ers there) at the start of the article, followed by a geographical listing of the domaines I visited when I returned to Beaune to finish up my trip during the last week of March and first week of April. I have not posted notes on a couple of stops during the end of my trip, as I caught the 2012 wines in a very awkward moment of their evolutions, and it simply did not seem fair to post notes on wines that were so obviously grumpy at the time of my visit- either from recent racking and *assemblage* in preparation for bottling, or because they had not yet fully recovered from their previous *mise*. These domaines that I have not posted tasting notes on include Maison Champy, Maison Benjamin Leroux (with one noteworthy exception, as his 2012 Clos St. Denis was absolutely singing when I stopped by, even though the other wines were extremely out of sorts) and Domaine de la Chapelle's lovely Volnays.

Les Grands Jours- Chablis

Domaine Christine, Eoldie and Patrick Chalmeau (Chitry)

Husband and wife, Patrick and Christine Chalmeau have now been joined by their daughter Elodie, and this Chitry-based domaine was completely new to me at this year's Les Grands Jours tastings. The appellations here are pretty modest, but the three white wines that I tasted were extremely well-made and offer up simply stunning value. There is a depth, a precision and a mineral drive to all three of these wines that make them very much worth searching out for those interested in serious wines without serious price tags! I was very impressed with the quality of all three whites, though the red that I tasted was not quite in the same league of quality as the white wines.

2012 Bourgogne Aligoté- Domaine Christine, Eoldie and Patrick Chalmeau

This is one of the best Aligoté bottlings I have tasted in quite some time. The wine is produced from twenty-five year-old vines that lie in the village of Chitry and the 2012 delivers a really lovely bouquet of green apple, tart orange, flinty soil tones, citrus peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and impressively complex, with lovely

focus and balance, a very *Chablisienne* personality and a long, focused finish. This is really high class Aligoté! 2014-2020. **87+**.

2012 Bourgogne “Chitry” Blanc- Domaine Christine, Eoldie and Patrick Chalmeau

The 2012 Bourgogne “Chitry” from the Chalmeau family is another really excellent wine and offers up plenty of Chablis personality at a bargain price. The wine wafts from the glass in a classic aromatic mix of lemon, tart orange, beautifully flinty minerality, smoky overtones and lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the long and classy finish. This is really a beautiful bottle of Bourgogne Blanc. 2014-2020+. **88+**.

2012 Chablis- Domaine Christine, Eoldie and Patrick Chalmeau

The one lone Chablis bottling from Domaine Chalmeau is outstanding in 2012, delivering a pure and utterly classic bouquet of lemon, tangerine, very complex minerality, a touch of anise, orange zest and a lovely, floral topnote redolent of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully focused, with impressive complexity, vibrant balance and a long, pure and zesty finish that is as fine as any Chablis *villages* bottling one could find at this year’s Les Grands Jours tasting. A serious bottle that will drink very well from the outset, but clearly will have no difficulties cruising along for a dozen years or more. 2014-2025+. **90**.

Domaine Bernard Defaix (Chablis)

Bernard Defaix began his domaine in 1959, with two hectares of vines, and the family has added vineyard parcels as opportunity has allowed over the years, so that today they exploit twenty-six hectares of vines, which include fine parcels in the premier crus of Les Lys, Vaillons and Côte de Léchet, as well as the two grand crus of Bougros and Vaudésir. The viticulture in the last several years has moved to certified organic, with Bernard’s son Didier Defaix in charge of the vineyards, and his brother, Sylvain overseeing the winemaking in the cellars. The Petit Chablis and Chablis AC are raised in stainless steel tanks, with the Vieilles Vignes cuvée and premier crus produced from a combination of a percentage of barrel-fermented juice and the remainder raised in tank. Both grand crus are entirely barrel-fermented. The family did not have the 2012 Les Lys bottling available for tasting at Les Grands Jours, but the remainder of the range was on display and the wines showed very well indeed. This is another domaine that I need to find time to visit and taste “sur place” in November.

2012 Chablis- Domaine Bernard Defaix

The 2012 Chablis *villages* from Sylvain and Didier Defaix is quite a pretty wine, offering up a vibrant bouquet of lemon, tart orange, a fine base of minerality, smoke and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and quite succulent on the attack, with good, but not great mid-palate depth, bright acids and fine focus and balance on the long and zesty finish. This does not quite have the same core as the very best examples of AC, but it is very well made and offers up a lot of pleasure in its slightly more *fluide* style. 2014-2020. **87**.

2012 Chablis “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Bernard Defaix

The old vine bottling from Domaine Bernard Defaix hails from a one hectare parcel of fifty year-old vines, with twenty-five percent of the blend barrel-fermented. The wine is young and fine, offering up a fairly primary nose of lemon, tart orange, a touch of straw, a fine, complex base of minerality, white flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and young, with a fine core of fruit, racy acids and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and youthful finish. Fine juice in the making here. 2016-2030+. **89+**.

2012 Chablis “Vaillons”- Domaine Bernard Defaix

The 2012 Vaillons from Monsieur Defaix is an excellent wine in the making, but this nicely structured and serious premier cru will want a few years in the cellar to fully blossom. The excellent nose jumps from the glass in a mix of green apple, lime, tangerine, flinty minerality, citrus zest and again, a nice touch of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and quite primary in personality, with a fine core, excellent focus and grip, nascent complexity and a very long, snappy and well-balanced finish. All this lovely wine needs is a bit of bottle age. 2017-2035. **91+**.

2012 Chablis “Côte de Léchet” - Domaine Bernard Defaix

The domaine’s 2012 Côte de Léchet is a stellar example of this fine premier cru. The complex and classy nose delivers a blend of lime, green apple, oyster shell minerality, white flowers, citrus zest and a touch of straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with lovely mid-palate concentration, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and very precise, transparent finish. Lovely juice. 2015-2030+. **92**.

2012 Chablis “Côte de Léchet” Reserve - Domaine Bernard Defaix

The “Reserve” bottling of Côte de Léchet is made from a parcel of sixty year-old vines in this premier cru. Because it is not allowed by the INAO to put the name of “Reserve” on a front label, the wine is labeled on the front as “Premier Cru”, with the back label showing that this is from the Côte de Léchet and is the Reserve bottling. Half of this wine is barrel-fermented, with a fair bit of *battonage* for that portion of the cuvée, with the other half raised in stainless steel tanks. The 2012 is deep and powerful in profile, but does not (yet?) show the same precision on the nose and palate as the regular bottling. The very youthful bouquet is a mix of lime, orange, flinty soil tones, a touch of hay, smoke and hints of white pepper. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent cut and grip, brisk acids and a very long, powerful finish. Perhaps this will gain in breed with further bottle age, but today, I have a slight preference for the regular bottling of Côte de Léchet from Monsieur Defaix. 2018-2035+. **91+?**

2012 Chablis “Vaudésir”- Domaine Bernard Defaix

The 2012 Vaudésir from Domaine Bernard Defaix is a stellar example of the vineyard, and has turned out very well indeed in this vintage. Monsieur Defaix barrel ferments his grand crus and is a fan of frequent *battonage*, which does not seem to have had an adverse effect on the Vaudésir, but may have taken a way a bit of the precision of the Bougros (see below). The 2012 Vaudésir is outstanding, offering up a deep and classic nose of pink grapefruit, lemon, chalky minerality, citrus peel, smoke and a gentle topnote of grassiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively pure, with a superb core of fruit, excellent transparency, racy acids and truly exceptional focus and grip on the very long and youthful finish. This is dynamite. 2019-2040. **94**.

2012 Chablis “Bougros”- Domaine Bernard Defaix

The 2012 Bougros from Domaine Bernard Defaix is a very good bottle, but here I get a slight sense that some focus and refinement has been sacrificed to the nurturing effects of frequent *battonage*. The bouquet seems a bit straightforward in its blend of green apple, orange, flinty minerality, citrus peel and smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite broad-shouldered, with good, but not great depth, crisp acids and a long, slightly chunky finish. This is far more open than the superb Vaudésir, and while it is still a very good wine, it is not quite in the same league. 2017-2035. **91**.

Domaine Gérard Duplessis (Chablis)

Lilian Duplessis is the fifth generation of his family to run this estate, which exploits eight hectares of premier and grand cru vineyards, as well as producing Petit Chablis and a fine Chablis villages example. The full lineup of premier crus includes Vaugiraut, Vaillons, Fourchaume, Montée de Tonnerre, Montmains and Mont de Milieu (starting with the 2015 vintage), but I did not have the opportunity to taste the entire range at this year's Grand Jours event. Additionally, the Duplessis family also owns .4 hectare of vines in Les Clos right in the heart of the vineyard- mid-slope and perfectly exposed, and the domaine is fortunate to have plenty of old vines scattered amongst their parcels, with many plots reaching back seventy-five years. Fermentation for the entire lineup takes place in stainless steel tanks, with the premier crus and grand cru then spending six months of further élevage in older barrels prior to bottling around the eighteen month mark out from the vintage. Since 2009, the domaine has been in the process of conversion to organic farming for all of their vines; I am not sure which parcels are picked by hand and which by machine, but will make a point to find this out when I get a chance to visit and taste in the cellars. I was quite impressed with what I tasted of their 2012s and 2011s that were on display.

2012 Chablis- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

Lilian Duplessis has made a very good Chablis *villages* in 2012, as the wine offers up a bright and classy nose of tart orange, green apple, chalky soil tones, citrus peel and a touch of wet stone. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and nicely balanced, with a good core of fruit, a nice signature of stony minerality, crisp acids and fine cut and grip on the long and still fairly youthful finish. This wine comes from three parcels that look out at Vaillons. Good juice. 2015-2025. **88.**

2012 Chablis “Vaillons”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The Duplessis Vaillons bottling comes from four different *lieux à dits* that are entitled to Vaillons status: Minot (the finest parcel in the Vaillons constellation), Epinottes, Séchet and Chatain. Whereas the 2012 Chablis *villages* had already been bottled, all of these premier crus and the Les Clos were assembled back in tank after their *stage* in barrel and were destined to be bottled in early April. This is an excellent example of Vaillons, jumping from the glass in a mix of tart orange, pink grapefruit, chalky minerality, orange peel, stone dust and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely soil signature, excellent cut and focus and a long, youthful and transparent finish. Fine juice- give it a couple of years to uncoil. 2016-2030+. **92.**

2012 Chablis “Fourchaume”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The Domaine Duplessis Fourchaume 2012 is another excellent wine in the making, but it will want a couple more years in the cellar than the Vaillons before it starts to hit on all cylinders. The bouquet is a youthful and classy blend of green apple, pear, smoke, some of the woody, gently peaty undertones so typical of Fourchaume and a lovely base of stony minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with a fine core, superb soil signature, brisk acids and lovely focus and grip on the long, primary and very well-balanced finish. Another fine bottle in the making. 2018-2032+. **92.**

2012 Chablis “Montée de Tonnerre”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

According to the domaine's website, the Duplessis family has five different parcels of vines scattered around in Montée de Tonnerre, which gives a nice, representative example of this lovely cru. The 2012 is a lovely wine and (surprisingly) seemed a tad more forward than the

Fourchaume. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a youthful blend of lemon, tart orange, complex, flinty soil tones, a dollop of lime blossom and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and nascently complex, with a fine core, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the youthful and classy finish. Fine juice. 2016-2030+. **92.**

2011 Chablis “Montmains”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The 2011 Montmains is a very nice wine, but it does not quite possess the same mid-palate depth as the 2012 premier crus that preceded it in the lineup. This is an important cru for the Duplessis family, as they have fully two hectares of vines here, split between two parcels of a hectare each. The 2011 Montmains offers up a fine nose of green apple, lime, lovely, chalky minerality, dried flowers and a topnote of straw. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite a bit more open on the attack than the 2012s, but still with fine backend mineral drive that gives the wine bounce and precision on the long finish. This is a very pretty wine and is already drinking with plenty of style. 2014-2025. **91.**

2011 Chablis “Les Clos”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The 2012 Les Clos from Lilian Duplessis is still very closed and reserved in profile, but there is plenty of underlying quality here that is self-evident. The youthful nose offers up scents of green apple, pear, lime, a complex base of flinty soil tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a still very primary personality, lovely focus and backend cut, brisk acids and lovely mineral drive on the very long, reserved finish. This will be excellent, but give it some time in the cellar. 2018-2040. **93.**



The vignoble of Chablis in the height of summer, courtesy of Domaine Gérard Duplessis website.

Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen (Chablis)

Frédéric Gueguen and his lovely wife, Céline, have really been snake-bitten when it comes to vineyard sources and family matters in the last several years, as Madame Gueguen is the daughter of Jean-Marc Brocard and Frédéric Gueguen was in charge of the Brocard estate's viticulture for many years, before a falling out with brother-in-law Julien Brocard led to the couple's departure from Domaine Brocard a few years back. This year, when I was visiting them at Les Grands Jours, I found that they have now lost all of their parcels of vines that had originated with Frédéric Gueguen's family and which they have been producing wines for many years, and are now starting all over again with some rented parcels in a handful of premier crus and lieux à dits. I am not sure what happened to the Gueguen family's vineyards, but the first vintage from the new vineyards for Frédéric and his wife is the 2013, and this is all that the couple had to show at this year's Les Grands Jours. It was not the best time to be showing 2013s, as some had been recently bottled, and the remainder of the wines that remained in tank had just had their SO2s adjusted, so it was tough to get a precise read on the new wines from the domaine, but it is certainly clear that Monsieur Gueguen has not lost his touch in the cellars or out in the vines.

2013 Coteaux Bourguignon Sacy "Cépages Confidential"- Dom Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The "Cépages Confidential" from the Gueguens is made from the ancient grape of Sacy, which was once fairly widely planted in Burgundy, but is now nearly extinct. This particular bottling is made from fifty year-old Sacy vines and offers up a lovely nose of lime, green apple, wet stones, a touch of smokiness and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and quite stony in personality, with a good, solid core and fine length and grip on the bright and zesty finish. A very pretty wine. 2014-2020. **87+**.

2013 Côtes d'Auxerre Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The chardonnay vines for this bottling hail from the village of Saint Bris, which is best-known as the last holdout for sauvignon blanc in the region. The 2013 had already been bottled and was showing quite nicely in March, offering up a stylish nose of apple, lime peel, a touch of pear, anise and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely balanced, with solid depth, bright acids and nice cut and grip on the reasonably long finish. A very well-made example. 2014-2020. **87**.

2013 Petit Chablis- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2013 Petit Chablis had just been bottled a week or so prior to Les Grands Jours, but had not yet shut down from the *mise* and was showing very well. The bouquet is a lovely blend of green apple, tart orange, lime zest, flinty soil tones, citrus peel and a gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with a lovely core (particularly for Petit Chablis!), vibrant acids and excellent cut and grip on the long finish. A fine example. 2014-2022. **88+**.

2013 Chablis- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2013 Chablis *villages* from Frédéric Gueguen was still in tank, but as was the case also for the two premier crus, this wine had just had its SO2 adjusted and was a little cranky about being tasted. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that this will be a lovely village wine, as it offers up scents of pear, pink grapefruit, tart orange, complex, flinty minerality, smoke and orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fairly wide open personality, fine focus and grip and a long, classy finish. This will be lovely and should drink very well right out of the blocks. 2014-2025. **90-91**.

2013 Chablis “Vosgros”- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2013 Vosgros was also still in tank, but was in a good mood and was showing very well at Les Grands Jours. The excellent nose wafts from the glass in a mix of orange, lime, crystalline minerality, white flowers and lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite racy in personality (particularly for a 2013 Chablis, as this vintage looks likely to be quite forward in style), with a rock solid core, fine cut and grip and a long, complex and classy finish. This will be lovely. 2015-2035. **92.**

2013 Chablis “Vaucoupin”- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

Monsieur Gueguen’s 2013 Vaucoupin was the most cranky of the wines still in tank from its sulfur adjustment, and while there is clearly a superb premier cru in the making here, it really was too agitated at the time of my tasting to get a good, solid read on the wine. I would imagine it would be, at the very least, at least as fine as the Vosgros, as there is excellent depth and focus here, but it was just showing too much of its SO₂ component at the time to take a proper note on the wine.

Maison Louis Jadot (Beaune)

I do not get to taste Louis Jadot’s Chablis bottlings too often, so I was very happy to see this pair of 2012s available for tasting at the Les Grands Jours. The village bottling was stellar and raised entirely in stainless steel tanks (if memory serves me correctly), whereas the Fourchaume saw some barrel fermentation and was not quite as impressive.

2012 Chablis- Maison Louis Jadot

The 2012 Chablis *villages* from Louis Jadot is quite a lovely example, offering up a bright and stylish bouquet of lemon, grapefruit, flinty minerality, a touch of oyster shell and a delicate topnote of hay. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and shows off a fine core of fruit, with bright acids and a long, wide open and succulent finish. A very fine bottle of Chablis AC for drinking over the next six to eight years. 2014-2020+. **89.**

2012 Chablis “Fourchaume”- Maison Louis Jadot

The 2012 Fourchaume from Maison Jadot was barrel-fermented and aged in ten percent new wood and is not quite as successful an example as the Chablis *villages*. The nose is juicy and generous, but not as precise as in the Chablis AC bottling, as it offers up scents of apple, pink grapefruit, a bit of smokiness, hay, chalky soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and quite solid at the core, but also a bit chunky and lacking a bit of delineation on the fairly long finish. This is not bad, but a bit chunky in personality by the very high standards of Maison Jadot. 2014-2020. **87.**

Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils (Chablis)

I have vowed for a couple of years that I was going to visit Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils during my annual visits in November to Chablis, and after yet another stellar showing of their wines at Les Grands Jours this year, I assure you that I will be there this coming November to taste the entire lineup of their 2013s. The village and premier crus here are fermented and raised entirely in stainless steel, with the grand crus seeing a bit of barrel-fermentation, but a tiny percentage of new wood is used for the subsequent élevage. Based on what I tasted at the Les Grands Jours, these are clearly some of the very best wines being made in Chablis these days and I have been remiss in not visiting and tasting “sur place”. This will be remedied by the fall of the year!

2012 Chablis- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

The 2012 Chablis AC from Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils is a very classy village wine, wafting from the glass in a lovely and very elegant mélange of apple, pear, spring flowers and a fine base of complex, chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and refined, with a good core of fruit, utterly seamless balance, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the complex finish. A fine example. 2014-2025. **89+**.

2012 Chablis “Vaillons”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

The 2012 Vaillons from Domaine Moreau is properly reserved and shows outstanding potential on both the nose and palate. The bouquet delivers a fine blend of green apple, pink grapefruit, a nice touch of hay, chalky soil tones, dried flowers and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and absolutely rock solid at the core, with fine cut and focus, bright acids and a very long, youthful and classy finish that closes with impressive grip and soil drive. Lovely potential here! 2016-2030+. **92**.

2012 Chablis “Les Clos”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

Forty percent of the blend for the 2012 Les Clos here was barrel-fermented, but the cuvée was only raised in three percent new oak, which is just enough to give a very gentle background touch of vanilla to the aromatics of the wine. This is a beautiful bottle of Les Clos in the making, as the wine delivers a fine nose of apple, pear, a very complex base of chalky minerality, spring flowers, hay and a faint whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and still properly primary in profile, with outstanding mid-palate concentration, superb transparency and nascent complexity, brisk acids and great cut and grip on the very long and beautifully balanced finish. High class juice! 2018-2040. **94+**.

2011 Chablis “Valmur”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

I assume that the superb 2011 Valmur was also handled similarly in the cellars to the 2012 Les Clos, with a percentage of the blend barrel-fermented and just a touch of new wood used. The wine is lovely, offering up a bright and complex nose of apple, tart orange, chalky soil tones, apple blossoms and a delicate touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very well-delineated, with a good, but not great core of fruit, fine focus and balance, bright acids and very good length and grip on the poised and quite wide open finish. Lovely juice for more immediate consumption than the 2012 Clos. 2014-2025. **92**.

2011 Chablis “Les Clos- Clos des Hospices”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

The Clos des Hospices bottling from Domaine Christian Moreau is a bit more overtly new oaky in style than the other two grand crus that I tasted during Les Grands Jours, but it too is very well done in its style. The nose is a touch more new oaky than I would find ideal, but offers up lovely depth and complexity in its mélange of apple, pear, a bit of *crème patissière*, chalky soil tones and a rather generous coating of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with an excellent core of fruit (and quite a bit more mid-palate concentration than the 2011 Valmur), fine focus and grip and a very long, vibrant and gently new oaky finish. Good juice, but I would like this even better if it was done in the same, very understated style of new oak as the 2012 straight Les Clos. 2014-2035. **92+**.

Domaine Gérard Tremblay (Poinchy)

I have really liked the wines from Domaine Gérard Tremblay in the past and this year's lineup of (primarily) 2012s at Les Grands Jours were showing very well indeed. This domaine does not harvest any of its premier crus by hand, which is too bad, as I think that even more refinement and precision could be found in these wines if the grapes were not picked by machine,

but this is simply and observation, as the quality of the winemaking here is exemplary. The pair of 2013s that the domaine was showing at this tasting, the Petit Chablis and the Chablis AC, had both been bottled one month prior to the tastings. The remainder of the lineup that I tasted were from the 2012 vintage and the wines showed considerable promise, with properly reserved personalities and fine structure for blossoming with a few years' worth of bottle age. These are really quite classic examples of their respective terroirs and offer up truly fine value.

2013 Petit Chablis- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

For just having been bottled four weeks ago, this wine was showing quite well indeed. The nose is open and classy, offering up scents of grapefruit, a touch of tart orange, chalky soil tones, dried flowers and a bit of grassiness. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and tasty, with a good core and cut, sound focus and fine length and grip for Petit Chablis. Good juice and a fine value. 2014-2019. **87+**.

2013 Chablis- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

The 2013 Chablis AC Domaine Gérard Tremblay was also showing quite well for just having been bottled, but unless I am mistaken, a bit of the easy-going style of the 2013 vintage in Chablis has left this wine just a touch *gourmand* in style this year. The nose is riper than the Petit Chablis, offering up scents of tart orange, a bit of green fruit, smoke, flinty soil tones and cut grass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and really already wearing its heart on its sleeve, with good depth, sound framing acids and an early drinking style that will want to see this wine consumed in the first five or six years out from the vintage. It is not bad, but I tend to like a bit more cut and grip to my Chablis *villages* bottlings. 2014-2020. **87**.

