

VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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**THE HOSPICES DE BEAUNE'S MARVELOUS
BEAUNE "CUVÉE MAURICE DROUHIN" AND A BIT OF HISTORY
OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MAN BEHIND THE WINE**



The Hospices de Beaune's fine bottling of Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is one of the very top wines of the Côte de Beaune produced by this venerable charity, with the quality of the wine totally commensurate with the very well-lived life of the exceptional gentleman who gave it his name. Maurice Drouhin was an iconic figure in the world of Burgundy during his days at the head of Maison Joseph Drouhin, which started in the immediate aftermath of the First World War and lasted up until he officially retired in 1957 and passed on the directorship of the *négociant* business to his nephew and adopted son, Robert Drouhin. In addition to his long tenure at the head of the family business, he was also the long-time director of the Hospices de Beaune and gave tirelessly of his time and energy to this worthy cause. Maurice Drouhin was an extraordinary man and his activities took him far beyond the scopes of the wine business. He was himself a highly-decorated a veteran of the First World War, having spent time in the trenches and coming to prominence as the Liaison Officer to the (then) American Major, Douglas MacArthur and his Rainbow Division (which was the second division of American soldiers to arrive in France after the US joined the Allies in 1917). During the Great War, he formed a lifelong friendship with Douglas MacArthur and over the course of his life Maurice would be

invited to Washington from time to time on diplomatic missions. It would be his close friendship with General MacArthur that would later get Monsieur Drouhin in trouble with the Germans during the Second World War.

After the First World War, Maurice Drouhin returned to Beaune and took over the reins of the family *négociant* business from his father Joseph Drouhin. The family domaine had been founded by Maurice's father in 1880, and was one of the important *négociant* businesses by the time of the First World War, when Maurice was called up for the military and sent off to serve his country. He returned to Beaune unscathed physically from his time fighting the war (though he was often visited by nightmares brought on by his wartime experiences), and succeeded to the head of the family business in 1919. At the time, Maison Joseph Drouhin was like most of its neighboring *négociants* in Beaune or Nuits St. Georges and sold wines from many other regions of France under its label, as well as Burgundy. Maurice decided that the future lay in his house producing solely wines from the Burgundy region and he was one of the very first amongst the merchant houses in Beaune to make this transition to a Burgundy-only portfolio. In 1925 he was selected to the Administrative Commission of the Hospices de Beaune and moved up to the position of Vice-President of the organization a few years later. As the position of President of the Hospices was an honorary post given to the Mayor of Beaune, the Vice-President was the *de facto* head of the Hospices de Beaune. He would continue on with his duties as Vice-President of the Hospices until 1955. During his time there he was instrumental in getting the Hospices de Beaune to rework its vineyard holdings, which prior to his tenure here, were a hodgepodge of *villages*, premier cru and a few scattered grand cru holdings. Maurice understood that the Hospices would be much better served if they could trade off their *villages* holdings for additional premier crus or purchase additional parcels in premier crus, so that they could offer higher quality wines at the auction each November and increase the budget for their good works. He wrote a convincing Hospices report to this effect in 1932 that paved the way for the vineyard configuration we know today of the modern Hospices de Beaune. He was very much a man ahead of his time in realizing that Burgundy's fortunes in the future would be tied to the highest quality wines.

In a similar vein, one of the first things that Maurice Drouhin accomplished after taking over the direction of the family *maison* in 1919 was to purchase the family's first vineyard parcels, with this beginning with the domaine's flagship premier cru of Clos des Mouches in the village of Beaune. Maurice was quick to realize that a merchant house with a foundation of its own vineyard holdings would be better positioned to withstand the vagaries of the marketplace in more difficult times, which Burgundy had certainly seen its share of by the time he returned to Beaune from the war in 1919. Phylloxera had devastated the region in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and even as Joseph Drouhin was founding his house in 1880, the region was in the midst of economic crisis caused by the devastation of the vineyards by phylloxera. It was not really until the second decade of the twentieth century that the region was beginning to bounce back a bit from the costs of replanting all those vineyards onto American rootstocks, and then along came the First World War. With so many young men on both sides of the trenches lost during that war, the aftermath in Burgundy was a time of hardship, a shortage of young men to work in the vines, little market demand, abandoned vineyards and real questions about the future of wine production in the region. Maurice Drouhin's first purchase of land in the Clos des Mouches vineyard was actually *en friche* at that time, and after buying the parcel, it had to be

replanted in the spring of 1920 and the *maison* did not produce its first vintage of Beaune “Clos des Mouches” until the 1923 vintage. At this time, work in the vineyards was still done principally by horse and cart, so Maurice Drouhin focused his continued vineyard purchases during the 1920s on other vineyard parcels in the premier crus of the village and neighboring communes of Beaune. It would not be until 1938 that he would purchase his family’s first parcel of vines outside of the Côte de Beaune, when he purchased just under a hectare of vines in the Clos de Vougeot.