2012 Chablis “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

The 2012 Chablis “V.V.” is made all from forty-plus year-old vines and is quite good in 2012. The excellent and youthful nose wafts from the glass in a mix of lemon, grapefruit, straw, flinty minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and racy, with a fine core, lovely minerality and a long, still quite primary finish. This is a bit four-square today, but my gut feeling that this is simply a function of the relative adolescence of the wine and it should blossom nicely with a bit of bottle age. Good juice. 2015-2025+. **88+**.

2012 Chablis “Beauroy”- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

The 2012 Beauroy from Domaine Tremblay is also quite young and unevolved, but it has considerable promise. The lovely nose is vibrant and nicely focused, wafting from the glass in a mix of tart orange, lemon, complex minerality, dried flowers and a bit of chalk dust in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and youthful, with a very good core, bright acids and fine length and grip on the well-balanced and still quite primary finish. This will need a couple of years to blossom, but will be a lovely bottle. 2016-2030+. **89**.

2012 Chablis “Côte de Léchet”- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

The 2012 Côte de Léchet from the Tremblay family is quite fine, offering up a bright and classic nose of grapefruit, lemon, oyster shell, chalky minerality and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthful, with a rock solid core of fruit, with snappy acids, lovely mineral drive and a long, even more youthful finish than the Beauroy. This seems inherently more elegant to me than the Beauroy, but will want another year or two in the cellar to really blossom. Good juice and a fine value! 2017-2030+. **90+**.

2012 Chablis Montmains”- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

I really like the personality of the 2012 Montmains from Domaine Tremblay, which is not quite as rock solid at the core as the Côte de Léchet, but shows lovely dimension on the

palate and a fine aromatic profile. The bouquet shows just a touch of candied elements to its fruit component (that is very reminiscent of the best 1995 Chablis in their respective youth), offering up scents of green apple, lime, tart orange, chalky minerality, a whisper of anise and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and elegant, with lovely focus and balance, very good, if not great depth at the core and lovely intensity of flavor and bounce on the long and classy finish. This will drink sooner than the Côte de Léchet and has personality to burn in 2012. 2015-2030+. **91+**.

2012 Chablis “Fourchaume”- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

The “regular” bottling of Fourchaume from the Tremblays includes a bit of l’Homme Mort in the blend (which can be sold as Fourchaume), with the majority of the cuvée hailing from Fourchaume proper. This is a lovely wine that shares the more forward and generous aspect of the Montmains, as it wafts from the glass in a complex and quite minerally blend of green apple, tart orange, flinty minerality, straw, smoke and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and nascently complex, with an excellent core of fruit, fine soil signature and a very long, snappy and beautifully balanced finish. This really is an excellent bottle of Fourchaume in the making. 2015-2035. **92**.

2012 Chablis “Fourchaume” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

The old vine cuvée of Fourchaume hails from vines that were all planted in 1951, making these sixty-one years of age in 2012. This is a far more structured young bottling of Fourchaume and will demand some bottle age, but its potential is very fine, as the wine offers up scents of green apple, bread fruit, flinty soil tones, a touch of youthful grassiness and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with brisk acids, fine focus and cut, a very minerally backend and a very long, primary and structured finish. This will be excellent, but give it time! 2018-2040. **92+**.

2012 Chablis “Vaudésir”- Domaine Gérard Tremblay

The 2012 Chablis “Vaudésir” from Domaine Gérard Tremblay is an outstanding example of the vintage, jumping from the glass in a stellar aromatic constellation of pear, lemon, pink grapefruit, very elegant minerality, dried flowers and incipient notes of oyster shell. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with fine mid-palate concentration, lovely focus and balance and a very long, zesty and elegant finish. A classic example of Vaudésir! 2017-2040. **93+**.

Les Grands Jours- Côte de Nuits

I did not spend a full day tasting during the Les Grands Jours second day in the Côte de Nuits, as I had to drive to Germany to start that leg of my trip in the afternoon of this day and had only arrived in Europe a couple days earlier and was a bit worried about the combination of jet lag and extended tasting prior to the drive to German wine country. Consequently, I decided to start my day here in Nuits St. Georges and did most of my tasting at this locale for the day, as I was trying to keep to a laid back pace and not taste too many wines before hitting the autobahn. However, I did manage to taste with a vigneron in Nuits that I have wanted to visit for a few years now, Philippe Gavignet, as I have wanted to expand the number of domaine I visit in this commune and Elodie Michelot had told me that I would very much like his style of wines. I had sold some of Monsieur Gavignet’s wines way back in the 1993 vintage, when I was still a wine merchant, and had very much liked the style here, so I was quite excited to taste through his range of 2012s during the Les Grands Jours tasting. Besides from the Gavignet wines, I had a chance to sample several other producers’ wines from Nuits during this morning, and was still in

good shape for my drive to Germany after a quick lunch and working through a few of the 2012s from Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret over at the Château de Clos Vougeot.



Maison Bouchard Père et Fils (Beaune)

I was very happy to cross paths with these Bouchard Père et Fils bottlings from Nuits St. Georges at the Les Grands Jours event, as I had visited here in November and caught the red wines in a particularly awkward stage of their evolution in the cellars. I had planned to re-visit the domaine at the end of March to re-taste the reds at a more suitable moment, but my schedule was too full to fit in an appointment on this trip. These three 2012 Nuits bottlings all showed better than they did in November, and though I still had some reservations about the oak integrated on the 2012 Les Cailles, the wines were quite reassuring and augured well for the lineup of 2012 reds from this fine house.

2012 Nuits St. Georges- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils

The 2012 Nuits St. Georges AC from Maison Bouchard Père et Fils was showing quite well at the time of Les Grands Jours, offering up a complex and already nicely evolved and open nose of cherries, strawberries, nutskins, fine soil tones, smoke and a gentle framing of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full and nicely transparent, with a good core of fruit, modest tannins and good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This will only need a handful of years to reach a nice point of drinkability. A good example. 2018-2035+. **88.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Les Porrets St. Georges”- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils

The 2012 Les Porrets St. Georges was raised in fifty percent new wood, but only spent ten months in barrel prior to being racked back into tank prior to bottling. This wine was showing lovely potential in March, wafting from the glass in a nicely transparent and complex aromatic constellation of red plums, cherries, cocoa, gamebirds, soil, woodsmoke, cedar and a touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven in personality, with a fine core and good length and grip on the focused finish. The balance on the wine today shows just a touch of uncovered oak tannins, but there is plenty of stuffing here to eventually absorb the wood and this should prove to be a tasty bottle down the road. 2020-2050. **90.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Les Cailles”- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils

I had reservations about the balance of the 2102 Les Cailles in the cellars in November and was still quite worried about the wine after re-visiting it again in March, as there are still some fairly tough, uncovered wood tannins on the backend of this wine that clamp down hard on the finish and leave the wine pretty dry-edged at the present time. Perhaps this wine will have enough fruit density to absorb the wood more fully down the road, but I am not at all certain of this happening, based on how it showed in March. The nose is deep and sappy, offering up lovely promise in its mix of red and black cherries, plums, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke, dark chocolate and spicy new wood. The wine is deep, full-bodied and quite primary on the attack, with a good core, but a rather oak-dried finish that may or may not resolve with bottle age. Whether or not this wine ultimately resolves its balance issues, it is pretty clear that its new oak regimen in the cellars has proven to be a hindrance, rather than an asset to the wine’s ultimate evolution. This could end up really good down the road, as the raw materials are exceptional, or it could just end up drying out from poorly thought out new wood management. ???

2000 Nuits St. Georges “Les Cailles”- Maison Bouchard Père et Fils

It was very nice of the team at Bouchard to bring along the 2000 Les Cailles for this year’s Grand Jours tasting. The wine is now fully mature and quite lovely in its aromatic appeal, offering up scents of cherries, *sous bois*, roasted gamebirds, coffee, bonfires and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fully mature, with a fairly autumnal personality, fine complexity and just a bit of new wood still poking out on the finish after more than a dozen years of bottle age. This is a good wine, but it is not as fresh today as one might have expected and seems a bit more evolved than a comparable bottle from a domaine such as Henri Gouges or Robert Chevillon et Fils would be today. But, still a perfectly pleasant drink. 2014-2030. **88.**

Domaine Philippe Gavignet (Nuits St. Georges)

Monsieur Gavignet was one of those vigneronns who used a bit more new oak for his premier crus in 2012, as he had already ordered and taken delivery of the new barrels prior to seeing just how short the crop was going to be in this year, and rather than return the barrels or store them for a year, he chose to just use them. Consequently, all his premier crus were raised in fifty percent new wood in 2012, rather than the typical one-third, but the wines did not show any signs of being over-oaked- just more new oaky in personality than would be typical here in other vintages. This was quite apparent when we arrived at his 2011 Bousselots, after the lineup of 2012s he had brought to the Les Grands Jours tasting, which was just a bit more soil-driven in personality from its slightly lower percentage of new barrels. All the 2012s had been bottled in February of 2014, so they had been in bottle anywhere from four to six weeks at the time of Les

Grands Jours, but the wines showed very well indeed and it was quite apparent that this is a domaine that I should have been visiting all along during my November or April visits to the region to taste “sur place”. You can be assured I will be visiting here in November to taste the 2013s, as these were excellent wines across the board.

2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Argillats”- Domaine Philippe Gavignet

Les Argillats is a vineyard that is located up at the very top of the slope on the northern side of Nuits St. Georges, up above Bousselots and aux Thorey, with a small section of the lower part of the vineyard entitled to premier cru status, but the majority ranked as a village wine. Monsieur Gavignet’s vines here are in the AC level section, but were planted in 1962 and are now over fifty years of age. This is a very fine Nuits *villages*, offering up a classy nose of red and black cherries, black plums, dark soil tones, cocoa, woodsmoke and a gentle touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, suave on the attack and sappy at the core, with lovely focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip. High class *villages*. 2020-2050. **89.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Philippe Gavignet

Ninety percent of the vines that go into this bottling of Vieilles Vignes were planted in 1926, so this is truly and old vine cuvée! The 2012 is excellent, offering up a deep and quite primary bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, bitter chocolate, smoke, gamebird, lovely soil tones and a deft base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a youthful personality, a superb core of fruit and a long, ripely tannic and properly chewy finish. This will be excellent, and given the fact that it was so recently bottled, I am probably underrating it a tad! 2022-2055+. **90+.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Bousselots”- Domaine Philippe Gavignet

Monsieur Gavignet’s Bousselots vines were planted in 1946, so these vines are closing in on their seventieth birthday. The 2012 Bousselots is going to be a lovely example of the vintage in the fullness of time, as the wine wafts from the glass in a pure and youthful bouquet of black cherries, black plums, cocoa, a touch of coffee bean, woodsmoke and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively pure on the attack, with a nice sense of reserve, a rock solid, sappy core, ripe, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and very promising finish. Lovely juice in the making. 2022-2060. **92.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Chaboeufs”- Domaine Philippe Gavignet

The 2012 Chaboeufs from Philippe Gavignet is also outstanding, offering up a deep and classic nose of black cherries, dark berries, raw cocoa, gamebirds, woodsmoke, dark soil tones that are already hinting at the *sous bois* to come and a nice base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a sappy core of fruit, excellent soil signature, suave tannins and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and classy finish. This seems likely to drink a bit earlier than the Bousselots, but perhaps it was just bottled a tad later and is showing a bit less structure than it will ultimately display when it has fully recovered from the *mise*. This will be excellent. 2020-2055+. **92+.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Pruliers”- Domaine Philippe Gavignet

The 2012 Pruliers from Domaine Gavignet is also stellar and the pick of the litter of the 2012s that the domaine chose to show at Les Grands Jours. The primary and very promising nose wafts from the glass in a youthful mix of dark berries, cassis, a great base of dark soil tones, espresso, gamebirds, a touch of violet and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with bright acids, fine-grained, ripe tannins and

outstanding length and grip on the focused and quite potentially elegant finish. The elegance of Monsieur Gavignet's 2012 Pruliers is something I have found echoed in the examples from both Domaines Cheillon and Gouges as well in this vintage, as the year seems to have really produced wines of great refinement in this particular premier cru. Great juice! 2025-2075. **93+**.

2011 Nuits St. Georges "Bousselots"- Domaine Philippe Gavignet

The 2011 Bousselots from Domaine Gavignet is excellent, with a bit more of its soil component front and center than is (currently?) the case with the 2012, as this was raised in its customary one-third new wood, rather than half. The superb nose delivers a fine mélange of dark berries, black, a lovely base of minerality, woodsmoke, *pigeon* and a deft framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and nicely transparent, with good mid-palate concentration, elegant tannins and a long, tangy and youthful finish that closes with lovely grip and precision. Fine juice. 2020-2055+. **92**.

2003 Nuits St. Georges "Bousselots"- Domaine Philippe Gavignet

This was the first 2003 I had tasted from Monsieur Gavignet and it is really quite a strong success for this torrid vintage. The bouquet is a complex blend of roasted venison, cherries, plums, dark soil tones, charred wood and coffee bean. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a quite wide open personality, good depth at the core and a long, slightly chewy and mature finish. I suspect that this wine's slightly chewy backend will always be part of the equation and I would deem this wine fully mature and ready to drink up over the next fifteen or twenty years, as I do not imagine that last bit of backend tannin is ever going to fade. A fine and fairly fresh 2003. 2014-2030+? **88**.

Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret (Vosne-Romanée)

I did not have a chance to visit the Mongeard family this past November, as the very short yields of 2012 had them cutting back on the number of visitors to taste in the cellars. I was very happy therefore, to run into them at Les Grands Jours at the Château de Clos Vougeot and have a chance to sample a few of their very fine 2012s. This estate is really making superb wines these days and deserve to be much more highly regarded than they are in some circles, as I find their wines more interesting and classic in style than several other domaines in this village that have far bigger reputations than the Mongeard-Mugneret. They tend to start out life pretty new oaky in personality, but unlike some of their neighbors' wines, the oak is quickly eaten up by the depth of fruit here and the wines are quite classic in style and balance once they have had a bit of bottle age. I know it is completely unfashionable of me to state that this is one of my absolute favorite estates in Vosne-Romanée, but I have great respect for the long and illustrious track record of the Mongeard-Mugneret wines and am very happy to have them well-represented in my personal cellar.

2012 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret

The 2012 Vosne AC had already been bottled and was showing very well at Les Grands Jours. The excellent bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of dark berries, cassis, woodsmoke, cocoa, gamebirds, dark soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full-bodied, and very nicely transparent, with a tightly-knit and tangy personality, modest tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and well-balanced finish. Give this wine at least four years to fully absorb its new wood, though its true apogee will not really arrive until the wine has had six years or so of bottle age! A lovely village Vosne in the making. 2020-2045+. **89+**.

2012 Vosne-Romanée “les Orveaux”- Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret

The 2012 les Orveaux from Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret is very elegant this year and is going to be a lovely example of this consistently fine premier cru. The deep and quite red fruity nose wafts from the glass in a very pretty display of cherries, blood orange, woodsmoke, fresh herb tones, a fine base of soil, cedar and a lovely topnote of fresh nutmeg. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with fine mid-palate depth, fine-grained tannins and a long, focused and tangy finish. Like the Vosne AC, this still needs time to fully absorb its new wood, but it will be excellent with some bottle age. 2022-2060. **92.**

2012 Echézeaux- Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret

It seems a bit disorientating to only have the single example of Echézeaux produced from the Mongeard family these days, as their Vieilles Vignes bottling was such a flagship of the estate. However, with that parcel now reverting back to a cousin, in 2012 there is just this single Echézeaux in the stable, but the wine has really turned out beautifully in this vintage. The wine wafts from the glass in a very classy blend of red plums, cherries, woodsmoke, a complex base of soil, fresh herbs, incipient notes of venison and bonfire and a fine framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very refined, with a rock solid core, lovely soil inflection, ripe tannins, tangy acids and a very long, classy and palate-staining finish. Lovely juice. 2025-2075. **94.**

2012 Clos Vougeot- Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret

Like the 2012 Echézeaux, the Clos Vougeot from Mongeard-Mugneret is supremely elegant out of the blocks this year. The superb bouquet is a mix of red plums, cocoa, cherries, gamebirds, a touch of nutskin, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex with a sappy core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, velvety tannins and great style and grace on the long and youthfully complex finish. A great bottle of Clos Vougeot in the making. 2025-2075. **94+.**

2012 Grands Echézeaux- Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret

The 2012 Grands Echézeaux from Domaine Mongeard-Mugneret is a great young wine and a very impressive example of just how special this vintage is in the Côte de Nuits. The exceptional and quite classic bouquet offers up scents of red and black plums, cocoa, duck, woodsmoke, a beautifully complex base of soil tones and a very suave base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite plush and refined on the attack, with a sappy core of fruit, great soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a very long, tangy and utterly seamless finish. A great wine. 2025-2075. **96+.**

Domaine Daniel Rion (Nuits St. Georges)

I have liked the handful of Daniel Rion wines I have tasted over the years and have tucked some away in my cellar to follow with bottle age in the past, but have not yet had the pleasure to visit and taste “sur place”. Monsieur Rion had the following five wines on display at the Les Grands Jours tasting in Nuits, and the wines showed quite well, despite having been recently bottled. The percentage of new wood here is pretty high- fifty percent for the Vieilles Vignes bottling and at least as much for the premier crus, and I am not sure why all this new wood is needed. At least to my palate, the wood does not bring anything beneficial to the equation and just adds to the cost of the élevage and ultimate bottle price to the consumer. But, my personal predilection is already pretty well known when it comes to new wood, and if the new wood is simply covering up some of the soil tones and adding more structure (where none was in short supply already from the underlying terroirs), then I cannot really understand the logic of

using such relatively high percentages of new wood for wines such as these. But, as Anne Gros told me several years ago when I observed the same thing to her while tasting her wines at a Les Grands Jours event, “I like the style of my own wines- just as they are” and I suppose that is all that really matters. In any event, these 2012s were good, but a few were a bit woody to my tastes, and the only wine in this well-made lineup that I would want to put in my cellar is the very elegant Les Lavières.

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Daniel Rion

This wine had only been bottled ten days prior to the Les Grands Jours event, but was still showing very well and handles its fifty percent new wood quite well in this vintage. The bouquet is deep and nascently complex, offering up scents of cassis, dark berries, espresso, smoke, soil and plenty of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely reserved, with a good core, sound balance and a long, chewy and youthful finish. This needs time, but should prove to be quite good with enough bottle age. 2020-2050. **89+**.

2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Grandes Vignes”- Domaine Daniel Rion

The les Grandes Vignes bottling from Monsieur Rion in 2012 is quite fine. This is a village wine, which hails from a *lieu à dit* in Prémieux. The 2012 offers up a fine nose of black cherries, sweet dark berries, bonfires, gamebird, soil, nutskin and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and nascently complex, with fine depth and a long, ripely tannic finish. The wine is just a touch reductive today, but I assume that this will sort itself out with some time in bottle. 2020-2050. **89+**.

2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Lavières”- Domaine Daniel Rion

The les Lavières bottling from Monsieur Rion, which hails from a single *lieu à dit* right below the premier cru of Murgers, is excellent in 2012. The superb nose wafts from the glass in a mix of plums, black cherries, nutskins, gamebirds, dark soil tones, cocoa and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with its proximity to both Murgers and Boudots very much in evidence in the elegant profile of the wine. The finish is long, moderately tannic and very well-balanced, and this will prove to be an excellent village wine and a fine example of the vintage. Stylistically, this is my favorite of the entire Daniel Rion lineup that I tasted from the 2012 vintage. 2020-2050. **90+**.

2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Vignes Rondes”- Domaine Daniel Rion

The 2012 Les Vignes Rondes (a premier cru that lies just below Chaignots on the slope) was quite shut down and cranky at the Les Grands Jours tasting. I am not sure how recently it had been bottled, but it was not happy to be tasted! The nose is deep and grumpy, offering up scents of red and black cherries, coffee, game, incipient notes of forest floor and plenty of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and compacted (probably from the recent *mise*), with a fairly extracted and new oaky, chewy personality. Not a great moment to be trying to assess this wine! ???

2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Pruliers”- Domaine Daniel Rion

The 2012 Pruliers from Daniel Rion is a very good example of this vineyard, but it is a bit new oaky in personality at the present time. The nose offers up a youthfully promising blend of dark berries, cassis, woodsmoke, cocoa, gamebirds, dark soil and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with a fine core, nascent complexity and a long, focused and quite chewy finish. This does not have the same sense of unexpected early elegance as can be found in my favorite examples of Pruliers in 2012, but it is a

very well-made wine that should age well and prove to be quite good with sufficient bottle age. 2022-2050+. **92.**

Domaine Patrice Rion (Nuits St. Georges)

Patrice Rion is Daniel Rion's son and has had his own domaine for several years now. I had never had the pleasure to taste his wines before this year's Les Grands Jours, and they were very well-made and, not surprisingly, quite similar to his father's wines. The percentage of new oak here is again pretty high to my tastes, but the wines are reasonably competent in this particular style, though I did worry about the ultimate balance of wood to wine in a couple of bottlings.

2012 Nuits St. Georges "Vieilles Vignes"- Domaine Patrice Rion

Patrice Rion's Vieilles Vignes bottling was raised in thirty percent new oak in 2012 and had been bottled one month prior to the Les Grands Jours. This is a good wine in the making, offering up scents of red and black cherries, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, coffee and a fair bit of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and well-balanced, with suave tannins and a long, focused finish. This is fairly new oaky in style, but well-made. 2020-2045+. **88.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges "Clos des Argillières"- Domaine Patrice Rion

The Clos des Argillières is located in Prémieux, tucked in between Clos l'Arlot and Clos des Corvées. This had not yet been bottled at the time I tried it, but was assembled in tank and was to be bottled a few weeks after Les Grands Jours. It was raised in fifty percent new wood by Monsieur Rion and this seemed a bit heavy-handed to my palate. There are lovely raw materials under the overly-generous coating of new wood, as notes of black cherries, cassis, coffee bean and smoke fight against the heavy blast of oak spice. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and chewy, with a good core, but probably a bit too much new oak for its long-term health, as the wood currently dominates this wine on the backend. Maybe it will right the ship with bottle age- maybe. 2022-2055. **86.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges "Clos St. Marc"- Domaine Patrice Rion

Patrice Rion purchased the Clos St. Marc in 2006, and this Monopole premier cru is planted with sixty-five year-old vines. Sadly, to my palate, this wine too was over-oaked a bit. The wine is very black fruity in its fruit profile, offering up notes of cassis, dark berries, espresso, dark soil tones, smoke and plenty of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, chewy, and again, a bit dominated by its spicy oak component. The finish is long and primary, but also defined by some uncovered, drying wood tannins. Hard to see this ever rising fully above its new wood strait-jacket. 2022-2050. **86.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges Blanc "les Terres Blanches"- Domaine Patrice Rion

This white Nuits is produced from a blend of ninety percent chardonnay and ten percent pinot blanc and is quite tasty in 2012. The bouquet is a lovely blend of apple, a touch of quince, chalky soil tones, nutskins and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, reasonably crisp and complex. It is not especially fresh (particularly for such a young wine), but it is focused and well-balanced and should drink reasonably well in its youth. 2014-2020. **88.**

Domaines Visited and Tasted “Sur Place” in March and April:

Marsannay-la-Côte and Chenôve

Closerie des Alisiers- Maison Stéphane Brocard (Chenôve)

This was my first visit to Stéphane Brocard’s small négociant business, but I was quite excited to try a lineup of his 2012s, as I have liked the couple of bottles of his 2010s that have crossed my path in the last couple of years. His operation is an old-fashioned négociant business, in that he purchases small lots of finished wines from small growers and markets them under his Closerie des Alisiers label. Monsieur Brocard arrived here in the Côte de Nuits from Chablis in 2007, settling in Marsannay and starting his maison up in that year. From what I could tell from the lineup his Export Director, Lisa Vanon, prepared for our visit, the focus here is on high quality wines from lesser appellations that offer outstanding value, but Monsieur Brocard does also bottle a few premier and grand crus under his Closerie des Alisiers label as well in small quantities. As one might intuit from the name, Stéphane Brocard is related to the important Brocard family in Chablis, but Stéphane headed south to the Côte d’Or, rather than choosing to work alongside his brother Julien at the large family domaine in Chablis. Some of the bottlings from Monsieur Brocard carry the name of the proprietor he has purchased the wine from on the labels, whereas others simply are labeled with the Closerie des Alisiers label. I had the pleasure to taste the following lineup at Monsieur Brocard’s offices in Chenôve (just north of Marsannay), but make sure to call ahead for directions if you are making a visit, as these are not the easiest offices to find and in the grand French wine tradition, there is not a placard outside the door to tell you that you have indeed found the right place! Happily, Mademoiselle Vanon was on the lookout for us at the door to the office building, and I hope that perhaps a discreet placard will be organized here prior to my next visit, as I was on the verge of giving up and going off to get another espresso and croissant!

Vins Blancs

2013 Bourgogne Aligoté- Domaine de la Croix St. Germain (Stéphane Brocard)

This wine had only been bottled two weeks prior to my visit, but was showing quite well. The bouquet is a classic blend of lemon, green apple, chalky minerality and white flowers. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and quite long, with good balance, nice, framing acids and a nice signature of soil on the finish. A very good bottle of Aligoté. 2014-2020. 87.

2012 Bourgogne Aligoté- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

The 2012 Bourgogne Aligoté bottling under the Closerie des Alisiers label is also quite fine, with a riper nose than the 2013 version from Domaine de la Croix, but equally fine soil expression. The bouquet is a blend of lemon, stony soil tones, tart orange and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and wide open in personality, with good bounce and focus and sneaky length on the well-balanced finish. A good example. 2014-2017. 87.

2013 Bourgogne Hauts-Côtes-de-Nuits Blanc- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

This bottling had also only had its *mise* one week prior to my visit, but had not yet shut down and was showing quite well. The nose offers up scents of apple, grapefruit, chalky minerality and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and elegant in profile, with a good core, fine cut and grip and quite length on the finish. A very solid example and a fine value. 2014-2019. 87+.

2012 Pouilly-Fuissé “Trilogie des Terroirs”- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

The 2012 Pouilly-Fuissé “Trilogie des Terroirs” is half barrel-fermented and half raised in stainless steel tanks. This is quite a good bottle of Pouilly-Fuissé, offering up a bright and classic bouquet of apple, peach, toasty soil tones, citrus zest, white flowers and a nice underpinning of minerality. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and crisp, with a solid core and a long, focused and well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2014-2019. **89+**.

2013 Mâcon-Milly-Lamartine- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

I liked the 2013 Mâcon-Milly-Lamartine even a hair better than the 2012 Pouilly-Fuissé, as it offers up a bit more cut and mineral drive on the backend. The excellent bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, lime blossoms, complex minerality and a touch of lilies. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and focused, with fine bounce and grip and impressive backend minerality on the long finish. A lovely bottle of Mâcon. 2014-2020. **90**.

2012 Meursault- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

The 2012 Meursault from Closerie des Alisiers is comprised of wine from two different *lieux à dits*, as well as a small percentage of premier cru, and was raised in thirty percent new wood in this vintage. This is a very good bottle of Meursault, offering up a fine aromatic mélange of apple, iodine, a touch of passion fruit, hazelnuts, chalky soil tones and a nice base of vanillin wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with lovely cut and grip and a long, nascently complex and nicely focused finish. Good juice. 2014-2025+. **91+**.

2008 Auxey-Duresses Blanc “Cuvée Henry”- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

The 2008 Auxey-Duresses Blanc “Cuvée Henry” from Stéphane Brocard is a wine that he has held back in his cellars for a few years for his restaurant clients to utilize, as he reasons that it is nice for them to be able to offer customers a wine with a bit of bottle age on it for their wine lists. This is really quite lovely, offering up a bright and mature nose of lime, quince, chalky soil tones, a touch of smokiness and a nice note of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with lovely focus and delineation, bright acids and lovely length and grip. A lovely bottle at its apogee. 2014-2020. **90**.

Vins Rouges

2012 Bourgogne Pinot Noir- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

Monsieur Brocard’s Bourgogne rouge hails from vineyards in Couchey and Marsannay and is quite solid in 2012. The bouquet is a black fruity mix of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, soil and a bit of barnyard. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and has a good core, with a bit of backend tannin, tangy acids and good length and grip on the finish. This has just a touch of brett to it. 2014-2020+. **86+**.

2012 Marsannay- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

The fine 2010 bottling of Marsannay was the first wine that attracted my attention to Monsieur Brocard’s new project, and his 2012 is a very worthy follow-up. This cuvée is produced from a parcel of sixty to sixty-five year-old vines and the wine was showing very well at the time of my visit, despite having been bottled in mid-January. The bouquet is deep and classic in its mix of cassis, dark berries, grilled meat, dark chocolate, lovely soil tones and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and shows a bit of backend tannin, with a plump core of fruit, fine soil signature and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. A lovely bottle of Marsannay. 2014-2030. **89+**.

2012 Pommard “la Rue en Port”- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

This Pommard *villages* hails from a small parcel of vines that are owned by Monsieur Brocard and his 2012 version was raised in twenty percent new wood and also bottled in mid-January. The wine is excellent, offering up a deep and complex nose of black cherries, dark berries, cocoa, woodsmoke, a fine signature of soil and a bit of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and nicely structured, with a good core, chewy tannins and a bit of backend *herbacité* that is probably a reflection of the vintage’s hail in Pommard. This will be a lovely bottle, but give it some time to unlock from behind its chewy structure. 2022-2050. **91+**.

2011 Nuits St. Georges “la Cour des Miracles”- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

The 2011 Nuits “la Cour des Miracles” is a fine, fine example of Nuits St. Georges and should drink very well with only four or five years or bottle age. The deep and utterly classic bouquet delivers scents of dark berries, iodine, bitter chocolate, woodsmoke, gamebirds, dark soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and nicely transparent, with fine balance and focus, a superb core, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and very promising finish. Fine juice. 2018-2035+. **90.**

2010 Gevrey-Chambertin “les Champs Remy”- Closerie des Alisiers (Stéphane Brocard)

Again, this is a fine *villages* level bottling from Monsieur Brocard, who seems to like to focus on old vines at this level, rather than hunt around for less serious examples of premier crus. The excellent nose wafts from the glass in a complex and very refined blend of black cherries, cassis, grilled meats, woodsmoke, black minerality and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off the 2010 vintage’s plush purity of fruit on the attack, with a lovely core, ripe, suave tannins and superb length and grip. A very serious Gevrey AC. 2017-2035. **91.**

Domaine Bart (Marsannay-la-Côte)

I always enjoy my visit to Domaine Bart in Marsannay-la-Côte, as their lineup of lieux à dits in the village is second to none and I have the distinct impression that these wines are getting better and better with each passing vintage. It is now starting to look probably that the long overdue introduction of a few premier crus in the village is going to become a reality in the next few years, as the “les officials” at the INAO seem to be a bit more favorably inclined towards the proposition to elevate a few of the finest vineyards here to premier cru status. As there are a couple of premier crus in next door Fixin that do not seem to my palate to be superior terroirs to the best vineyards in Marsannay, it certainly seems logical to finally give a couple of premier crus to the village of Marsannay- particularly for parcels such as Clos du Roy, Clos de Jeu or Champs Salomon. Most of the 2012s at Domaine Bart had been bottled a couple of months before my visit in early April and the wines had bounced back quite nicely and were showing very well indeed. A couple remained assembled in tank for bottling in the second or third week of April. Domaine Bart is really at the top of their game right now and if you are looking for very high class, well-made Burgundies that offer up a semblance of value in these overheated times of heady pricing, this is a domaine that should be right at the top of your shopping list! Superb 2012s from the Bart family this year!

2012 Marsannay “les Finottes”- Domaine Bart

The les Finottes *lieu à dit* is a Monopole of the Bart family, and lies just above Ouzeloy on the slope. Their 2012 version was showing beautifully at the time of my visit, offering up a

deep and classy nose of black cherries, cassis, espresso, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a gentle touch of meatiness. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and succulent on the attack, with fine elegance, a good core, just a touch of backend tannin and impressive length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice that will drink well from an early age and would be an excellent bottle for well-stocked wine lists with an eye towards offering their clientele value. 2014-2025. **88+**.

2012 Marsannay “Longerois”- Domaine Bart

The 2012 Longerois from Domaine Bart was raised in twenty percent new wood, with one-third of the cuvée seeing no wood at all and fermented and kept in stainless steel tank to add a bit more early fruitiness to the bottling. This is really a lovely wine for early drinking, as the 2012 Longerois offers up a classy nose of black cherries, dark berries, grilled meat, French roast, dark soil tones and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely plump on the attack (from the one-third raised in stainless tanks?), with a fine core, just a touch of backend tannin adding grip and structure and a long, focused finish of lovely style and bounce. A really fine example that will not demand bottle age before it blossoms. 2014-2030. **89**.

2012 Marsannay “St. Jacques”- Domaine Bart

The St. Jacques bottling from the Bart family is one of their younger vine parcels, as these vines are only seventeen years of age, but are starting to get close to a “*bonne age*” and the 2012 was just singing at the time of my visit. In this vintage, twenty percent whole clusters were used and the wine was also raised in twenty percent new wood, with some of the barrels the larger *demi-muids* to keep the oak influence as discreet as possible. The excellent nose wafts from the glass in a mix of cassis, a touch of currant leaf, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, incipient notes of meatiness and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just a tad more reserved in profile than the first two bottlings, with fine mid-palate depth, a bit of fine-grained tannin and a very long, transparent and classy finish. Give this fine bottle a couple of years in the cellar to really blossom. A great value. 2016-2030+. **89+**.

2012 Marsannay “Grandes Vignes”- Domaine Bart

The 2012 Grandes Vignes produced some of the shortest yields of the entire vintage amongst the Bart family’s plots of vines, as these forty year-old vines struggled during the *floraison* and only produced seventeen hectoliters per hectare in this vintage! The wine was also produced with twenty percent whole clusters and twenty percent new wood, with plenty of *demi-muids* used, and it offers up a really lovely and black fruity nose of cassis, dark berries, a nice touch of medicinal tones (very reminiscent of young Mazis-Chambertin!), dark soil, a touch of game and a gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core, ripe, chewy tannins and a very long, well-balanced and promising finish. Fine juice in the making here. 2019-2040. **90+**.

2012 Marsannay “Echézots”- Domaine Bart

Echézots is one of the coolest *climats* in Marsannay, and this parcel is always the last to be picked by the Bart family (even after the grand crus of Bonnes-Mares and Clos de Bèze). Yields here were only off ten percent from a normal crop (showing how much variation there could be in terms of yields in the Côte de Nuits), and as this wine was a bit slower to finish up its malo, it had only been in bottle three weeks at the time of my early April visit. The wine is lovely and shows a nice sense of reserve in its aromatic constellation of dark berries, black cherries, a fine base of soil, dried violets, coffee, gentle new wood and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is dee4p, fullish and potentially velvety, with a very good core of fruit, lovely

focus and elegance, suave tannins and a long, complex and classy finish. This will be a lovely wine. 2017-2035. **90+**.

2012 Marsannay “Clos du Roy”- Domaine Bart

The 2012 Clos du Roy was raised in fifty percent new wood this year, rather than the customary twenty-five percent, as the short crop here resulted in surplus barrels and the Barts decided to use some for their Clos du Roy. This is relatively a new bottling for the family, and these fifty to sixty year-old vines have produced a lovely wine in 2012 that has no difficulties carrying its extra new wood quite seamlessly, as it offers up a complex nose of black cherries, plums, woodsmoke, cocoa, a fine base of soil and a nice framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and nascently complex, with a superb core, ripe tannins and a very long finish that shows just a touch of its stems today from the inclusion of some whole clusters during the fermentation. High class Marsannay (despite the *climat* actually lying over the border in Chenôve). 2019-2040. **91+**.

2012 Marsannay “Champs Salomon”- Domaine Bart

The 2012 Champs Salomon was the last of the family’s Marsannay cuvées to be bottled this year, as this wine had only been in bottle one week at the time of my visit! Nevertheless, the wine was showing outstanding promise in its excellent bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, espresso, a touch of iodine, complex soil tones, woodsmoke and new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite primary in personality, with an excellent core, ripe tannins and a very long, pure and velvety finish. This is going to be an outstanding bottle of Marsannay. 2019-2040. **92**.

2012 Fixin “les Hervelets”- Domaine Bart

The 2012 les Hervelets was really showing well in early April, wafting from the glass in a fine and complex nose of cassis, small, dark berries, iodine, grilled venison, dark soil tones and a touch of chicory in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a good core, lovely soil signature, a bit of ripe, chewy tannins and fine length and grip on the primary finish. This will be excellent. 2020-2045. **91+**.

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “les Veroilles”- Domaine Bart

The second vintage of Domaine Bart’s Veroilles is outstanding in 2012. As I noted last year in the inaugural vintage for this wine, the plot of vines lies in an outcropping of *terres blanches* directly above the family’s holdings in Bonnes-Mares, and there were only two barrels of this lovely Chambolle in the short crop of 2012. The wine offers up a superb and very sappy nose of black cherries, plums, cocoa, a fine base of chalky soil tones, violets and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and sappy in the mid-palate, with fine-grained, moderate tannins, lovely bounce and focus and a long, soil-driven and very classy finish. Lovely Chambolle! 2019-2035+. **91**.

2012 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Domaine Bart

The Domaine Bart Clos de Bèze in 2012 is exceptional, soaring from the glass in a nascently complex and very pure aromatic blend of cassis, dark berries, grilled meats, espresso, a very complex base of black minerality, woodsmoke and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and brilliantly transparent out of the blocks, with a rock solid core, a fine sense of reserve, excellent focus and grip and a very, very long, soil-driven and ripely tannic finish. Fine, fine juice. 2022-2060. **94+**.

2012 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Bart

As I noted last year, Domaine Bart’s parcel of Bonnes-Mares lies directly above that of the Comte de Vogüé on the slope, and consequently, this wine is almost entirely *terres blanches*

(as the *terres rouges* section of the vineyard lies further down the slope here in the Comte de Vogüé section). These are the oldest vines that the domaine possesses, with the parcel ranging from ninety to one hundred and five years of age, and they have produced a masterpiece in 2012. The stunning bouquet is a mix of dark berries, black cherries, venison, espresso, woodsmoke, a great base of soil tones, mustard seed and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a superb synthesis of transparency and potential sappiness, fine-grained tannins, outstanding balance and excellent length and grip on the focused and magical finish. A great example of Bonnes-Mares. 2022-2060+. **96.**

Gevrey-Chambertin

Maison Pierre Bourée Fils (Gevrey-Chambertin)

The 2012 Maison Pierre Bourée Fils wines were in varying stages of élevage at the time of my late March visit, with some already bottled and others assembled in tank and awaiting bottling over the next week or so. I had the pleasure to taste with both Monsieur Louis Vallet and his son, Bernard Vallet, who has been in charge of the winemaking here for many years. The 2012 white wines had all been bottled prior to my visit, and I am assuming that we tasted a representative sampling of the lineup here, but as so many of the villages in which the Vallets purchase grapes for their white wines were devastated by the vintage's hail, the crop is extremely short and I saw no reason to ask to open more bottles than what the family had prepared (if indeed there are other whites wines here from 2012). Some of the red wines had also been bottled prior to my visit at the end of March, while others were assembled in tank in preparation for imminent bottling and others were still in cask. A few of the wine were a bit reduced at the time of my visit (nothing new here, as the domaine does not use much new oak and it is not uncommon to find a few wines rather reductive prior to their racking in these cold cellars- but, this is much better than oxidative wines in cask!) and I have not published notes on the wines that were not on form. Overall, it is a very strong vintage for the Vallet family, with only the tiny size of the crop dampening the spirits of Monsieur Louis Vallet, as he is very content with the quality of the 2012 Pierre Bourée wines. But, the crop size was very small, and Monsieur Vallet emphasized that they felt very fortunate to have a fairly good supply of older vintages in the cellar and available for sale, as it would certainly be crisis time after the short crops of 2010, 2011 and now 2012, if there were not some older vintages in the cellar to buffer the pain of such a small crop size in 2012.

2012 Vins Blancs

2012 Bourgogne Blanc- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The Bourgogne Blanc from Maison Pierre Bourée Fils is a blend of both Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune fruit, which gives a lovely example. The bouquet on the 2012 offers up a fine and quite floral nose of peach, pear, acacia blossom, a touch of fresh almond and a dollop of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, succulent and impressively long, with nice framing acids, a very good core and fine grip on the fairly long finish. A fine Bourgogne Blanc. 2014-2018. **88.**

2012 Auxey-Duresses Blanc- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

I really like the 2012 Auxey-Duresses Blanc from the Vallets, as the wine really shows outstanding and complex minerality and superb vibrancy and cut. The bouquet is pure and classy, jumping from the glass in a mix of apple, a touch of tangerine, white flowers, chalky minerality, iodine and a gentle touch of nuttiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is

deep, full-bodied and nicely defined by its chalky soil component, with crisp acids, fine focus and cut and a long, juicy finish. High class juice and a real bargain! 2014-2025. **90.**

2012 Meursault- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Meursault AC from Maison Pierre Bourée Fils is another excellent example of the vintage and a very strong village wine. The superb nose offers up scents of tangerine, hazelnut, stony soil tones, iodine, gentle smokiness and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core, very good balance, tangy acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and zesty finish. Classic Meursault. 2018-2035+. **91+.**

2012 Puligny-Montrachet- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Puligny AC from the Vallet family is also very fine, but it does not share quite the same purity and precision as the Meursault *villages* this year. The bouquet is a lovely, nutty blend of pink grapefruit, apple, touch of iodine, chalky soil tones, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly broad-shouldered, with a good core and a long, crisp and well-balanced finish. This is quite a tasty bottle, but it will not last as well as the Meursault AC, and probably due to the hail in this village, is not quite as precise as it could have been, Still, a tasty bottle with plenty of personality. 2016-2030. **90+.**



Messieurs Louis and Bernard Vallet, nephew and grand-nephew of maison founder Pierre Bourée.

2012 Vins Rouges

2012 Santenay “Gravains”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Santenay “Gravains” had been racked once and was still in barrel, awaiting its *assemblage* and eventual bottling. This is going to be a lovely and red fruity middleweight, as the wine offers up scents of strawberries, cherries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, coffee and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and already showing nice shadings of the autumnal tones to come, with lovely intensity of flavor and fine length and grip on the gently tannic finish. Very tasty. 2018-2035. **89+**.

2012 Volnay- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The extremely low yields of the vintage in Volnay are in evidence in this fairly chewy village wine. The bouquet is deep and quite black fruity in its blend of dark berries, black cherries, cocoa, woodsmoke, a bit of fresh fig and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, fine length and grip and a bit of the chewy tannins of a 2012 Volnay perking up the finish. A good example. 2018-2035. **89+**.

2012 Beaune “Epenottes”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Beaune “Epenottes” had not yet been racked and was really singing at the time of my visit. The wine delivers a superb bouquet of sappy red and black cherries, plums, cocoa, gamebirds, lovely soil tones and a fine topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite velvety on the attack, with a sappy core, ripe tannins and a long, beautifully balanced and quite classy finish. This will be excellent. 2019-2040. **92+**.

2012 Corton- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

As I have noted in the past, the Bourée Corton hails entirely from the *lieu à dit* of Renardes, but the Vallets do not print this on the label. The 2012 is going to be outstanding, as it offers up very suave tannins for a 2012 Côte de Beaune and marvelous depth and nascent complexity. The bouquet is a fine mélange of red and black cherries, a bit of smoked meats, cocoa, a complex base of soil, a whisper of violets and a discreet framing of vanillin oak (the wine was raised in fifty percent new barrels this year, but seems less oaky than that). On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, composed and quite suave on the attack, with a fine core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. Fine, fine juice. 2025-2065+. **94**.

2012 Fixin “la Croix Blanche”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 la Croix Blanche (this is a *villages*, not a premier cru) had been bottled less than three weeks before my visit, but was still showing quite well. The wine offers up a black fruity nose of cassis, dark berries, new leather, smoke and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and properly chewy, with a fine core, firm, ripe tannins and very good length and grip on the finish. This will need some bottle age to blossom, but will be very good and a fine value. 2020-2040. **90**.

2012 Morey St. Denis- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Morey St. Denis from Maison Pierre Bourée Fils was still in barrel and was to be bottled soon after my visit. This is really a lovely village wine this year, offering up a deep and complex bouquet of black cherries, plums, woodsmoke, venison, soil tones that will become autumnal quite briskly and a topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite vibrant, with a good core, moderate tannins and lovely focus and balance on the long and classy finish. This will drink beautifully from release. 2014-2035. **90+**.

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos de la Justice”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

To my mind, the Clos de la Justice from the Vallet family is always premier cru quality and the 2012 is no exception. The wine had been bottled only two week prior to my visit, but was showing excellent potential in its aromatic blend of black cherries, cassis, grilled meats, woodsmoke, bitter chocolate and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and grip, excellent balance and a long, ripely tannic finish. Fine juice. 2020-2050. **91+**.

2012 Clos de la Roche- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Clos de la Roche from Maison Pierre Bourée Fils was still in barrel and was to be racked and assembled a week after my visit. This is a superb example of both the vintage and this outstanding cru, soaring from the glass in a mix of black plums, black cherries, gamebirds, French roast, woodsmoke, a very complex base of soil and a nice framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully balanced, with a superb core, great refinement and focus and a very long, suavely tannic and transparent finish. A superb Clos de la Roche. 2022-2060. **94**.

2012 Charmes-Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Charmes-Chambertin from the Vallets had already been bottled, but it was very much on form and showed great potential. These ninety year-old vines have produced a stellar wine in 2012, offering up a deep and very pure bouquet of red and black cherries, coffee, grilled meats, a superbly complex base of soil tones, just a touch of mustard seed and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nascently complex, with a sappy core of fruit, fine-grained tannins, outstanding focus and grip and a very long, refined and perfectly balanced finish. 2022-2060. **94+**.

2012 Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2012 Chambertin from Maison Pierre Bourée Fils was still in barrel, but had already been racked and was to be bottled not long after my visit at the end of March. This too is utterly superb, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of red and black cherries, plums, grilled meat, a complex base of soil, cocoa, smoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully reserved out of the blocks, with a sappy core of fruit, great soil inflection, ripe, suave tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and utterly refined finish. A classic and very fine example of Chambertin. 2025-2075. **95+**.

Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy (Gevrey-Chambertin)

The Harmands' yields in 2012 were quite typical of those more fortunate in the Côte de Nuits, as they were down on average about twenty-five percent. This is not ideal of course, but in comparison to the seventy-five or eighty percent loses of domaines in villages like Pommard and Volnay, this is not too bad. I have been visiting the domaine regularly since the 2008 vintage (I believe), and these stellar 2012s are clearly the finest set of wines I have yet tasted from this outstanding Gevrey estate. I tasted with Monsieur Harmand on the last day of March, and all of the wines had been bottled at the end of February, with the exception of the Mazis-Chambertin and Champeaux, which had only been bottled one week before my visit. The entire range here is excellent, and in this vintage, one must emphatically not ignore the beautiful foursome of village Gevreys crafted here, as they are all very serious and very classy wines that perfectly reflect the inherent elegance and sappiness of this vintage in the Côte de Nuits.

2012 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

There is a lovely red fruity quality to the Bourgogne this year from the Harmands, as the wine offers up a very stylish nose of cherries, red plums, cocoa, a nice touch of Gevrey meatiness and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and nicely sappy, with a gentle base of tannin, lovely soil signature and a long, transparent finish. This is really classy juice for a regional bottling. 2014-2020+. **88.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The village wines from Harmand-Geoffroy are particularly successful in 2012, with the entry level Gevrey AC offering up a fine nose of red and black cherries, cocoa, mustard seed, dark soil tones, , woodsmoke and grilled meats. On the palate is deep, full-bodied, pure and very classy, with a fine, sappy core of fruit, excellent soil signature, a nice framing of moderate tannins and impressive length and grip. This is a very classy village wine. 2019-2040. **90.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “en Jouse”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “en Jouse” bottling from Monsieur Harmand is excellent, as the sixty-five year-old vines here have turned out a wine that is equally pure, but perhaps a bit deeper and sappier at the core. The lovely bouquet is more black fruity in its mélange of sweet dark berries, black cherries, espresso, black minerality, grilled meats and fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and really impressive defined by its minerality, with a sappy core of black fruit, fine acids, suave tannins and a very long, well-balanced and sophisticated finish. Lovely juice. 2020-2040+. **90+.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

As I mentioned last year, the Gevrey V.V. comes from vines in the fifty year range, with most of these from the northern end of Gevrey towards the Combe de Lavau, augmented by a small parcel right below Mazis-Chambertin. The 2012 Vieilles Vignes is excellent and a step up from the first two village bottlings, offering up an excellent nose of cassis, dark berries, grilled meat, espresso, dark soil tones, a touch of licorice and cedar. On the palate the wine is a touch fuller than the en Jouse, with a rock solid core, fine minerality, ripe tannins and a very long, tangy and impressively precise and focused finish. This is outstanding. 2020-2045+. **91+.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos Prieur”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

As I have noted in the past, the Clos Prieur bottling from the Harmands is a blend of the estate’s holdings in both the village level section of the vineyard (seventy percent of the cuvée) and the premier cru section (thirty percent), with the parcel of premier cru vines forty years of age and the village wine section comprised of vines that are eighty to eighty-five years-old, making this probably one of the very best village wines in the entire village. The 2012 is not going to disappoint anyone savvy enough to buy it, as it offers up a stellar bouquet of black cherries, dark berries, grilled meat, bitter chocolate, mustard seed, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil and a nice framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with excellent mid-palate depth, fine-grained tannins and a very long, refined and youthful finish that beautifully synthesizes sappy black fruit and excellent transparency. This is top premier cru quality without a doubt in 2012 and a great value. 2022-2050. **92.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Bousière”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The domaine’s vines in la Bousière are the youngest in their entire lineup, and though they have now reached the very respectable age of twenty-five, they do not deliver the same inner core of sappiness and soil signature as the best old vine parcels with which the family works. The 2012 was raised in thirty percent new wood and is a very pretty and stylish example of the vintage, wafting from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, a touch of

nutskin, a fine base of soil, fresh herbs and a discreet base of new wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and already quite silky on the attack, with good, but not great depth at the core, ripe tannins and a long, tangy finish. This is a very good wine that will drink well with only five or six years of bottle age, and should keep very well, but it is not appreciably superior to the best village wines in the cellar this year. 2019-2045. **91.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Perrière”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Perrière” from Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy is absolutely stellar and a gorgeous example of this oft overlooked, outstanding premier cru. The pure and very elegant nose soars from the glass in a blend of sweet dark berries, sappy black cherries, licorice, dark chocolate, black minerality, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and stunningly transparent, with a sappy core of fruit, fine-grained tannins and a very long, complex and gorgeously focused finish. This is a great bottle in the making. 2022-2060. **93+.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Lavaux St. Jacques”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2012 Harmand-Geoffroy Lavaux St. Jacques is also a strikingly beautiful example of its *terroir*, delivering a pure and complex bouquet of cassis, black cherries, a touch of eucalyptus, woodsmoke, cocoa, dark soil tones, cedar and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and soil-driven, with a black fruity and sappy mid-palate, ripe, suave tannins and a very long, tangy and complex finish. Another outstanding bottle. 2022-2060. **93+.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

As the Champeaux had only been in bottle a week prior to my visit, it was understandably still a bit shaken up from the recent *mise* and not particularly happy about being opened and tasted. That said, this will clearly be an excellent wine when it has recovered a bit from the bottling. The still slightly agitated nose is a blend of red and black cherries, a touch of dark berry, lovely spice tones, dark soil, grilled meats and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and very soil-driven, with a rock solid core, fine focus and outstanding backend energy and grip on the well-balanced and ripely tannic finish. Probably, by a small margin, this will be the best of all the premier crus, but it is hard to say that with certainty today. 2022-2060. **93-94.**

2012 Mazis-Chambertin- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2012 Mazis-Chambertin had also only been in bottle one week when I tasted it, but it was a bit less grumpy than the Champeaux. This will be a stunning wine by any measure, wafting from the glass in a complex constellation of cassis, sweet dark berries, black minerality, grilled meats, woodsmoke, a touch of licorice and a nice base of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and pure, with a rock solid core, superb, nascent complexity, great focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and a very long, absolutely refined and promising finish. This is an absolute classic in the making. 2025-2075. **96.**

Morey St. Denis

Domaine Taupenot-Merme (Morey St. Denis)

Romaine Taupenot is really making superb wines these days and his lineup of 2012s was exemplary. I really like the range of Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits wines in the lineup here, as this is one of those domaines where it is easy to get an appreciation for the very different vintages that vigneron on each end of the Côte d’Or faced in 2012. The Côte de Beaune reds

here were not too rustic in structure (with the exception of the Saint Romain rouge), which is to the credit of Monsieur Taupenot, and the entire range of Côte de Nuits reds was outstanding.

2012 Saint Romain Rouge- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

Romain Taupenot lost fully eighty percent of production in his Saint Romain pinot noir vines in 2012, through a combination of hail and poor flowering, and this wine is the only 2012 in the domaine's lineup that shows a tad rustic from its suffering over the growing season. The nose is a mix of cherries, red berries, woodsmoke, herbs and soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full and a bit edgy in structure, with good acidity, but with the tannins borderline dry and the structural elements perhaps a bit sturdier than the fruit this year. It will need some time to soften, and should be okay. 2018-2030. **85+?**

2012 Auxey-Duresses- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2012 Auxey-Duresses from Domaine Taupenot-Merme is really a very pretty village wine and a ringing success for this vintage, as hail did not spare the village of Auxey in this brutal summer. The wine offers up a very refined and classy nose of cherries, pomegranate, gamebird, mustard seed, lovely soil tones and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very nicely balanced, with a good core, much suaver tannins than in the Saint Romain rouge and lovely length and grip on the focused finish. This is really a fine bottle of village wine. 2018-2035. **88.**

2012 Auxey-Duresses "Premier Cru"- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

As I have noted in the past, Domaine Taupenot-Merme's premier cru bottling from Auxey-Duresses is a blend of two crus, les Duresses and les Bréterins, and this proved very lucky in 2012, as les Duresses was not hit by hail. Consequently, the yields for this bottling were only down twenty-five percent, which is far better than the sixty or seventy percent of so many bottlings from the Côte de Beaune this year. This is really going to be a lovely wine, as it offers up a stylish nose of cherries, red plums, smoke, a touch of nutskin, gamebirds, a fine base of soil and mustard seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very red fruity in personality, with a fine core of fruit, tangy acids, ripe tannins and lovely length and grip on the youthful finish. A fine result. 2019-2040+. **90+.**

2012 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2012 Chambolle AC from Romaine Taupenot is a lovely example of the vintage, with the silky tannic structure of the best Côte de Nuits bottlings very much in evidence. The bouquet is a pretty blend of red and black cherries, cola, venison (the vines here are on the Morey side of the village and abut Clos de la Bussière), vinesmoke and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, long and tangy, with a fine core, suave tannins and very good length and grip on the focused and quite stylish finish. A lovely Chambolle AC. 2018-2035. **89.**

2012 Morey St. Denis- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

I was very impressed by the early elegance found in the Morey wines from Taupenot-Merme in 2012, and this impression starts right off with this very strong *villages*. The deep and classic nose wafts from the glass in a mix of damsons, venison, sweet dark berries, French roast, dried violets, fresh herbs and dark soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and velvety on the attack, with a fine core, a very elegant personality this year, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy finish that closes with fine soil signature and lovely grip. High class AC. 2019-2035. **90.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2012 Gevrey *villages* was also showing very well at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a classic blend of red and black cherries, a touch of plum, cocoa, nutskin, a fine base of soil and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, elegant and intensely flavored, with a sappy core, bright acids and a long, modestly tannic and nicely balanced finish. Fine juice. 2019-2035+. **90.**

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “la Combe d’Orveau”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

Romain Taupenot has old vines in Combe d’Orveau- sixty-six years of age in fact in 2012, and the wine has turned out beautifully in this vintage. It was raised in thirty percent new wood and offers up an excellent bouquet of red plums, cherries, cocoa, gamebirds, a superb base of soil, mustard seed, fresh thyme, coffee and a gentle framing of vanillin wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very refined, with a sappy core, lovely soil signature, suave tannins and a long, complex and potentially elegant finish. 2020-2055. **92+.**

2012 Morey St. Denis “la Riotte”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The Taupenot parcel in the premier cru of la Riotte is also not young vines, as these are now more than fifty-five years of age. This is very transparent and refined in 2012, delivering a superb nose of red and black cherries, espresso, woodsmoke, gamebirds, a touch of chicory, dark soil tones and a touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with a fine core of fruit, firm, ripe tannins and a long, primary and focused finish that closes with a bit of youthful *herbacité* today. This will be lovely wine, but give it some time to blossom. 2020-2055. **92.**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Bel Air”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2012 Bel Air from Domaine Taupenot-Merme is really refined and transparent this year, with the structural polish of the vintage in the Côte de Nuits very much in evidence. The outstanding bouquet wafts from the glass in a pure blend of red and black cherries, a touch of grilled meat, raw cocoa, a beautiful base of dark soil tones, mustard seed, vinesmoke and a judicious framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very fresh, with a vivid, sappy core of fruit, outstanding soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a long, poised and tangy finish. Lovely juice in the making here! 2022-2055. **92+.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “les Pruliers”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The domaine’s parcel in les Pruliers really struggled at *floraison* in 2012, so this wine was produced from only twenty hectoliters per hectare. The wine is going to be excellent, as it delivers a fine and nascently complex nose of dark berries, black cherries, chicory, a bit of cola, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, nutskin and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with lovely early complexity, superb transparency, ripe, suave tannins and outstanding length and grip on the well-balanced finish. All this needs is time. 2022-2060. **92+.**

2012 Corton “Rognet”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2012 Corton “Rognet” from Romain Taupenot is also a fine bottle in the making. The bouquet is a complex and spicy mélange of cherries, cloves, mustard seed, red currants, venison, stony soil tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is young, deep and full-bodied, with a superb core of fruit, ripe, chewy and well-integrated tannins, fine focus and a very long, soil-driven and intensely flavored finish. This will be excellent. 2025-2075. **93+.**

2012 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

Domaine Taupenot-Merme’s parcel in Charmes-Chambertin lies right up at the top of the slope, just across the *chemin* from Clos de Bèze. The wine is going to be outstanding in 2012, as

is wafts from the glass in a complex and classy mix of cherries, strawberries, grilled meat, a fine base of black minerality, fresh herb tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and vibrant, with a rock solid core of fruit, outstanding transparency, fine-grained tannins, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex and refined finish. Great juice in the making. 2025-2075. **94.**

2012 Mazoyères-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2012 Mazoyères-Chambertin from Domaine Taupenot-Merme is also superb, with a very refined and surprisingly red fruity personality this year. The superb bouquet delivers scents of cherries, red plums, grilled meat, coffee, a superbly complex base of soil, mustard seed and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very vibrant, with a superb core of fruit, superb soil signature, excellent focus and balance and a very long, pure and suavely tannic finish. In what is a very impressive lineup of 2012s, this will be the best in the cellar this year! 2025-2075. **94+.**

Chambolle-Musigny

Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig (Chambolle-Musigny)

I had a superb visit with Gilbert Felettig during this spring trip and sampled most of the 2012s in the cellar here. Monsieur Felettig had bottled everything from the vintage between the 25th of January and the 15th of February of this year, so most wines were already nicely recovered by the time I had a chance to drop by on the last day of March. As readers may recall from my write up of the domaine's 2011s, the Felettigs have just over five hectares of vines, with small holdings in Chambolle premier cru parcels of Feusselottes, Combottes, Carrières and Charmes, as well as a small slice of Echézeaux. The family also has small parcels in three different Vosne premier crus, including Reignots, Chaumes and Petits Monts, but as each parcel is so tiny, the domaine makes a single, blended Premier Cru bottling from these plots of vines. The Felettig lineup is rounded out by a few parcels that they rent, including a bit of Grands Echézeaux, village wine parcels in Nuits St. Georges and Gevrey-Chambertin and a bit of Bourgogne Haute Côte de Nuits Rouge and Bourgogne Haute Côte de Beaune Blanc. A few of the wines here were bottled with a slightly higher percentage of new oak than is customary, as Monsieur Felettig was another vigneron who did not wish to return new barrels to his tonnelier when it became apparent that the crop was going to be tiny in this vintage. The 2012s are uniformly excellent this year and were really showing well at the time of my visit, and as I stated last year, Domaine Felettig is clearly one of the rising stars in Chambolle-Musigny. As the yields are so short in 2012, and the parcels here are already small enough to begin with, I did not ask to taste either of the grand crus from the domaine, as there are not going to be enough bottles of those wines for a thirsty clientele in 2012. But, given how fine the premier crus are here, it would be foolhardy to not purchase one of the two grand crus here from 2012 if they are offered, as I cannot imagine they are anything short of exquisite.

2012 Haute Côte de Beaune “En Vallerot” Blanc- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2012 Haute Côte de Beaune Blanc from the Felettigs is a pretty wine that will drink very well from release. The bouquet is a blend of lime blossoms, apple, chalky soil tones and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and juicy, with a good core and nice bounce and grip on the reasonably long finish. A very pleasant example for near-term quaffing. 2014-2020. **87.**

2012 Haute Côte de Nuits Rouge- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The grapes for the Haute Côte de Nuits Rouge all come from Ladoix, with an exposition of due east. This was one of the few reds here from 2012 that I thought was still a bit closed from its recent *mise*, but there are good underlying materials here. The nose is a red fruity blend of cherries, cranberries, fine soil tones, smoke and a touch of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and nicely structured, with a solid core and good length and grip on the tangy finish. This should drink very well from a young age- once it has had a chance to recover from its bottling. 2014-2025. **87-88.**



Gilbert Felettig outside of his family domaine, with the vineyard of les Feusselottes in the background.

2012 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The Chambolle *villages* bottling from Domaine Felettig comes from several plots of vines from *lieux à dits* on both ends of the village (including les Fremiets) and the average age of the vines for this cuvée is fifty years of age. The 2012 was raised in thirty percent new wood this year and is quite a fine example, offering up scents of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, a lovely base of soil, mustard seed and a bit of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely structured, with very good mid-palate depth, ripe tannins and fine length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice in the making. 2019-2040. **89+.**

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “Clos le Village”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The Clos le Village is a monopole of the of the domaine and is planted with forty year-old vines. This was one of the cuvées that Monsieur Felettig upped the percentage of new wood for in 2012, due to the very short crop, and this wine was raised entirely in new oak. Impressively, it showed almost no signs of over-oaking at the time of my visit. The nose is a lovely and classic Chambolle blend of cherries, red berries, mustard seed, chalky minerality and a deft framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and intensely flavored, with lovely transparency, a fine core and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. This has enough structure to want five or six years in the cellar to fully blossom and should drink very well for twenty-five to thirty years. Good juice. 2020-2050. **90+**.

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “les Combottes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The Felettigs have fifty year-old vines in the premier cru of Combottes, and their 2012 was raised in the customary fifty percent new wood for this cuvée. The excellent nose jumps from the glass in a mix of cherries, red plums, cocoa, mustard seed a lovely base of soil and a nice touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a sappy core, fine elegance, ripe, suave tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. Very fine indeed. 2020-2050. **92**.

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “les Feusselottes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The Felettigs’ parcel in Feusselottes is slightly older than their Combottes, as these vines are fifty-eight years of age. This was one of the premier crus that saw more new wood, due to the low yields, as it was raised entirely in new barrels, but like the Clos de Village, it does not show any signs of over-oaking. The lovely nose delivers a blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, woodsmoke, chalky soil tones, fresh herbs, just a touch of cigar wrapper and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and a bit more open on the attack than the Combottes (bit more micro-oxygenation from the higher percentage of new wood?), with a fine core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2019-2045+. **92**.

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “les Carrières”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2012 Chambolle-Musigny “les Carrières” from Domaine Felettig is really lovely, as this very chalky *climat* has a great base of hard limestone that really delivers great bounce and breed. The excellent nose delivers scents of red plums, sappy cherries, cocoa, stony chalky, a touch of fresh thyme and a fine framing of vanillin oak. I did not ask, but I intuit that this wine was also raised in its customary fifty percent new wood, based on its closer structural similarity to the Combottes than the Feusselottes. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and sappy at the core, with suave tannins, fine focus and very good grip on the long, nascently complex finish. This will be lovely, but give it five or six years. 2020-2050+. **92+**.

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “les Charmes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

As I noted last year, the domaine’s vines in Charmes are located right along the road that runs up from the center of Vougeot to the center of Chambolle, so this is on the side of the vineyard across from les Hauts Doix and les Amoureuses. These are also old vines (in excess of fifty years old) and the 2012 is excellent, wafting from the glass in a plummy and very refined nose of cherries, red plums, cocoa, roses, a superb base of chalky soil tones, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with a lovely sappiness at the core, superb soil signature, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex and very classy finish. 2020-2050. **93+**.

2012 Vosne-Romanée “Premier Cru”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The Felettigs truly have tiny holdings in the premier crus of Reignots, Petits Monts and Chaumes, as between the parcels, they only have a quarter of a hectare of vines. All three parcels have been farmed *biodynamically* since 2008. The 2012 is absolutely outstanding, offering up scents of red plums, raspberries, cocoa, a fine, complex base of soil, violets, Vosne spice and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and velvety, with lovely purity and transparency, suave, refined tannins, excellent focus and balance and a very long, complex and very classy finish. An excellent Vosne premier crus. 2022-2050+. **93+**.

Vosne-Romanée

Domaine Georges Noëllat (Vosne-Romanée)

I was introduced to young Maxime Cheurlin back in November of 2011 and I have had the pleasure now to follow his impressive progression from his first vintage of 2010 up through this magical and utterly assured set of 2012s. That he was a very talented vigneron on the rise was readily apparent from my first tasting of his 2010s, but in only a few vintages, he has gained a sure-handedness in the cellar that is very rare in a vigneron of his relative youth, and anyone who is fortunate enough to cross paths with bottles of his brilliant 2012s is going to count himself blessed! The entire cellar had been bottled fifteen days prior to my visit, but despite the recent mise, the wines were entirely on form and really showing stunningly well. Monsieur Cheurlin has reduced the percentage of new wood he is using for some of his cuvées since his first vintage of 2010, and there is not a single wine in his cellars in 2012 that I would not absolutely want to have in my own personal collection. A few of the wines have a bit more whole clusters in use in 2012 than was the case in 2010, and this too has added to their complexity and potential for longevity. As a group, the 2012 Domaine Georges Noëllat wines are utterly suave, seductive and velvety wines that perfectly capture the depth and purity that is inherent in the very finest wines of the vintage, with a refinement to their structures and an unerring sense of balance that will carry them far into the future, despite the fact that several of them are going to be so delicious out of the blocks that they are going to be extremely hard not to want to open and drink in their bloom of youth! This has been a superstar domaine on the rise since 2010, but with this sterling set of 2012s, one can clearly say that Maxime Cheurlin has arrived at the very top of the class in Vosne, and he is clearly now making better wines than several other estates in this village of higher and longer-running reputations, but less sensitivity and touch in the cellars. Bravo!

2012 Nuits St. Georges- Domaine Georges Noëllat

The 2012 Nuits St. Georges from Domaine Georges Noëllat is a beautiful village wine in the making, which was raised in thirty percent new wood this year. The stellar bouquet jumps from the glass in a mélange of cherries, a touch of blood orange, nutskin, lovely soil tones, woodsmoke and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very suave on the attack, with a sappy core of red fruit, fine soil signature, tangy acids and a long, moderately tannic and beautifully balanced finish. Lovely juice. 2019-2035+. **90**.

2012 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine Georges Noëllat

The 2012 Vosne-Romanée AC from Maxime Cheurlin was raised in a touch more new wood than the Nuits *villages*, (forty percent versus thirty), but is another equally well-balanced and extremely promising village wine. The nose is a touch more closed than the Nuits AC at the present time, offering up scents of cherries, raspberries, coffee, fresh herb tones, a

lovely base of soil, Vosne spices and a nice touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, long and intensely flavored, with a fine core, lovely transparency, vibrant acids and a very long, suavely-tannic finish. Another absolutely superb village wine. 2019-2035+. **90+**.

2012 Vosne-Romanée “les Chaumes”- Domaine Georges Noëllat

Monsieur Cheurlin has been working on ways to better capture the personality of his parcel in Chaumes, which lies right outside the domaine’s back door, and in 2012 he has decided to raise the wine entirely in one wine barrels, to better capture the inherent elegance of this wine. He has succeeded beautifully with the wine in 2012, as it offers up pure and refined nose of cherries, beetroot, coffee, lovely minerality, gamebirds, woodsmoke and still a whisper of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very velvety on the attack, with a sappy core of fruit, beautiful soil inflection, fine-grained tannins and a very long, tangy and complex finish. A beautiful example of les Chaumes! 2019-2045. **92**.

2012 Vosne-Romanée “Petits Monts”- Domaine Georges Noëllat

As readers know, I love Petits Monts, and with this superb 2012 version, Domaine Georges Noëllat must now be ranked up there with Joseph Drouhin and Liger-Belair as amongst the very best sources for this great cru. These were fifty-one year-old vines in 2012 and the wine was raised in fifty percent new wood. The wine offers up a very, very elegant and complex bouquet of cherries, raspberries, blood orange, a beautiful base of dark soil tones, a touch of nutskin, mustard seed, cedar and a whiff of cigar smoke in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and again, very, very transparent, with a sappy core of red fruit, velvety tannins, vibrant acids and outstanding length and grip on the beautifully focused and complex finish. A gorgeous wine. 2020-2050. **93**.

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

Monsieur Cheurlin has the pleasure of working with a very old parcel of vines in Boudots, as these vines all range from eight to one hundred years of age! The 2012 was raised half in new barrels and is absolutely stunning, soaring from the glass in a deep and very classic nose of red and black cherries, dark plums, cocoa, a superb base of soil, a touch of fresh herbs, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and nascently complex, with a beautiful sappy core of plummy black fruit, excellent focus and balance, ripe tannins and a very long, tangy finish that is light on its feet and already very compelling. 2020-2050. **93+**.

2012 Vosne-Romanée “les Beaux Monts”- Domaine Georges Noëllat

The domaine’s parcel of vines in Beaux Monts lie in the lower section of this high elevation premier cru, which is superior *terroir* in my book to the more extreme section at the top of the hillside. This is really a beautiful wine in the making in 2012, as it wafts from the glass in a very complex and elegant aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, a touch of sweet dark berry, bonfire, gamebird, dark soil tones, coffee, mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and supremely elegant on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, ripe tannins, tangy acids and outstanding backend energy and grip on the very long and dancing finish. A stellar example of Beaux Monts. 2022-2050+. **94**.

2012 Echézeaux- Domaine Georges Noëllat

As I noted when tasting the 2010 version, Maxime’s family’s parcel lies in the *lieu à dit* of Les Cruots and the vines are in excess of eighty years of age. They lie right below Beaux Monts and in 2012, this wine was raised in sixty percent new oak and Monsieur Cheurlin used twenty-five percent whole clusters. This is an absolutely brilliant bottle of Echézeaux in the

making, delivering a marvelous bouquet of red and black cherries, dark plums, cocoa, gamebirds, fresh nutmeg, incipient notes of bonfire, a very complex base of dark soil tones and spicy new wood. Stylistically, this is quite similar to Louis-Michel Liger-Belair's version. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and flamboyantly sappy at the core, with great soil signature, suave, fine-grained tannins and a very, very long, perfectly balanced and tangy finish. A stunning wine. 2023-2060. **95+**.

2012 Grands Echézeaux- Domaine Georges Noëllat

The Grands Echézeaux from Domaine Georges Noëllat is also produced from vines in excess of eighty years of age, and though this remains the only wine that is raised entirely in new oak, it is not particularly oaky at all in personality and is absolutely brilliant in 2012. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a complex and very vibrant mélange of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, incipient notes of venison, a very complex base of soil tones, a touch of nutskin, Vosne spices and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and simply gorgeous, with a very sappy core of fruit, magical transparency, very refined tannins and stunning length and grip on the vibrant, pure and utterly stellar, peacock's tail of a finish. Probably the best example of Grands Echézeaux that I have tasted from the 2012 vintage! 2025-2075. **97+**.



Maxime Cheurlin in his parcel of vines in the premier cru of les Chaumes- right alongside the domaine.

Pernand-Vergelesses

Domaine Bonneau du Martray (Pernand-Vergelesses)

Jean-Charles de la Morinière was in a fine mood at the time of my April visit, as both 2011 and 2012 have turned out marvelously well at this domaine, and the bottle of 2005 Corton-Charlemagne that he had opened that morning was in absolutely pristine shape and as young and as vibrant as one could ever hope a nine year-old white Burgundy to show in this day and age! The 2012s here were in their final preparation for bottling, which was to be done within a week or so of my visit, and the 2011s had nicely bounced back from last spring's mise and were also showing very well indeed. This is a domaine at the absolute top of its game these days, and as is Jean-Charles' penchant for generosity, he has several other bottles open beyond the 2012s and 2011s at the time of my visit. Fine, fine wines here on this visit!

2012 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray

The 2012 Corton-Charlemagne from Bonneau du Martray was scheduled to be bottled the week following my visit in early April and is going to be another absolutely stellar vintage of this iconic wine. The bouquet is a classic mélange of apple, pear, lemon zest, limestone minerality, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very long, with a great core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a long, zesty finish. Fine juice. 2018-2035+. **95.**

2011 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray

The 2011 Corton-Charlemagne has no difficulties keeping pace with the fine 2012, as this wine is another outstanding example of its vintage, wafting from the glass in a mix of delicious apples, pears, chalky soil tones, acacia blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, young and powerfully built, with a more reserved personality than the 2012, a fine core, brisk acids and a very long, youthful and classy finish. Another absolutely superb vintage of this wine. 2017-2035+. **94+.**

2010 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray

The 2010 Bonneau du Martray Corton Charlie was probably a bit more structured out of the blocks than the 2012 version will be, but their overall quality is quite comparable. With a couple of years of bottle age this wine is showing very well, albeit still a bit too early on in its evolution for primetime drinking. The lovely nose is a blend of candied lemon, pear, chalky soil tones, lemon blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with lovely attack, fine focus and great length and grip on the very racy backend. A classic. 2018-2040. **95.**

2009 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray

The 2009 Corton-Charlemagne from Bonneau du Martray is currently in a very nice point of its evolution for current consumption, wafting from the glass in a mix of white peach, pineapple, lanolin, chalk, a touch of *crème patissière*, orange zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a good core, bright, framing acids and very good grip and focus on the long and wide open finish. A very strong 2009 white Burgundy, with a 1992-like personality. 2014-2025. **92.**

2005 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray

Happily, this bottle of 2005 Bonneau du Martray Corton-Charlemagne was absolutely pristine and was showing young and magically, delivering a deep and utterly superb nose of peach, pear, iodine, chalky minerality, pastry cream, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite vibrant, with a rock solid core, laser-like

focus and simply stellar length and grip on the racy finish. No signs of premox here in this utterly stunning wine! 2014-2035+. **96.**

2012 Corton- Domaine Bonneau du Martray

The 2012 Corton *rouge* from Bonneau du Martray is quite black fruity in personality this year, but will be a fine bottle in the fullness of time. The bouquet is a mix of black cherries, woodsmoke, cranberries, cocoa, a touch of dried fruit, gamebirds, a dollop of vanillin oak and a superb base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and soil-driven, with a tightly-knit personality, a fine core, chewy tannins and very good length and grip. 2025-2065. **91+.**

2011 Corton- Domaine Bonneau du Martray

The 2011 Corton *rouge* was also showing quite well at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a more red fruity blend of cherries, cranberries, gentle smokiness, gamebirds, Corton spices, coffee and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with fine mid-palate concentration, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and soil-driven finish. This will be very fine indeed with sufficient bottle age. 2021-2050. **91.**

Domaine Rollin Père et Fils (Pernand-Vergelesses)

I have a very good friend who had been lobbying me for a year to find time to visit Domaine Rollin Père et Fils in Pernand-Vergelesses, as he said I would love the style of their quite classic wines. I had not found time previously, but had a couple of slots on my schedule still free for the end of my spring trip this year, and when I had a chance to taste a bottle of the domaine's spectacular 2010 Corton-Charlemagne right at the start of the trip (courtesy of the generosity of this same friend), I quickly booked a visit for the end of my trip. I had very little previous experience with this estate's wines, as their New York importer is famously disdainful of journalists, so I really had no idea what to expect beyond the fact that they made a brilliant Corton-Charlemagne in the 2010 vintage. I was very happy to find that both the reds and the whites here are very traditionally made, with great respect for their underlying terroirs, and the entire range was simply outstanding. The Rollin family have been vignerons in Pernand for four generations now, but have only been selling one hundred percent of their production off in bottle under their own label since the early 1990s. Raymond Rollin began piecing together vineyards in the 1940s to form the basis of the domaine, while still working primarily for another estate in Pernand, and his son, Maurice joined his father in 1955 with the intention of producing his own wine from the small family parcels. I had the pleasure to taste with the third generation of the Rollin family, Rémi Rollin, who began working alongside of his father in 1976 and has been in charge of the family domaine for many years now. He has been joined by his son, who arrived at the domaine in 2003. The Rollins now have twelve hectares under vine, primarily in the villages of Pernand-Vergelesses and Savigny-lès-Beaune. As this was my first visit to the estate, I did not taste the entire range of wines here, but Monsieur Rollin very graciously prepared a very nice selection to serve as an introduction to the very classic and well-made wines of the property. The 2012 reds here had been bottled one month prior to my visit, so we only tasted a couple of these and focused more on the 2011 reds during my visit. Needless to say, despite the dislike of their New York importer, I will be back to visit here with regularity, as these are exceptional wines.

Vins Rouges

2012 Pernand Vergelesses- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

For having been in bottle for only four weeks, the 2012 Pernand AC was showing very well at the time of my visit. The bouquet is a lovely and sappy blend of red and black plums,

cocoa, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, just a whisper of vanillin oak and a lovely topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and a bit reserved after its recent *mise*, but with a fine core of fruit and a long, ripely tannic and nicely balanced finish. This will be a lovely village wine. 2017-2035. **90.**

2012 Pernand Vergelesses “Île des Vergelesses”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The Rollin family’s parcel in Île des Vergelesses was one of the very first to be purchased by Raymond Rollin in the very earliest days of the domaine, and today the Rollins are the second largest owners of vines in this great premier cru, after Domaine Chandon de Briailles. The Rollin parcel is up at the extreme northerly end of the vineyard, in the direction of the village of Pernand, whereas the de Nicolay family’s holdings are in the more southerly end of the cru, so one gets a nice contrast between the two sections when one compares the two examples. This is going to be an outstanding wine in 2012, as it offers up a deep and serious nose of red and black cherries, plums, cocoa, stony soil tones, woodsmoke, violets and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved, with a fine core of fruit, fine focus and grip, ripe, firm tannins and a long, youthfully chewy finish. This too had only been in bottle for a month at the time of my visit, but its potential was self-evident. 2020-2050. **93+.**

2011 Pernand Vergelesses- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2011 Pernand Vergelesses from Domaine Rollin Père et Fils is a lovely example of the vintage that will start to drink with great style in the next year or two. The pure and classy bouquet delivers a mix of cherries, strawberries, lovely soil tones, coffee, roses and vinesmoke. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and very elegant, with a fine core of fruit, suave, moderate tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. A lovely bottle. 2015-2035. **89.**

2011 Pernand Vergelesses “Les Vergelesses”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The Rollin family has fifty to fifty-five year-old vines in their parcel of Les Vergelesses, and the 2011 was raised in twenty percent new wood. This is a lovely wine, wafting from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, gamebirds, dark soil tones, violets, coriander seed, a touch of vanillin oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite a bit more primary than the 2011 *villages*, with a fine core, bright acids and a long, ripely tannic and very well-balanced finish. This needs a few years to blossom, but it will be excellent once it reaches its apogee. 2019-2035+. **90+.**

2011 Pernand Vergelesses “Les Filhots”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The premier cru of Les Filhots lies to the north of Les Vergelesses in the direction of the village center, and is effectively across the road from the Rollin family’s parcels in Île des Vergelesses. Their 2011 version is outstanding, offering up a deep and youthful aromatic mélange of red and black cherries, cocoa, a superb base of stony soil tones, a touch of fresh herbs, woodsmoke and a gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a still very primary personality, fine focus and balance, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex and soil-driven finish. Lovely juice. 2020-2050. **91+.**

2011 Pernand Vergelesses “Île des Vergelesses”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2011 Île des Vergelesses from Domaine Rollin is excellent, wafting from the glass in a youthfully complex mix of red and black cherries, plums, superbly complex soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh herbs, cocoa and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with ripe, suave tannins, fine focus and grip and a very long, primary and beautifully balanced finish. This is really a terrific example of the 2011 vintage! 2022-2060. **93.**

2006 Pernand Vergelesses “Île des Vergelesses”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2006 Île des Vergelesses is starting to close in on its apogee of maturity, but it still has a bit of backend tannin to resolve and really deserves another couple of years in the cellar to fully soften up and drink at its peak. The bouquet is excellent, delivering scents of cherries, strawberries, coriander seed, roses, superb, stony minerality, vinesmoke and a touch of mustard seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core and balance and a long, still slightly chewy finish of fine focus and grip. I would tuck this lovely wine away for two more years before really starting to open it with abandon. 2016-2035. **92.**

1998 Pernand Vergelesses- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 1998 Pernand AC is really drinking quite well at age sixteen, offering up a fine nose of black cherries, charred wood, fresh herb tones, *sous bois*, coffee and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still shows a bit of the '98 vintage's backend tannin, with lovely focus and grip and a long, classy finish. This is drinking well, but has the balance to cruise along for many years to come, and like so many of the 1998 reds today, it is probably best left alone in the cellar for a few more years. 2014-2030. **88.**

Vins Blancs

2012 Bourgogne Haute Côtes de Beaune Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The vines for the Haute Côtes de Beaune Blanc bottling from Domaine Rollin lie in Pernand, up in the valley behind the hill of Corton. This is really a very well-made example, wafting from the glass in a mix of peach, apple, chalky soil tones and white flowers. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and succulent, with a good core, sound acids and sneaky length and grip on the finish. A good bottle for near-term drinking. 2014-2020. **87.**

2012 Pernand Vergelesses Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2012 Pernand Blanc AC is really quite a lovely wine and has to be an outstanding value. The superb nose wafts from the glass in an aromatic mélange of apple, pear, fresh almond, complex, chalky soil tones, a touch of vanillin oak and a topnote of acacia blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with excellent mid-palate concentration, fine focus and grip and a very long, bright and elegant finish. High class juice. 2014-2025+. **91.**

2011 Pernand Vergelesses Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2011 Pernand Blanc from Domaine Rollin is a bit tighter and racier than its more succulent 2012 counterpart, but every bit as pure and precise. The excellent bouquet delivers scents of pear, lemon, white flowers, chalky minerality, fresh almonds and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and racy, with excellent focus and grip, lovely precision and a very long, well-balanced and complex finish. Even finer than the 2012 version. 2014-2025+. **91+.**

2012 Pernand Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles” Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

Sous Frétilles is one of those gems of a premier cru that is relatively hidden in the landscape of Burgundy, but for the savvy collector, wines such as these can offer up tremendous value. The 2012 version from the Rollin family is truly exceptional, offering up a very Corton Charlie-like personality on both the nose and palate. The bouquet delivers a ripe and classy blend of white peach, apple, almond paste, chalky soil tones, acacia blossoms and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a broad and generous attack, excellent focus and cut and a very long, poised and racy finish. Great juice. 2016-2035+. **93.**

2012 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2012 Corton-Charlemagne from Domaine Rollin Père et Fils is a brilliant wine in the making, though still quite primary in personality. The wine was raised in forty percent new wood in both 2012 and 2010. The nose of the 2012 delivers a very promising mix of apple, pear, lemon blossoms, superb, limestone minerality, incipient notes of *crème patissière* and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and racy, with great structure and focus, exceptional mid-palate depth and superb cut and grip on the very, very long and soil-driven finish. A beauty in the making. 2018-2040. **95.**

2010 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

After not having had a single wine ever from Domaine Rollin prior to my trip this spring (that New York importer is really doing his job keeping the family's wines away from pesky journalists who write about the region!), I had the good fortune to drink this stunning Corton-Charlemagne on two occasions within the month! This is truly a stunning bottle of wine, offering up a deep and very precise bouquet of pear, orange zest, iodine, a touch of passion fruit, a beautifully complex base of chalky soil tones, lemon blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with great purity and focus, plush fruit on the attack, crisp acids and laser-like focus on the very, very long, snappy and profound finish. A brilliant bottle of Corton-Charlie! 2014-2040. **95+.**



Savigny-lès-Beaune

Domaine Simon Bize et Fils (Savigny- lès-Beaune)

I had a very difficult time visiting Domaine Bize this spring, as I profoundly missed Patrick and could still feel his absence everywhere in the cellars. His wife Chia showed us the 2012s, which, for the most part, had been racked into tanks only a couple of weeks prior to my early April visit. A few of the white wines had already been bottled. The Savigny premier crus had been racked into tanks about two months prior to my stopping by the domaine, and consequently, were absolutely singing when I had the opportunity to taste them. It is quite clear that 2012 is going to be a very special vintage in terms of quality at Domaine Bize, though the year is not going to be remembered fondly. I did not taste the Marconnets this year, as it was being readied for imminent bottling. We also only tasted a couple of the 2012 white wines here, as several had only been in bottle for a couple of days and it made no sense to waste bottles right after the mise. We were joined for the latter half of our tasting by former Domaine de l'Arlot proprietor, Jean-Pierre de Smets and his wife, which made for easier conversation as we sampled our way through this very strong set of 2012s, but over the entire afternoon hung the memory of Patrick Bize and the gulf of personality he has left in the Côte d'Or the wake of his tragic and untimely passing last October. The yields at Domaine Bize were down between forty and fifty percent in 2012, which is hardly a gift, but the crop will be even shorter in this coming year, as the hail that focused on Savigny in 2013 wiped out fully eighty percent of the production in the vineyards. The capricious force of Mother Nature only seemed to reinforce the palpable sadness at the estate, as the healing touch of time has not yet had an opportunity to work its magic on any of us who shared these lovely and very promising wines on a damp and cool April afternoon in Savigny.

Vins Rouges de Simon Bize et Fils

2012 Bourgogne “les Perrières” Rouge- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 les Perrières rouge is going to be a lovely bottle in this vintage, as it offers up a deep and very promising nose of black cherries, sweet dark berries, woodsmoke, dark chocolate, fresh herb tones and a lovely base of stony soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite sappy at the core, with moderate tannins, lovely focus and grip and a long, serious finish. This wine, red or white, is consistently one of the best examples of Bourgogne to be found in the Côte d'Or, and the 2012 is another sterling success. 2017-2025+. **88.**

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Bourgeots”- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 les Bourgeots was one of the few 2012 reds that had already been bottled, as its *mise* was a bit more than two weeks prior to my visit. The wine showed quite well, offering up a pure and minerally bouquet of red and black cherries, red currants, stony soil tones, woodsmoke, spices and a touch of currant leaf in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and beautifully structured, with a rock solid core, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and properly reserved finish. Fine juice in the making. 2020-2045+. **90.**

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “Grands Liards”- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 Grands Liards was still in tank and showing excellent potential on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a sophisticated blend of cassis, dark berries, currant leaf, lovely minerality, incipient notes of gamebird, dark chocolate and a bit of bonfire up high. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and ripely tannic, with a plush texture to the fruit on the attack, an excellent core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, youthful and promising finish. Fine juice, 2020-2050. **90+.**

2012 Aloxe-Corton “le Suchot”- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 Aloxe AC is very deep and black fruity this year, wafting from the glass in a mix of sweet dark berries, espresso, a complex base of soil tones, hints of the game to come and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and structured, with a rock solid core, ripe tannins and lovely length and grip on the still quite primary finish. This wine has fine potential and reminds me structurally of a 1993 red Burgundy out of barrel. 2020-2050. **90+**.

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Talmettes”- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The les Talmettes vineyard lies up at the top of the slope in the northern band of premier crus in Savigny and is essentially a continuation of les Vergelesses in the village. Domaine Bize's parcel of vines are closing in on fifty years of age now and have really produced a wonderful wine in 2012, wafting from the glass in a mix of black cherries, dark berries, coffee bean, woodsmoke, stony soil tones and a nice touch of the black truffle to come. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively complex out of the blocks, with a sappy core of black fruit, ripe tannins and a very long, focused and properly chewy young finish. A superb wine in the making. 2022-2060. **92+**.

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 aux Fourneaux is another outstanding wine, delivering a deep, pure and focused bouquet of black cherries, red currants, dark berries, espresso, bonfire, a bit of gamebird and a very complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very refined on the attack, with a rock solid core, ripe, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the classic finish. All this beauty needs is some time in the cellar! 2024-2065+. **93**.

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Vergelesses”- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 les Vergelesses from Domaine Bize is a brilliant wine in the making and one of the most gorgeous young examples of this superb cuvée that I can recall tasting at the estate. The stellar nose soars from the glass in a blend of cassis, dark berries, currant leaf, a very complex base of dark soil tones, woodsmoke, espresso and an exotic topnote of fresh mint. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and focused, with a rock solid core, ripe tannins and a very, very long, laser-like and perfectly balanced, young finish. Great juice in the making. 2025-2075. **94+**.

2012 Latricières-Chambertin- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 Latricières-Chambertin from Domaine Simon Bize et Fils is also outstanding, delivering a deep and pure bouquet of cassis, black cherries, coffee bean, gamebirds, a marvelously complex base of soil and a fine base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a sappy core of black fruit, excellent soil signature, fine-grained tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and balance on the very long and elegant finish. Another absolutely stellar example of the vintage. 2025-2075. **94+**.

Vins Blancs Simon Bize et Fils

2012 Bourgogne “les Perrières” Blanc- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

The 2012 Perrières Blanc had been bottled three weeks prior to my visit and showed very well indeed, offering up a fine bouquet of apple, white peach, orange zest, chalky minerality and a nice touch of beeswax (or as Patrick used to say, “Bize wax”) in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, bright acids and a long, nascently complex finish. High class juice. 2014-2025+. **90**.

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc- Domaine Simon Bize et Fils

I have always liked the Savigny Blanc from Domaine Bize and the 2012 is another ringing success. This was already in bottle ten weeks at the time of my visit and completely on form, offering up a pure and nicely reserved nose of pink grapefruit, apple, orange zest, chalky minerality, white flowers and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully focused, with lovely mid-palate concentration, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the classy finish. I would give this lovely wine at least a couple of years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2016-2030. **91+.**

Domaine Antonin Guyon (Savigny-lès-Beaune)

Domaine Antonin Guyon has once again turned out a very impressive lineup of wines in 2012. However, with the very short crops here in 2012 and again in 2013 (particularly for their Côte de Beaune parcels), it would be hard to say that the mood was upbeat during our visit, as there is simply not going to be a lot of wine available for clients in these two vintages. The vast majority of the cellar had already been bottled prior to my visit in early April, but most of the wines had already recovered nicely from the mise and were showing excellent potential. Unless noted below, please assume that the wine in question had already been bottled. I brought a friend from New York with me on this visit and this was his first exposure to the wines from Domaine Guyon, and he had already added several of them to his cellar back here in the city by the time I returned from my trip, so obviously, these wines were showing very well indeed. For the most part, the Côte de Beaune bottlings of rouge here this year showed quite polished tannins, without some of the sturdiness of structure that is evident from some other producers in 2012, and the Côte de Nuits bottlings are quite classic and stellar examples of the very suave, fine-grained and supremely elegant structural side of this classic vintage. With each passing year, it seems to me that the domaine is producing absolutely quintessential examples of each respective vintage, and this is clearly an estate at the absolute top of its game and one of the very best-kept secrets in all of Burgundy! If you are lamenting the dizzying spiral upwards in price of some of your long-time favorites in the region, but have not yet made yourself acquainted with the stellar wines of Domaine Antonin Guyon, perhaps the 2012 is the vintage to take the plunge. I guarantee that you will not be disappointed, as this is an absolutely stellar range of wines this year!

Vins Rouges

2012 Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits- Dominique Guyon

The 2012 Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits from Dominique Guyon was bottled just before the 2013 harvest and was showing quite well. This is a very pretty wine, offering up scents of cherries, strawberries, coffee, fresh herbs and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and well-balanced, with no rough edges, fine focus and very good length and grip on the finish. Good juice for early drinking. 2014-2020. **87.**

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Goudelettes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The *lieu à dit* of Les Goudelettes is located at the far end of the Savigny, as one heads in the direction of Bouilland, and the domaine's vines forty year-old vines have excelled in 2012 and this is an excellent village wine. The bouquet is deep and utterly classic in its blend of cherries red currants, Savigny spices, stony soil tones, woodsmoke and a nice touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and very well-

balanced, with excellent soil drive, a sappy core and a long, bright and moderately tannic finish. Fine juice. 2016-2035+. **89+**.

2012 Pernand-Vergelesses “Les Vergelesses”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The premier cru of les Vergelesses here had already been assembled into tank, but had not yet been bottled and was scheduled for its *mise* a week or so after my visit. The wine was a bit cranky from its recent racking, but showed good potential. The nose is a fine blend of black cherries, dark berries, stony soil tones, bonfire, venison and dried herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and structured, with good focus and a long, chewy and youthful finish. This is one of the Côte de Beaune reds in the Guyon cellars that showed some of the slightly rustic quality to the tannins from the extremely low yields of the vintage, but the balance here seems quite good and I am sure this wine will be quite tasty with a bit of bottle age. 2020-2040+. **88-90+?**

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “Clos du Village”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The Clos du Village vineyard lies in the center of Chambolle, next to the premier cru of les Cras, and Domaine Guyon owns the entirety of this vineyard. The 2012 has really turned out fine, with the textural sophistication of the vintage in the Côte de Nuits very much in evidence here. The lovely bouquet wafts from the glass in a stylish mélange of cherries, plums, cocoa, a touch of nutskin, violets and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and velvety on the attack, with a very fine core of fruit, moderate and fine-grained tannins and lovely length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This was bottled at the end of January and was not yet fully recovered, but its excellent quality was quite in evidence on the first of April. A lovely example and a wine that will drink well with only a few years in the cellar. 2017-2035+. **90+**.

2012 Chambolle-Musigny “les Cras”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

As readers will recall, this bottling hails from the *villages* section of Les Cras, not the premier cru section. This is really superb in 2012, with a deeper and sappier nose than the Clos du Village. The wine jumps from the glass in a vibrant blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a complex base of soil tones, a touch of mustard seed, gentle notes of gamebird and a lovely topnote of raw cocoa. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with a more reserved personality than the Clos du Village, similarly suave tannins and lovely focus and grip on the long, pure and very well-balanced finish. This is an outstanding Chambolle AC! 2019-2040. **91+**.

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Justice”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2012 la Justice was also assembled in tank in preparation for its bottling, and was scheduled for its *mise* the week after my visit. This was showing very well indeed in early April, offering up a very pure and classy bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, dark soil tones, a bit of chocolate and a topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and refined, with a fine core of fruit, excellent soil signature, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. I really like this *lieu à dit*, and the 2012 version from Domaine Guyon is excellent. 2020-2040+. **91**.

2012 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The fine bottling of Charmes-Chambertin *chez* Guyon was also still in tank and ready for bottling at the time of my visit, with the wine hitting on all cylinders and showing exceptional potential. The wine was raised this year in one-third new oak. The deep and complex nose delivers a constellation of red and black cherries, a touch of plum, cocoa, grilled meats, a beautifully refined base of soil tones, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is

deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a sappy core of fruit, a fine sense of reserve, excellent focus and balance and a very long, tangy finish that closes with fine-grained tannins and superb grip. This is one of the best bottlings of Charmes-Chambertin in the entire Côte d'Or and one of the best values out there for a very high quality grand cru from Gevrey! 2022-2060. **94+.**

2012 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

In the 2012 vintage, the Clos des Chênes from Domaine Guyon was reduced by two-thirds due to the hail and difficulties at flowering, and the wine is more deep-pitched in personality as a result of the constant depredations that this vineyard suffered in this brutal growing season in Volnay. The wine has still turned out quite positively, but this is usually my very favorite example of Clos des Chênes produced, after the Lafarge family's version, and a certain lack of energy is evident here this year from all of the hail damage to the vines. The bouquet is a black fruity blend of dark berries, chocolate, smoke, black cherries, dark soil tones, gamebirds and fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and quite chewy, with a good core and still very good length and grip on the youthful finish. This will need at least six or seven years to soften, and should provide quite good drinking once it has blossomed, but it does not have its customary vibrancy or purity in this vintage. Still, given what the vines here faced in 2012, this wine has turned out quite well indeed. 2020-2045. **91+.**

2012 Aloxe-Corton “les Fournières”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2012 Aloxe-Corton “les Fournières” was assembled in tank at Domaine Guyon, and was scheduled for bottling the following week after my visit. This is going to be outstanding in 2012, as the wine offers up a deep and vibrant nose of cherries, strawberries, Corton spices, a lovely base of minerality, a touch of bonfire, incipient notes of venison and coffee. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite nicely defined by its stony soil signature, with a fine core, ripe, chewy tannins and excellent length and grip on the pure and very promising finish. This is a baby Corton this year and one of the great bargains of the vintage! 2019-2045+. **92.**

2012 Aloxe-Corton “les Vercots”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2012 les Vercots was the one wine in the cellar that was still not bottled and not really in a good mood for being tasted. The malolactic was very late for this wine and it was simply far behind the others in the cellar in terms of evolution, so it was not fair to be tasting it at the time of my visit. I did not take a proper note on the wine, due to its very apparent grumpiness, but it is deep, long and ripely tannic on the palate, and I am sure that this will be just fine when it has had a chance to catch up a bit with its *elevage* with the other wines in the cellars.

2012 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The domaine's parcel in Bressandes is right at the top of the slope, with only a small pathway separating these from their plot of vines in Clos du Roy. This has been bottled in February and was absolutely singing at the start of April, offering up a deep and profound bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, gentle notes of the venison to come, great, complex minerality, mustard seed, coffee and a deft touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, outstanding focus and balance, ripe tannins, tangy acids and outstanding backend energy on the very pure and very promising finish. This is clearly the finest young vintage of Bressandes I have ever had the pleasure to taste from Domaine Guyon! 2022-2075. **95.**

2012 Corton “Clos du Roy”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

As I have noted in the past, half of the domaine’s parcel in Clos du Roy is comprised of ninety year-old vines and these old vines have excelled in 2012. This is a bit more reserved than the outstanding 2012 Bressandes, but every bit as promising, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of black cherries, red currants, venison, coffee, another superbly complex base of soil, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, beautifully balanced, offering up a stellar core of pure fruit, ripe, firm tannins, superb focus and a very, very long, potentially stunning finish. All this great bottle of young Corton needs is some time in the cellar. 2025-2075. **95+**.



Looking down on the village of Pernand-Vergelesses from the top of the hill of Corton.

Vins Blancs

2012 Bourgogne Blanc- Dominique Guyon

The 2012 Bourgogne Blanc from Domaine Guyon is a very pretty middleweight that will drink well right out of the blocks, The bouquet is a mix of apple, peach, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and a touch of caraway seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and tasty, with good focus and balance, moderate framing acids and a long and juicy finish. A good solid example. 2014-2018. **87**.

2012 Pernand Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles” Blanc- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2012 Sous Frétilles is an excellent wine this year, and as it was bottled in September of 2013, it was already singing at the time of my April visit. The superb bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of pear, almond, apple, chalky soil tones, white flowers and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary in personality, with a fine core of fruit, crunchy acids and a long, succulent and fruit-driven finish. This has a generosity out of the blocks that is going to make it very hard to resist, but I would try to give it at least a year or two in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2016-2030+. **90.**

2012 Meursault “Charmes Dessus”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2012 Charmes Dessus had only been in bottle two weeks at the time of my visit, but I suspect it had not yet had time to shut down after the *mise*, as the wine was simply stunning! The utterly superb bouquet delivers a classic mélange of apple, iodine, citrus peel, a superb base of salty minerality, spring flowers and a judicious base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and extremely mineral in profile (particularly for Charmes!), with a great core of fruit, laser-like focus, outstanding balance and grip and a very, very long, pure and classy finish that closes with excellent grip and precision. Stellar juice. 2018-2035+. **94.**

2012 Puligny-Montrachet “les Pucelles”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2012 Pucelles finished its malo earlier in the Guyon cellars this year than the Charmes, and consequently, it had been in bottle since the end of October. This too is absolutely superb in 2012, soaring from the glass in a complex and vibrant mix of white peach, pear, *crème patissière*, chalky soil tones, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and utterly classic in profile, with a full-bodied personality, a fine sense of early reserve, excellent mid-palate concentration and a very long, crisp and stunning finish. Even better! 2018-2040. **94+.**

2012 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Antonin Guyon

Like the 2012 Charmes, the Corton-Charlemagne had also been bottled in the middle of March, but it too had not yet shut down and was showing brilliantly. The deep and classic nose offers up a stellar constellation of pear, apple, lemon, chalky, stony minerality, a hint of almond, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with great purity and mid-palate depth, racy acids, stellar cut and balance and a very, very long, focused and youthful finish. A great Corton Charlie! 2019-2040+. **96.**

Beaune

Maison Benjamin Leroux (Beaune)

This was my first visit to taste the négociant bottlings from Benjamin Leroux, who of course is best known as the cellar master at Domaine Comte Armand in Pommard. He rents cellar space for these wines from Maison Albert Bichot in Beaune, and this is soon to become his primary vocation, as he told me he is planning to leave Comte Armand at the end of the year. Having no previous experience with these wines, I did not really know what to make of them, as I seem to have caught them at an awkward phase of their evolutions in early April, and there was only one wine (the 2012 Clos St. Denis) that was absolutely singing at the time of my visit. The other wines were okay, but seemed to really lack vitality and were rather evolved aromatically, with awfully early signs of autumnal development, not to mention a very generous coating of spicy new oak in several of the wines. All of the red wines here had been assembled in tank in preparation for bottling in the coming weeks, and perhaps this explains why they were not showing at their best. I have heard very good things about Monsieur Leroux's wines from

several folks whose palates I trust implicitly, but I was unlucky and could not find a lot to get enthusiastic about in the cellars here on this visit- ill-timed as it was. Rather than write up notes on wines that may or may not have been entirely on form, it seems fairer to me to only write up a note on the 2012 Clos St. Denis, which was really showing well at the time of my visit and whose quality was quite evident. The lineup of crus here is pretty extraordinary- premier crus such as Gevrey-Chambertin “les Goulots” and “Champeaux”, not to mention Chambolle-Musigny “les Amoureuses”, and grand crus such as Griotte-Chambertin, Clos St. Denis, Clos de la Roche and Bonnes-Mares, so it is quite clear that Monsieur Leroux is really plugged in to the Burgundy firmament, as opportunities to purchase grapes from holdings such as these are far from commonplace. I hope in the future to have an opportunity to taste here when the wines are more on form and I can get a much better read on their quality.

2012 Clos St. Denis- Maison Benjamin Leroux

I spent a fair bit of time in Monsieur Leroux’s cellars during my visit, and despite sampling fifteen different 2012s, I had the bad luck to really only encounter one wine that seemed entirely on form and showing well. However, the 2012 Clos St. Denis was showing so beautifully that it was hard not to come to the conclusion that all the rest of the lineup was simply out of sorts from their recent *assemblage* in tank in preparation for bottling. The 2012 Clos St. Denis offers up lovely depth and dimension on both the nose and palate (which were missing in most of these other 2012s when I tasted them), with a bouquet of red and black cherries, mustard seed, cloves, fine minerality, woodsmoke and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and quite sappy at the core, with tangy acids and a long, nascently complex and ripely tannic finish. This will be excellent. 2022-2060. **93+**.

Le Grappin- Maison Andrew Nielson (Beaune)

Andrew Nielson is a very friendly and talented Australian ex-pat who worked for several wineries in California, New Zealand and Burgundy, including the recently departed Patrick Bize in Savigny, prior to starting his very small négociant house. I had first heard of his wines from Jeremy Seysses of Domaine Dujac, who mentioned that he thought I would quite enjoy their style, and happily, Andrew tracked me down via email last November and invited me to stop by on my next trip in the spring. Winemaking is a second career for Andrew, as he was in publishing prior to crossing paths with a bottle of Domaine Dujac Clos de la Roche and deciding that his time could be better spent in the vineyards and cellars than sitting in front of a computer screen every day. He splits his time evenly these days between London and Beaune. Andrew likes to call himself a “micro-négoce”, as he only offers a few wines in small quantities, but based on what I had the opportunity to taste on this visit, he is doing some excellent work and these are wines that will make any Burgundy lover very happy to add to their cellar or wine list. The cellars here are cozy, but sufficient for the four wines that he is currently offering in 2012- up from two wines in his inaugural vintage of 2011. The short crop of 2012 here was no gift, and 2013 will be even shorter, as he is currently working with vines in Savigny-lès-Beaune and in Beaune. There are two village wines from Savigny, a white from a couple of very steep parcels planted to chardonnay in the direction of Bouilland, which are quite cool and allow him to keep a fine raciness in the wine, and a Savigny AC from a parcel of sixty year-old vines located in the “villages” section of aux Fourneaux (the same lieu à dit from which Chandon de Briailles makes their lovely Savigny AC). In 2012, the vigneron from which he rents these parcels also added a few rows from the premier cru section of aux Fourneaux to flesh out this cuvée. Starting in 2012,

there are also two Beaune wines in the lineup- a Beaune “Boucherottes” red from a small parcel planted with a mix of forty-six year-old and twenty-five year-old vines, and a Beaune Blanc from the Grèves, with these fifty year-old vines next door to Maison Bouchard’s flagship l’Enfant Jésus. Andrew is not a fan of new wood, using only about fifteen percent new oak each year, and in 2012 he employed a small percentage of whole clusters in the fermentation. The wines get a short pre-fermentation maceration and the 2012s were crushed with an old-fashioned basket press- mostly due to the tiny crop size. He tends to like to pick on the later side (de rigueur for his Savigny Blanc vineyards, which are definitely cool and need the extra hang time!) and his four 2012s were quite fine and I look forward to my next visit here.

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Fourneaux”- Le Grappin- Maison Andrew Nielson

The 2012 aux Fourneaux is really a lovely village wine. Andrew used twenty-five percent whole clusters for this wine this year, and it was bottled in November of 2013 and showing very well at the time of my visit on the first of April. The wine offers up an excellent, black fruity nose of dark berries, bitter chocolate, currant leaf, woodsmoke and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and very nicely balanced, with a touch of tannin, excellent focus and grip and a long, classy and serious finish. This will be a lovely wine and will only need four or five years in the cellar to really blossom and start to deliver up its secondary layers of complexity. A very fine *villages*. 2018-2035. **90.**

2012 Beaune “Boucherottes”- Le Grappin- Maison Andrew Nielson

The 2012 Boucherottes was produced with only ten percent whole clusters this year, but how many stems are retained is a function of the quality of the stems each vintage, and I imagine that in some years this will be more like twenty-five percent retained stems. This too is a fine example in 2012, with a black fruity personality from its short “cold soak” and a fine base of soil. The bouquet is a blend of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, a touch of venison, lovely soil nuances and a topnote of espresso. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, plush and rock solid at the core, with a fine base of ripe tannins, fine grip and a long, nascently complex and well-balanced finish. This will be very fine as well. 2020-2040+. **90+.**

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc- Le Grappin- Maison Andrew Nielson

Needless to say, when a *vigneron* starts chatting about the untapped potential of Savigny, he finds a very will audience in me, and I was really happy to taste the current lineup from Andrew and hope the future will find more cuvées from this fine village in his cellars. His 2012 Savigny Blanc is really a lovely wine, offering up a complex and vibrant nose of apple, white peach, chalky minerality, citrus peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and shows off lovely mid-palate depth, with a lovely succulence on the attack, fine framing acids and a long, focused and classy finish that closes with impressive grip and style. Fine juice and a bottle that will drink very well from day one. 2014-2020. **90.**

2012 Beaune “Grèves” Blanc- Le Grappin- Maison Andrew Nielson

Andrew Nielson’s 2012 Beaune “Grèves” Blanc is outstanding, as these fifty year-old vines have really turned out a superb example of this lovely vineyard. In Grèves, it is important to be in the upper section of the slope, as the *terroir* in this section of the vineyard is really better than what is found down low, and this is where Andrew’s fifty year-old chardonnay vines are located. The 2012 is a fine new addition to the Le Grappin lineup, wafting from the glass in a classy blend of apple, orange peel, a fine base of chalky soil tones, a nice dollop of smokiness, lime and a touch of the botanical overtones that I often find in young whites from Beaune, such as Maison Drouhin’s Clos des Mouches. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and

complex, with an excellent core, fine focus and a very long, bright and soil-driven finish. This wine will drink very well again from an early age and is a very, very fine example. 2014-2020+. 92+.



Andrew Nielson outside his cellar doors in the center of Beaune.

Maison Nicolas Potel (Beaune)

I had rather an odd visit with Nicolas Potel in early April, as he was not aware that I was a journalist and had not prepared any samples for the visit. He had a visit from clients the evening before and had some leftover samples from their visit, which we started to taste, until I asked him if the samples were tired or if he preferred an oxidative style for his wines. This was my first visit to the maison. After hitting several oxidized samples, he did have one of his employees fetch a few fresh bottles to serve, but Monsieur Potel was in a hurry on this morning and the tasting was rather abbreviated and uninformative. Based on the fresh samples that were poured in the latter half of the tasting, it seems that the style here is a bit reductive when the wines go into bottle, (perhaps to protect their potential longevity?), and so in several instances, we transitioned from oxidative and tired samples from the day before to reduced wines in need of decanting! Not the best way to get a read on a vintage's worth of 2012s, particularly when time was obviously of the essence. Hopefully future visits will be a bit better organized, as I did not glean a whole lot from this visit. The estate has a very large array of négociant wines, made primarily from purchased grapes (I believe), as well as several wines produced from domaine-

owned parcels, primarily in the Côte de Beaune. Jean-Christophe Pascaud has been the winemaker here since 2008, but I did not have the chance to meet him on this visit. Several of the older samples seemed to have not absorbed their new wood completely and were showing overt, uncovered oak tannins on the backend, but perhaps this was just a function of the bottles being tired when I tasted them? Here are my notes from the visit, for what they are worth.

Vins Rouges- Opened the Day Before

2012 Vosne-Romanée- Maison Nicolas Potel

The 2012 Vosne-Romanée AC had been bottled around Christmas of 2013 and seemed a bit dominated by its oak spice on the backend when I sampled the older bottle. Notes of black cherries, plums, cocoa, dark soil tones and plenty of spicy oak formed the nose. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with solid depth and rather raw from uncovered oak tannins on the finish. But, perhaps the wine was just tired from being left opened. 2019-2035? **86?**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos Prieur”- Maison Nicolas Potel

The 2012 Clos Prieur was even more dominated and dried out from its new wood, but again this had been left open for at least eighteen hours and was perhaps not representative. This was raised in fifty percent new wood, which has left the wine rigid from the oak tannin, though there is probably sufficient stuffing here to eventually absorb most of the wood. Nice red fruity notes of cherries and strawberries, as well as grilled meats, soil and mustard seed vie with the spicy new wood for attention on the nose. The palate is fullish and shows nice fruit on the attack, but is currently dominated by oak tannins on the backend. Not sure how much this wine staying open has affected it... 2020-2040? **84+?**

2012 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Maison Nicolas Potel

This is overtly oxidized from being left open.

2012 Morey St. Denis “les Charrières”- Maison Nicolas Potel

According to Monsieur Potel, the 2012 Morey St. Denis “les Charrières” was raised entirely without new wood, but it still shows plenty of oak spice on day two of it being opened. The nose is a blend of red and black cherries, fresh herbs, woodsmoke, soil and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a good core of fruit, ripe tannins and a long, youthful finish. This had held up better than most of the samples from the day before and its potential was pretty self-evident. 2020-2040+. **90.**

2012 Vosne-Romanée “Petits Monts”- Maison Nicolas Potel

The 2012 Petits Monts was also quite new oaky in personality, but again, perhaps this is just a mistaken impression from tasting a wine opened the day before. There are good raw materials under the wood here, with notes of black cherries, plums, cocoa, mustard seed and the *de rigueur* spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and reasonably complex, with the new wood currently dominating the flavors with a huge serving of oak spices, but with sufficient stuffing in evidence to eventually absorb the wood better and present a more sophisticated profile with bottle age. I would have loved to have seen a properly prepared sample of this wine. 2019-2040? **89+?**

2012 Vosne-Romanée “Beaumonts”- Maison Nicolas Potel

The 2012 Beaumonts was also showing rather oaky, but with good underlying raw materials, delivering notes of red and black cherries, plums, dark soil, smoke, a bit of venison and spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant on the attack, with a good core and a bit of uncovered wood tannins poking out on the finish. There is sufficient stuffing here to eventually absorb the wood. 2020-2040. **90.**

2012 Mazis-Chambertin- Maison Nicolas Potel

Oxidized sample.

2012 Romanée-St.-Vivant- Maison Nicolas Potel

Oxidized sample- quality underneath is clearly fine.

Vins Rouges- Opened During the Tasting

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Nicolas Potel

This seems a bit bretty, as well as reduced on the nose, which offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, game and soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite extracted in style, with good stuffing, firm tannins and a rather dense style on the backend. Not a lot of charm in evidence today, but solid raw materials and may blossom with some bottle age. 2018-2035. **88?**

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Peuilletts”- Domaine Nicolas Potel

The 2012 les Peuilletts was also reductive and a bit four-square in personality, but offered up pretty good complexity on the nose in its mélange of black cherries, cassis, some overt signs of reduction, game and soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with a good core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and pretty good length and grip on the chewy finish. Maybe a bit more delineation would appear here with some air, but we did not have the time for that. 2020-2040. **87+?**

2012 Beaune “Pertuisots”- Domaine Nicolas Potel

The 2012 Pertuisots was the best of the domaine Côte de Beaune wines that I sampled on this visit. The nose is deep and quite concentrated, offering up scents of dark berries, coffee bean, venison, soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, muscular and shows off good mid-palate depth, with ripe, substantial tannins, good focus and grip and a long, youthful and chewy finish. This will need some time in the cellar to blossom, but it will be quite good once it comes around. 2020-2045. **90.**

2012 Nuits St. Georges “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Nicolas Potel

The 2012 Nuits Vieilles Vignes was also showing good potential and was one of the easier wines to get a handle on during this visit. The wine offers up a fine bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, game, a bit of iodine, woodsmoke and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a less reductive personality than some of these newly-opened samples, with suave tannins and very good length and grip on the primary finish. Good juice in the making here. 2019-2040. **90.**

2010 Côtes de Nuits Villages- Maison Nicolas Potel

The vines for this bottling are in Comblanchien. This was quite reduced, but long and balanced on the palate. ???

Vins Blancs

2012 Bourgogne Blanc- Maison Nicolas Potel

The 2012 Bourgogne Blanc from Maison Potel includes twenty percent from Rully. This is quite a good example of its genre, offering up scents of apple, pear, spring flowers, citrus peel and a nice dollop of stony minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and quite stylish, with a solid core and good length and grip on the bright and bouncy finish. Good juice. 2014-2020. **88.**

2011 Côtes de Nuits Villages Blanc “les Monts de Boncourt”- Maison Nicolas Potel

The 2011 Côtes de Nuits Villages Blanc was also showing very well at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, tangerine, beeswax, chalky soil tones, white flowers and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely complex, with a good core of fruit, a generous attack and fine length and grip on the well-balanced and zesty finish. A lovely example. 2014-2020. **89.**

2011 Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc- Domaine Nicolas Potel

The 2011 Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc from Domaine Nicolas Potel is a lovely wine and was really showing well at the time of my visit. The bouquet is deep, complex and quite classy in its mélange of green apple, lemon, complex, chalky minerality, a bit of paraffin, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite stylish, with a fine core, sound acids and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2014-2025. **91.**

Pommard

Château de Pommard (Pommard)

The Cellar Master at Château de Pommard, Emmanuel Sala, was very content with the potential of his 2012, which I am guessing did not get hit as hard with hail as some of the other vineyards further up the slope in the village. Yields were down here fifty percent in 2012, but based on the very supple texture of the tannins in the grand vin, I suspect that the culprit was poor flowering, rather than hail. I tasted through all of the constituent components for the grand vin and then an approximation of the final blend, as is my custom here with the new vintage, and then a few of the recent vintages out of bottle. The wines are really very, very strong here these days and the flagship Château de Pommard bottling is clearly as fine as any of the top premier crus in the village and this remains one of the best-kept secrets out there in the world of Burgundy today. The estate continues to change and prosper as well, as it now is home to a Michelin-starred restaurant and continues to stage modern art exhibits each and every summer. I was very sorry to hear that the owner had taken back his Salvador Dali sculpture to his home that had been installed here for a year or two, which was one of the most beautiful Dali pieces that I have ever seen, but hopefully, one day it will be back in the courtyard at this fine estate. I get the sense that the domaine sees mostly tourists during its summer season and that Monsieur Sala is more than happy to arrange visits for serious Burgundy lovers, and though there are only the two Pommards here for the most part, it is a beautiful property to visit and those two wines are really right up there with the best to be found in the Côte de Beaune these days and serious oenophiles should be stopping to taste here with more regularity.

2012 Pommard- Château de Pommard

The 2012 Château de Pommard is going to be a dynamite example of the vintage, as the wine shares a textural sophistication in this year that is far more reminiscent of the top wines of the Côte de Nuits than it is of most Côte de Beaune reds. The beautifully complex nose offers up a fine mélange of red plums, cherries, woodsmoke, marvelously refined soil tones, pomegranate, Vosne-like spice notes and a deft framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and balance, tangy acids, outstanding length and grip, as well as a fine chassis of ripe, chewy tannins that will carry the wine far into the future. First class juice in 2012! 2022-2065+. **94.**

2011 Pommard- Château de Pommard

The 2011 Château de Pommard has turned out very well indeed, offering up a bright and very refined bouquet of cherries, red berries, coffee, complex soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced, with a good core of fruit, suave tannins and very fine grip on the long and vibrant finish. This does not have the same depth in the mid-palate as the 2012 and 2010 versions, but it is a complete and very satisfying example of the 2011 vintage and a compelling wine in its own right! 2019-2040+. **91+**.

2010 Pommard- Château de Pommard

The 2010 Château de Pommard is fairly closed at the present time, but shows plenty of promise in its reserved, but pure and spicy profile. The reticent nose delivers a blend of cherries, pomegranate, a cornucopia of spice tones, great soil signature, woodsmoke, mustard seed and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and properly reserved, with a fine core of fruit, tangy acids and a very long, nascently complex and chewy finish. This will be stellar, but it still needs a minimum of eight to ten years more bottle age to start to stir. 2022-2075. **94**.

2008 Pommard- Château de Pommard

I have liked the 2008 vintage at Château de Pommard since I first tasted the wine out of barrel, and at age six, the wine is cruising along just as expected. The superb and very transparent nose offers up scents of red plums, cocoa, cherries, a lovely base of soil, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with fine mid-palate intensity, fine-grained tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and soil-driven finish. High class juice. 2018-2040. **92+**.

Domaine Michel Gaunoux (Pommard)

Given the amazingly short crops of both 2012 and 2013 in Pommard, Madame Gaunoux and her family were in reasonably good spirits at the time of my visit in early April of this year. I am sure that their policy of holding back a percentage of each vintage to sell as older vintages has cushioned the blow from these two brutally short crops, as they certainly have a nice library of older wines to choose from and make available to clients to help soften the impact of the very small quantities that will be available here in both the 2012 and 2013 vintages. As Madame Gaunoux observed, "this is exactly the reason that we hold back some of our older wines to sell at a later date, as one is never sure with nature what the new year is going to bring, and having a selection of older wines gives us a bit of insurance against years like 2012 and 2013." Domaine Michel Gaunoux is certainly one of the bastions of old school, traditional Burgundy in the entire Côte d'Or, but the family's strong respect for Burgundian traditions does not preclude change at the estate, and I noticed that the younger vintages are starting to find their way into the market a bit earlier than was the case a decade ago, as there was already a pallet of their lovely 2011s stacked up in the courtyard and awaiting pick up for their New York importer. When I mentioned this to Madame Gaunoux, she responded that "yes, we are offering the wines a little bit earlier than we used to, as our importers are always excited to have the newer vintages available for their clients earlier than used to be the case in the past."

In addition to having my first look at the lovely 2011 wines from Domaine Michel Gaunoux, I was also able to taste the first examples of the extraordinary 2010 vintage fashioned by Alexandre Gaunoux that have crossed my path, and I have to say that I have been looking forward to trying these wines for several years already and it was like Christmas morning when

the 2010 Grands Epenots was first poured in my glass! We tasted a range of wines between 2011 and 2006, before finishing up with a really lovely example of 1983 Corton “Renardes”, and what I found most striking about this tasting (though this was certainly no surprise!) was just how consistently excellent the wines were from vintage to vintage, with each and every wine beautifully reflective of both the style of the respective vintage and its underlying terroir. Twenty or thirty years down the road, no one drinking the 2006 Rugiens or the 2011 Corton “Renardes” is going to comment that “this wine is good, but it is not like the wines the Gaunoux family made back in the 1960s or 1970s”, because, these younger vintages are exactly like the wines the family made back in the 1960s and 1970s, and they are going to age every bit as long and gracefully as those previous vintages did in their day. It is always a wonderful visit with the Gaunoux family, and the very exciting 2011s and 2010s are going to make fans of this domaine very, very happy when they arrive in the coming months, and as the notes will attest, if you have the good fortune to cross paths with bottles from the family in the 2008, 2007 or 2006 vintages as well, do not hesitate to snap up a few for the cellar, as they too are excellent.



The Gaunoux family in the courtyard of their elegant domaine in the center of Pommard.

2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2011 Bourgogne rouge from the Gaunoux family is quite a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a bright and red fruity bouquet of cherries, sweet cranberries, lovely soil tones, smoke and a topnote of gentle spices. On the palate the wine is medium-full, transparent and tangy, with a nice touch of backend tannins adding grip and potential for mid-term cellaring. A fine bottle of Bourgogne. 2015-2025+. **88.**

2011 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2011 Grands Epenots is stunningly pure and focused, jumping from the glass in a vibrant aromatic constellation of cherries, quince, incipient notes of mustard seed, woodsmoke, a beautiful base of complex soil nuances and a nice, youthful touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with great purity and soil signature, a very elegant profile, excellent mid-palate concentration and a very long, youthful and ripely tannic finish. A very, very high class 2011! 2021-2060+. **93+**.

2011 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2011 Domaine Gaunoux Rugiens is another absolutely stellar wine in the making. The deep and very precise nose delivers a fine blend of red and black cherries, gamebirds, woodsmoke, wonderful minerality, a touch of cumin and cocoa. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with stunning minerality, bright acids, exceptional focus and balance and a very, very long, transparent and ripely tannic finish. This will take a few years longer than the 2011 Grands Epenots to blossom, but it too will be one of the reference point Côte de Beaune wines in this lovely and classic vintage. 2025-2075. **94**.

2011 Corton “Renardes”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The Rugiens and Grands Epenots at Domaine Michel Gaunoux are such extraordinary wines that I do not always find that the Corton “Renardes” is superior to them, as in effect, the family really produces three grand cru quality wines. However, in 2011, I do have to give a slight nod to the Renardes as the most extraordinary of these three great young wines, as it offer sup a deep and youthfully spicy nose of cherries, pomegranate, complex, stony minerality, smoke and spice tones that remind me quite strongly of coriander seed and an array of Indian spices. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still very primary, with a great core of fruit, superb balance and grip, bright acids, suave tannins and excellent grip on the very long and beautifully focused finish. This is going to be a magnificent bottle at its zenith. 2025-2075. **95**.

2010 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2010 Grands Epenots is a great wine in the making. Today, the wine is properly shut down, but reluctantly offers up a potentially stunning nose of red and black cherries, a marvelously complex base of soil, herb tones, incipient gamebird, coriander and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with great purity and focus, ripe, beautifully-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the intensely flavored and tangy finish. A great and potentially timeless classic. 2025-2100. **95+**.

2010 Corton “Renardes”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2010 Renardes from Domaine Michel Gaunoux is every bit as magical as the 2010 Grands Epenots, as the wine offers up a deep and primary bouquet of cherries, quince, a touch of red currant, meaty tones, a beautifully mineral signature of soil, coriander and mustard seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very soil-driven, with a superb core of fruit, great purity and balance, firm, ripe tannins and stellar grip and focus on the very, very long and youthful finish. Great juice. 2025-2100. **95+**.

2008 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2008 Grands Epenots is utterly classic and a very strong example of this very fine vintage. The pure and vibrant nose wafts from the glass in a mix of cherries, red plums, marvelous soil tones, gamebirds, a touch of orange peel, woodsmoke and a gentle framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and sports a really superb core of fruit, with ripe tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and balance on the very long and transparent finish. A beautiful vintage for the Grands Epenots. 2019-2050+. **94+**.

2007 Corton “Renardes”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The Gaunoux family’s 2007 Renardes is starting to blossom nicely and offers up some secondary layers of complexity today on both the nose and palate. The fine bouquet delivers a mix of cherries, strawberries, a bit of *sous bois*, incipient notes of venison, a lovely base of soil, spice tones, coffee and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure, with fine mid-palate concentration, still a nice sense of reserve and a long, moderately tannic and tangy finish. The 2007 Corton “Renardes” is a lovely example of the vintage that is only a few years away from primetime drinking. 2017-2045. **92.**

2006 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

I really like the 2006 red Burgundies and the ’06 Grands Epenots from Domaine Gaunoux is a wonderful example of just how superb this often overlooked vintage can be! The nicely evolving nose wafts from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, *sous bois*, lovely spice tones, a bit of *pigeon*, smokiness and a superb signature of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and blossoming beautifully, with fine depth at the core, moderate, well-integrated tannins and a very long, complex and classy finish. Fine juice. 2019-2050. **93.**

2006 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

As is so typical when one compares the Grands Epenots and Rugiens from the Gaunoux family in the same vintage, the Rugiens is just a tad behind the Grands Epenots in terms of evolution, but the quality between the two is extremely close. The more reserved bouquet of the 2006 Rugiens delivers a fine mélange of dried red fruit, superb soil tones, a touch of dried citrus fruit, venison, woodsmoke, cinnamon and gentle hints of the autumnal notes to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly structured in personality, with a rock solid core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the soil-driven and complex finish. As this wine gets a bit of time in the glass it really starts to blossom and show its potential, which is exceptional! 2021-2060. **94.**

1983 Corton “Renardes”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

I had not seen a bottle of the 1983 Renardes in a few years, and the wine is every bit as good today as it was back in November of 2011 when I last had a chance to try it. The deep and tertiary nose wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of cherries, red currants, venison, coffee, beautiful autumnal soil tones and a sweet, savory topnote of summer truffles. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and gently chewy, with a very good core, lovely complexity and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This is a very good time to be drinking the 1983 Domaine Gaunoux wines. 2014-2035. **93.**

Puligny-Montrachet

Domaine Jean Chartron (Puligny-Montrachet)

I had arrived in November of last year at Domaine Chartron at a particularly inauspicious moment to taste the 2012 wines, as the entire cellar had either just been racked and assembled into tanks for their final stage of élevage, or had seen their sulfurs adjusted only a few days prior to my arrival. The wines were really in a difficult place to taste them, and after some reflection, I decided not to publish the notes from my November visit and take up Jean-Michel Chartron on his kind offer to allow me to re-visit in April and taste the lineup at a more propitious moment. I am very happy that I did so, as the wines were in beautiful form when I tasted them this spring and were really singing, and it was quite clear that I would have done an injustice to the wines and Monsieur Chartron to try and write notes from samples that were so out of sorts when I first tasted them in November. The extreme hail damage here in Puligny in

2012 is only felt in a couple of the wines, which are very nice, but seem to lack a bit of “energy” on the palate, which I associate with the hail. The remainder of the range is truly excellent, with the concentration from low yields very much in evidence here in certain wines, but none of the wines crossing over the threshold to what I would call too concentrated- just very deep, very pure and very terroir-specific wines of great purity and intensity of flavor. There was absolutely no Clos des Caillerets rouge this year, as the tiny block of pinot noir in this vineyard was completely wiped out by hail. All the village and premier cru whites had been bottled at the time of my early April visit, with the grand crus having been in tank for a few months already and due for bottling the week following my stopover at the domaine.

2012 Bourgogne Blanc “Clos de la Combe”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Domaine Chartron Bourgogne blanc is a very pretty wine, wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, white peach, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and a *souçon* of pastry cream. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and succulent, with a very nice core of fruit, zesty acids and fine length and grip. A really good example for its level. 2014-2020. **88.**

2012 Haute Côtes de Beaune Blanc “En Bois Guilleman”- Domaine Jean Chartron

As I was tasting this wine this year (for the first time in recent memory out of a labeled bottle), it struck me that I really approve of the name of this cuvée, as they almost got the spelling right! The wine is pure and classy in 2012, wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, white peach, a nice dollop of acacia blossoms, white soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows more mid-palate concentration at the core than the straight Bourgogne blanc, with very good acids, fine focus and a long, crisp and nicely nuanced finish. Good juice and a fine value. 2014-2022+. **88+.**

2012 Rully “Montmain”- Domaine Jean Chartron

Ever since I first became familiar with the Chartron wines back in the vintages of the early 1980s, I have always enjoyed their examples of Rully, and this 2012 is excellent. The very refined bouquet delivers a fine blend of pear, apple, complex, stony minerality, orange blossoms and a gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressive solid at the core, with fine mineral drive, crisp, ripe acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This was produced from quite low yields in 2012- thirty hectoliters per hectare- and it shows in the almost crunchy texture to the wine. Lovely juice and a great value! 2014-2020+. **89+.**

2012 Meursault “les Pierres”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Meursault “les Pierres” has really turned out well in this vintage and was one of the top Meursault *villages* bottlings that I tasted this year. The really refined nose jumps from the glass in an expressive mix of apple, pear, a touch of tangerine, almonds, white flowers, a fine base of soil tones and a delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a super core of fruit, excellent focus and grip, vibrant acids and outstanding balance on the very long and classy finish. Quintessential Meursault. 2014-2025+. **90.**

2012 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Pimentiers” Blanc- Domaine Jean Chartron

Jean-Michel Chartron is really making very good examples of Savigny Blanc in the last several years and his 2012 Pimentiers Blanc is excellent. The elegant bouquet delivers a lovely constellation of apple, gentle notes of lime, stony minerality, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and really shows the concentration of the vintage in its rock solid core, with bright acids and a very long, powerful

finish. This is like a reduction sauce of Savigny Blanc, but perfectly balanced and seamless- just really intense in style from the very short yields! 2014-2025. **89+**.

2012 St. Aubin “Murgers des Dents de Chien”- Domaine Jean Chartron

Yields were only twenty-five hectoliters per hectare for the Chartron family’s parcel in Murgers des Dents de Chien in 2012. This too is a pretty concentrated example of the vintage, but also impeccably balanced and very pure. The bouquet is an excellent blend of apple, pear, tangerine, pastry cream, *terres blanches* and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and cut, snappy acids and excellent length and grip on the very well-balanced and powerful finish. I really like the intensity of wines like this in 2012, as most often, when one encounters white Burgundies with this type of concentration, this comes at the expense of freshness and the wines tend to be overripe in profile. This is emphatically not the case with lovely and powerful wines such as this Murgers des Dents de Chien! 2016-2030+. **91**.

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Benoites”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The proximity of this Chassagne *lieu à dit* to Morgeots, which lies just above it on the slope, shows in the aromatic and flavor profile of this wine. This wine is not as inherently complex as the Murgers des Dents de Chien, but it is quite fine in its aromatic mix of peach, orange, incipient nuttiness, deep soil tones, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite generous on the attack already, with a fine core, crisp acids and a very long, well-balanced and juicy finish. Fine juice for early drinking, but with the balance to also age gracefully. 2014-2025+. **89**.

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Caillerets”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Chassagne “Caillerets” from Jean-Michel Chartron is another outstanding and quite concentrated example of the vintage, but with superb soil signature and zesty acidity to keep the wine beautifully balanced. The very pure and intense nose wafts from the glass in a blend of lemon, apple, white peach, superb, chalky soil tones, citrus oil and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with superb mid-palate concentration, outstanding focus and a very long, balanced and classy finish. This is a big boy for a young Caillerets, as the wine clearly has grand cru depth and power this year! 2016-2030+. **93+**.

2012 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Puligny AC from Domaine Chartron is a very lovely example, with the depth and concentration of the vintage nicely augmented by the inherent elegance of the village. The bouquet is a complex blend of apple, lemon, chalky soil tones, citrus oil, apple blossoms and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly broad-shouldered, with excellent depth at the core, crisp acids and lovely focus and balance on the long, zesty finish. A lovely bottle that will drink splendidly right out of the gate. 2014-2030+. **91**.

2012 Puligny-Montrachet “Folatières”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Folatières was one of the vineyards that was hit hard by hail in this difficult summer and Jean-Michel Chartron ended up with yields here of only ten hectoliters per hectare! This is one of those wines in the lineup that lacks a bit of vibrancy from the vines struggle this year, wafting from the glass in a deep and complex nose of peach, fresh almond, pineapple, chalky soil tones, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with good acidity, focus and grip on the long finish. It just lacks a bit of its customary spark, which is not too surprising, given how much suffering the vines had to go

through during the most violent attacks of hail and their aftermath. It is still a very good bottle, but the vagaries of the vintage are also part of its character this year. 2014-2025. **90.**

2012 Puligny-Montrachet “Clos de la Pucelle”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Clos de la Pucelles seems less affected by the struggles of the growing season and this wine has turned out beautifully in this vintage. The deep and concentrated nose is long and refinement and complexity, offering up scents of orange, pear, apple, chalky minerality, citrus zest, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and impeccably balanced, with a rock solid core, bright acids, lovely focus and bounce and a very long, complex and classic finish. High class juice. 2014-2030+. **93.**

2012 Puligny-Montrachet “Clos des Caillerets”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Clos des Caillerets falls somewhere between the Folatières and the Clos de la Pucelle this year, as it does not quite possess the same elegance and dimension as the latter, but is certainly a bit more vibrant and classic than the battered Folatières. The excellent and concentrated nose of the Clos des Caillerets wafts from the glass in a blend of pineapple, apple, chalky soil notes, citrus blossoms, incipient shadings of *crème patissière* and a nice dollop of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with fine mid-palate dimension, very good balance and a long, intense and classy finish. Good juice. 2014-2030. **92.**



Jean-Michel Chartron outside of his cuverie in the heart of the village of Puligny-Montrachet.

2012 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Corton-Charlemagne from Jean-Michel Chartron is absolutely stellar and a classic in the making! The brilliant nose soars from the glass in a mélange of apple, pear, orange zest, chalky minerality, pastry cream, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and intensely flavored, with a rock solid core, laser-like focus and great cut and grip on the pure and stellar finish. There was no hail on the hill of Corton this year, so this wine is very reminiscent stylistically of the 2010s here- just pure and deep from low yields. Great juice. 2019-2040+. **95+**.

2012 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Bâtard-Montrachet from Domaine Chartron is another stunning bottle of young grand cru. The very refined and nicely reserved nose delivers a stellar aromatic constellation of apple, pear, just a hint of pineapple, deep, complex soil tones, incipient notes of citrus blossom and a very stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with great focus and balance, racy acids and outstanding length and grip on the precise and very, very promising finish. Another majestic wine. 2020-2045+. **95**.

2012 Chevalier-Montrachet “Clos des Chevaliers”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Clos des Chevaliers is utterly brilliant. The superb bouquet delivers a magical blend of delicious apples, pears, *crème patissière*, very complex, chalky soil tones, lemon zest, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and laser-like in its focus, with a stunning core of fruit, impeccable balance, racy acids and great cut and grip on the endless and utterly seamless finish. Another clone of its 2010 version! 2020-2050. **97**.

2012 Montrachet- Maison Jean Chartron

The 2012 Montrachet from Jean-Michel Chartron is also outstanding, but at least at this early stage, it is not quite as multi-dimensional as the stunning Clos des Chevaliers. The outstanding bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, peach, lemon, a fine base of chalky soil, orange zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and complex, but not with quite the same core as the Chevalier this year. The finish is very, very long, intense and shows off outstanding acidity and bounce, with excellent balance and grip. Fine juice. 2019-2045. **94**.

Vins Rouges de Domaine Jean Chartron

2012 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Bourgogne Rouge from Domaine Chartron was bottled in January of 2014 and was showing quite well in April. The nose is a bright and vibrant blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee, charred wood and soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, young and bouncy, with a good core, just a bit of backend tannin and very good balance and grip. A fine example of its level, but give it a couple of years bottle age to blossom. 2016-2025. **87+**.

2012 Haute Côtes de Beaune Rouge “Sous la Roche”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2012 Sous la Roche has really turned out exceptionally well this year, and offers up decidedly more depth and complexity than the very good Bourgogne rouge that preceded it. The bouquet is a refined mélange of cherries, quince, chalky soil tones, a touch of gamebirds and a nice topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively suave on the attack, with fine mid-palate concentration, a bit of ripe backend tannin and lovely focus and grip on the long and classy finish. This is extremely well-made and a great bargain this year! 2015-2030. **89+**.

Chassagne-Montrachet

Domaine Michel Niellon (Chassagne-Montrachet)

I had the pleasure to taste the 2012 Domaine Niellon wines with both Michel Niellon and his son-in-law, Michel Coutoux, and both generations were quite content with how the 2012s had turned out here. The yields in several of the vineyards here were very short in 2012 (anywhere from twenty to twenty-five hectoliters per hectare), and where the crop was smallest, the wines have turned out the most concentrated in style- though all still with lovely balance and complexity. In a few of the premier crus, such as Vergers and Clos St. Jean, the yields were closer to forty-five hectoliters per hectare and the wines are quite classically styled as a result. Several of the wines reminded me quite strongly as more powerful versions of the 1992s here, with more tropical personalities and plenty of depth and generosity out of the blocks. As the 1992 Niellon wines have aged very well and many continue to drink with great style, there is little doubt that the 2012s here will age well also, but several of these wines will also offer up fine drinking at a relatively early age. I did not ask to taste the 2012 Bâtard-Montrachet this year, as all the wines had already been bottled, and with these very old vines already producing so little juice, in a very short crop like 2012 I felt it would be rude to ask to open a bottle.

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2012 Chassagne AC from Domaine Niellon is a very pretty wine, offering up a classic nose of apple, a touch of fresh pineapple, a fine base of chalky soil, white flowers and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, round and generous on the attack, with a good core of fruit, lovely acidity and very good length and grip on the wide open finish. 2014-2025. **90.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Champgains”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2012 Champgains had some of the shortest yields for the domaine this year, and as a result, this is one of the more concentrated wines in the lineup. The bouquet is a deep blend of pineapple, apple, orange peel, smoke, a bit of citrus oils and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary in personality, with a rock solid core, crisp acids and a long, powerful and youthful finish. This will need a couple of years to uncoil, but has the weight and depth this year of a grand cru (though not the same breed and complexity). 2016-2030. **90+.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean”- Domaine Michel Niellon

With a bit more normal yields (though still short), the 2012 Clos St. Jean is a bit more classically styled this year. The bouquet offers up a stylish mélange of orange blossoms, pear, tart tangerine, a lovely base of soil, incipient notes of the corn meal to come with bottle age and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and shows off lovely mid-palate intensity, with bright acids, fine focus and lovely length and grip on the still pretty primary finish. 2016-2030. **92.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Vergers”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The younger vines in Vergers also produced closer to a normal crop in 2012 and the wine has turned out very well indeed. The fine bouquet delivers scents of apple, pear, spring flowers, chalky soil tones, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very suave on the attack, with a good core, bright acids and a long, vibrant and complex finish. This is a bit more high-toned than some of the more concentrated premier crus here this year, but I like its lightness of step and its wonderful purity. 2014-2030. **92.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos de la Maltroie”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2012 Clos de la Maltroie is very concentrated in style and quite reserved in personality at the present time, offering up a powerful nose of peach, pineapple, a touch of the butterscotch to come, stony minerality, lime peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with bottomless depth at the core, bright acids and a long, powerful and zesty finish. This will need a few years to blossom, and like the Champgains, this has the weight of a grand cru this year. 2017-2030+. **92.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chaumées Clos de la Truffière”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2012 Chaumées Clos de la Truffière has turned out very well indeed in this vintage, delivering a fine and youthful bouquet of apple, pear, almonds, a complex base of chalky soil tones, apple blossoms and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and silky on the attack, with a rock solid core, ripe acids, excellent focus and complexity and a very long, crisp and zesty finish. This is powerful, but also impeccably well-balanced and shows plenty of breed. 2016-2030+. **93+.**

2012 Chevalier-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon

Having had the good fortune to drink the 1992 Niellon Chevalier-Montrachet two or three times in the last year, I was really struck by how similar the 2012 seemed to that wine in its youth. The bouquet is nicely closed and reserved today, but shows outstanding potential in its mix of apple, pear, a touch of tangerine, a bit of the *crème patissière* to come with bottle age, complex, chalky soil tones and a nice base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, long and zesty, with excellent focus and grip, a superb core of fruit, impeccable balance and a very long, vibrant and primary finish. This will need three or four years to start to blossom, and like the 1992, it should drink well from that point forward, and yet age long and gracefully on its superb balance. Fine juice. 2017-2035+. **95+.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet Rouge- Domaine Michel Niellon

I have only started to taste the red wines from Domaine Michel Niellon regularly in the last couple of years and I am sorry I did not ask to do so sooner! The 2012 Chassagne *rouge* offers up a very pretty nose of cherries, red plums, cocoa, a touch of nutskin, woodsmoke and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, suave and quite sappy at the core, with a lovely signature of soil, moderate tannins and impressive length and grip on the youthful finish. This will be very good with a bit of bottle age. 2018-2035. **90.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean” Rouge- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2012 Clos St. Jean *rouge* was raised in fifteen to twenty percent new wood and is a bit more reserved in style than the *villages* red, but equally successful in this vintage. The primary bouquet is a blend of red and black cherries, a touch of sweet, dark berry, charred wood, gamebird, espresso, a fine base of soil and just a whisper of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and tangy, with a nice sappy core, fine-grained tannins and a long, soil-driven and youthful finish. All this wine needs is a bit of time in the cellar! 2020-2040. **91+.**

St. Aubin

Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils (St. Aubin)

I had a very good visit with Philippe Prudhon this past April, as the 2012s were showing very well indeed and uniformly impressive- both reds and whites. He had been working hard in the vineyards prior to our visit, as the very early spring of 2014 had effectively taken away a month's time for pruning and trellising work in the vines, so that the Prudhons were really feeling the push from the sap already rising in the vineyards and an early budbreak just on the

horizon. As a result, Philippe Prudhon had been logging lots of extra hours in the vines and had managed to cut his thumb while pruning at breakneck pace only a few days before my visit, but with such a precocious start to spring, there was nothing to do but bandage it up really well and keep on working to get the vines trained and fully pruned before it was too late! The bandage certainly made it interesting for him to be opening bottles of the 2012s, but as he observed, “the thumb was cut a week ago and I am getting used to working around it now in the cellars.” With the exception of the two Puligny bottlings, which were still in tank, everything else had been bottled at the time of my early April visit, with the Bourgogne bottlings done in the fall of 2013 and the remainder of the range between January and March of 2014. I was very slow to get my act together and start tasting at Domaine Prudhon regularly, as 2010 was the first vintage I tasted *sur place* at their cellars, but I have loved the wines in each and every vintage since then and the outstanding 2012s are no exception, as these are a beautiful range of soil-driven, classic red and white Burgundies that offer up great style and charm. The St. Aubin whites here are across the board stellar in this vintage and have to offer up some of the most compelling values to be found anywhere in this year, and the top couple of premier crus from this village are probably even superior to the fine Chassagne “Chenevottes” and Puligny “la Garenne” in the cellars this year, as these St. Aubin vineyards were really not affected by the hail and are quite 2010-like in style.

Vins Blancs

2012 Bourgogne Aligoté- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2012 Bourgogne Aligoté from the Prudhons was bottled right before the harvest of 2013 and is a lovely bottle in the making, offering up a bright and classic nose of apple, lime blossoms, wet stones and a nice touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite round on the attack, with a good core, sound framing acids and lovely length and grip on the soil-driven finish. A fine example. 2014-2020. **87.**

2012 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2012 Bourgogne Blanc is a touch more reserved in style than the Bourgogne Aligoté, which is all to the good. The classy nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, a nice touch of iodine and an impressively complex base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, crisp acids and very fine backend cut and grip on the zesty finish. I would be inclined to give this very good Bourgogne a year in the cellar to fully allow it to blossom. Good juice here and a fine value. 2015-2025. **88.**

2012 St. Aubin “le Ban”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

This is the Prudhons’ St. Aubin *villages* bottling, and this is the largest cuvée that they produce, as they own just over two and a half hectares of vines in the village that go into this bottling. The 2012 has turned out beautifully, delivering a classy bouquet of pear, apple, *crème patissière*, a touch of lemon zest, spring flowers and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with good mid-palate intensity, bouncy acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and complex finish. This is a beautiful bottle for drinking right out of the blocks, though it does have the balance and spine to keep very nicely as well. 2014-2030+. **89+.**

2012 St. Aubin “les Castets”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2012 les Castets is quite forward and succulent this year and will also drink with great style from the outset. The very pure and lovely bouquet offers up scents of pear, delicious apples, very precise, limestone minerality, a touch of pastry cream and a stylish base of new

wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and complex, with a fine core, zesty acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and well-balanced finish. Another terrific bottle of St. Aubin that will not demand any patience before delighting the senses. 2014-2035. **90+**.

2012 St. Aubin “Sur le Sentier du Clou”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhon’s vines in Sur le Sentier du Clou are a very good age, having crossed the thirty-five year-old threshold a few years ago and the 2012 has turned out beautifully. The superb bouquet jumps from the glass in a very pure and complex mix of pears, apples, *crème patissière*, a touch of orange zest, *terres blanches*, apple blossoms and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off beautiful mid-palate depth, with a very classic balance (rather than the powerful concentration of so many examples from Puligny or Chassagne in 2012), excellent focus and grip, bright acids and outstanding length on the very refined and absolutely elegant finish. A beautiful bottle of white Burgundy! 2014-2030+. **92**.

2012 St. Aubin “les Perrières”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhons’ 2012 les Perrières, which lies just down slope from Sur le Sentier du Clou (and also faces southeast) is a bit more reserved out of the blocks, but every bit as stunning. The absolutely classic nose offers up scents of apple, white peach, chalky minerality, a touch of almond paste, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep and full-bodied, with a quite primary personality, a lovely core of fruit, excellent balance and focus, snappy acids and outstanding backend energy and grip on the very long and youthful finish. I would opt for drinking the Sur le Sentier du Clous first, and keep this equally fine bottle in the cellar for a few years to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. They are both ringing successes in this vintage! 2017-2035. **92+**.

2012 St. Aubin “Sur Gamay”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

Sur Gamay gets more afternoon sun than the two premier crus above, and it is a bit riper and more forward in style as a result. The more fruit-driven aromatics deliver scents of peach, a touch of passion fruit, acacia blossoms, a gentle touch of nuttiness and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine deep, full-bodied, round and juicy on the attack, with a good core, sound framing acids and a ripe, buxom finish that offers up very good length and grip, but comes across as just a touch chunky after the last couple of St. Aubin premier crus in the tasting. Good juice for early drinking, but this will not keep anywhere near as long as the Perrières or Castets. 2014-2020+. **90**.

2012 St. Aubin “les Chantennières”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The premier cru of les Chantennières lies over on the same hillside as Sur Gamay and en Remilly, with a southwesterly exposition, and it too is just a touch riper than the premier crus that face more southeasterly and lie on the hillside around the village of St. Aubin. However, the 2012 from Domaine Prudhon is a beautiful wine, wafting from the glass in a lovely aromatic constellation of white peach, apple, pastry cream, chalky soil minerality, vanillin oak and a gentle topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and succulent, with a fine core, bright acids, lovely soil signature and a very long, bouncy and wide open finish. This is a bit more elegant and transparent than the Sur Gamay this year, and is really a lovely bottle for drinking right out of the blocks. 2014-2030+. **91+**.

2012 St. Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2012 en Remilly from the Prudhon family is an utterly complete and classy example of this superb *terroir*. The bouquet delivers a superb mélange of pear, white peach, lemon, a very complex base of minerality, gentle notes of the almond paste to come, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and zesty, with excellent mid-

palate intensity, impressive complexity, fine focus and structure and a long, pure and very well-balanced finish that closes with lovely grip and soil signature, High class juice. 2015-2035. **92+**.

2012 St. Aubin “les Murgers Dents de Chien”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2012 St. Aubin “les Murgers Dents de Chien” from Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils is another absolutely stellar bottle in the making, soaring from the glass in a complex blend of apple, pear, lemon blossoms, *crème patissière*, vanillin oak and a lovely base of chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and racy, with a beautifully pure core of fruit, outstanding focus and grip, exquisite balance and a very long, refined and complex finish. Great juice and the very best of an extremely strong lineup of white wines in the Prudhon family cellars in this vintage. 2016-2035. **93+**.

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Houillères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

As I noted last year, the *lieu à dit* of les Houillères lies on the Puligny border, right next door to Puligny “Enseignères” and the Prudhons have a parcel of thirty-six year-old vines here. The 2012 has turned out very well indeed (though not as complex as the top premier crus in St. Aubin one should add), offering up a vibrant nose of peach, apple, orange blossoms, a fine base of soil tones and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and reasonably complex, with fine mid-palate intensity, fine balance and a very long, juicy and focused finish. Good juice. 2016-2035. **91+**.

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chenevottes”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2012 Chenevottes from Domaine Prudhon has turned out beautifully, wafting from the glass in a classic aromatic constellation of apple, peach, spring flowers, a complex base of soil and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely plush on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature, crisp acids and a very long, refined and complex finish. A lovely example of Chenevottes. 2016-2035. **92+**.

2012 Puligny-Montrachet “les Enseignères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhon family owns nearly a hectare of vines in les Enseignères, with half the vines thirty years of age and the other half over eighty. The 2012 was still in tank at the time of my visit and was to be bottled the following week. It offers up a really excellent bouquet of apple, peach, a touch of iodine, chalky soil tones, orange blossoms and a gentle base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit more concentrated in personality than the St. Aubin premier crus, but with fine focus and balance, crisp acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and refined finish. A lovely bottle, with the old vines here really contributing to a wine of premier cru quality. 2014-2030+. **92**.

2012 Puligny-Montrachet “la Garenne”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

As Philippe Prudhon remembered, the worst hail storm of 2012 arrived right over the ridge of La Garenne, and this vineyard was the worst hit of all their parcels in this vintage. The wine was still in tank at the time of my visit, and showed quite well, but without the same vibrancy as so many of the other Prudhon wines in the cellar from 2012. The bouquet is a ripe and open blend of peach, pear, pastry cream, chalky soil, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite juicy in personality, with plenty of mid-palate concentration, sound framing acids and good length and grip on the zesty and totally accessible finish. This came out quite well, but I have to rank at least two or three of the premier cru St. Aubins ahead of this wine in 2012. 2014-2025+. **91**.



Philippe Prudhon, taking a break from non-stop work in the vines, to hoist a glass of 2012 St. Aubin rouge.

Vins Rouges

2012 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

All of the pinot vines for the Prudhon Bourgogne rouge bottling are from the village of St. Aubin. The 2012, as is the style with this bottling *chez* Prudhon, quite light in color and offers up a vibrant bouquet of strawberries, cherries, fresh herb tones, a lovely base of chalky soil and a touch of youthful pepper in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and transparent, with a good, solid core, a bit of backend tannin and very good length and grip on the tangy finish. This is really quite good, but it will need a few years in the cellar to blossom. 2018-2025+. **87.**

2012 St. Aubin Rouge “les Argillers”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2012 St. Aubin *rouge* cuvée of les Argillers from Domaine Prudhon had only been bottled two weeks prior to my visit, but was showing aromatically quite well. The nose is excellent, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, gamebird, woodsmoke, coffee, chalk and incipient notes of the underbrush to come. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit agitated still from the *mise*, but with a lovely core, fine length and grip and a long, well-balanced finish of suave tannins and fine soil signature. This will be a lovely bottle. 2017-2035. **87-89.**

2012 St. Aubin “les Frionnes” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The domaine owns just under one hectare of thirty to sixty year-old pinot noir vines in the premier cru of les Frionnes and the 2012 is excellent, offering up a fine blend of red and black

cherries, woodsmoke, complex soil tones, cherry skin, cocoa, a whisper of nuttiness and just a touch of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite soil-driven in personality, with suave, ripe tannins, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and potentially superb finish. This had been in bottle a bit longer than the les Argillers rouge at the time of my visit. High class St. Aubin rouge! 2019-2040. **91.**

2012 St. Aubin “Sur le Sentier du Clou” Vieilles Vigne Rouge- Domaine Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhons have nearly hectare and a half of pinot noir in this fine premier cru. The 2012 Sentier de Clou *rouge* had also been in bottle for a while prior to my visit, and these fifty-five to eighty year-old vines have turned out a marvelous wine in this vintage. The excellent bouquet is a blend of red and black cherries, a complex base of soil, fresh cocoa, incipient notes of gamebird, a touch of orange zest, woodsmoke and a nice topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite sappy at the core, with lovely transparency, ripe, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the promising finish. Fine juice. 2019-2040. **91+.**

2012 St. Aubin “Cuvée les Rouges Gorges” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

To reiterate from last year’s report, the Cuvée les Rouges Gorges bottling is a blend of three premier crus, as the domaine has small holdings of pinot noir in each of these: Sur Gamay, La Combe and Bas de Vermarain à l’Est (which lies on the Chassagne border). All three are planted with relatively old vines, with the range from forty to sixty years of age. The 2012 had also only been in bottle for two weeks prior to my arrival to taste here, and was again a bit agitated on the palate. The bouquet is quite easy to read and really lovely, wafting from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, nutskin, woodsmoke, gamebird, cherry skin and a lovely signature of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and probably very well-balanced, but it is a little cranky so soon after the *mise*, with fine-grained tannins, tangy acids and lovely length and grip. I am sure this is very well-balanced, once it gets a chance to recover from the bottling, and it is quite likely to be the finest of these very good St. Aubin *rouge* cuvées in 2012. 2019-2040. **91-92.**

2012 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Chambres” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The les Chambres *rouge* bottling from Domaine Prudhon had been bottled at the start of March, and it too was a bit cranky still when I popped by at the start of April to taste. The nose is again more on form than the palate at the present time, offering up a far more black fruity profile of dark berries, black cherries, espresso, woodsmoke, game and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, youthful and nicely sappy at the core, with a fine base of soil, ripe tannins and good length and grip, but a rather shaken finish from the recent bottling. I am sure this too will be excellent, but I did not catch it at a great time. 2020-2040+. **89-91.**