Like many of the French men of his generation, who knew the reality of war all too well from the First World War, Maurice listened uneasily as another epic war with Germany seemed to be hovering on the horizon as the decade of the 1930s deepened. During this time, he was instrumental in the adoption of the Appellation Contrôlée system that has come to define Burgundy as we know it today and really paved the way for the region to find its way out of the dire economic crises that affected the region in the decade of the 1930s. Maurice Drouhin was elected one of the first members of the INAO when it was formed in 1938. In addition to starting to build up the family business’s vineyard patrimony during the decades of the 1920 and 1930s, Maurice also became at this time the largest customer for the wines of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, with Maison Joseph Drouhin purchasing fully sixty percent of their production each year during the decade of the 1930s and handling all of the domaine’s sales outside of France. DRC was not immune to the hard times that afflicted the Burgundy region in the 1920s and 1930s and Maurice Drouhin’s commitment to purchase their wines during this epoch was invaluable in keeping the domaine in the hands of the Chambon and de Villaine families during the nadir in Burgundy’s fortunes. Keep in mind that the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti was only officially established in 1912, the year after Edmond Gaudin de Villaine was appointed its managing director and a few years after his marriage to Mademoiselle Marie-Dominique-Madelaine Chambon. The Chambon family had owned half of the vineyard of Romanée-Conti for several decades, with the other half owned by their cousins, the Guyot brothers. In 1912, the vineyard was again reunited by the purchase of the Guyot brothers’ portion of Romanée-Conti by their cousins, Madame Chambon de Villaine and her brother, Jacques Chambon and the domaine was officially created in the aftermath of that sale. During World War II, when sales of Burgundy were hardly robust and expenses at DRC routinely outpaced profits, Jacques Chambon sought to sell his half of the domaine and the de Villaine family sought a partner to take over the Chambon legacy. The first person that they thought of as a potential new partner in 1941 was Maurice Drouhin.

As is so beautifully recounted in Don and Petie Kladstrup’s moving book, Wine and War, the timing of the offer to join the de Villaine family as co-proprietors of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti could not have come at a worse time for Maurice Drouhin, for at that time he was in prison and suspected by the Germans of having ties to the French Resistance. He had been arrested in August of 1941, no doubt in part due to his occasional trips to Washington to consult with Douglas MacArthur and other American foreign policy officials on the affairs of Europe as the clouds of potential war deepened on the continent. He spent six months in prison before he was put on trial on February 13, 1942. He was released a few days later, as the Germans were unable to uncover any evidence of his ties to the Resistance. It turns out that the Germans were not incorrect in their suspicions however, as Maurice Drouhin was indeed very actively involved with the French Underground at this time. While in prison his wife Pauline had relayed the

information that it was going to be possible to purchase Jacques Chambon's half of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, but Maurice decided that it would be too big of a risk with his being in prison and knowing that even if he were released, the odds were strong that he might be re-arrested if any evidence surfaced of his ties to the French resistance. And in fact, the Gestapo did indeed knock on the door of the Drouhins' home on the Rue d'Enfer in the old center of Beaune in the wee hours of the morning to re-arrest Maurice on June 7th of 1944. Maurice had been prepared for just such an eventuality, having packed a small bag and placing it under his bed the moment he returned home from his first imprisonment, just in case he would have to go into hiding. When the knock came, he whisked out his bag and headed to the cellars under the house.

The Drouhins' home and Maison Joseph Drouhin's offices sit above the ancient cellars that were once owned by either the Dukes of Burgundy or the Church. These ancient cellars honeycomb all the level below Beaune's center, running under the Hospices de Beaune and much of the remainder of the town's old section. They were built at various times between the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries and were purchased by the Drouhin family as circumstance allowed in the early years of the twentieth century. There are miles and miles of interconnected cellars here that form an underground city of their own underneath the heart of Beaune and Maurice had descended into these with only a small candle as soon as he heard the knock on the door. As Maurice had been the Vice President of the Hospices de Beaune since the late 1920s, when he emerged from the labyrinth of cellars a block over from the family home, his destination was to be the Hospices de Beaune. There, the nuns employed by the Hospices to take care of the sick and the elderly were able to hide Monsieur Drouhin from the Gestapo until the city of Beaune was liberated by American soldiers in September of 1944, and so, unbeknownst to his family (who were only a few blocks away), Maurice was safely hidden away out of the reach of the Gestapo as the war ground to a close in the Burgundy region in the last months of 1944. In appreciation of all that the Hospices de Beaune did for Maurice during his months in hiding at the end of the war, he and his wife Pauline made a donation in 1947 of vineyard parcels that Maison Drouhin owned in Beaune to create what would become the Hospices' "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin".

Although the vineyard parcels that comprise the Cuvée Maurice Drouhin were bequeathed to the Hospices de Beaune in 1947, the transfer of vineyards was assigned to occur after the death of Maurice Drouhin. After the war, Maurice Drouhin settled into his professional life once again, running Maison Joseph Drouhin and continuing his activities at the Hospices de Beaune. In the autumn of 1955 he had a stroke, that left him partially paralyzed, though his mental faculties were largely unaffected. At the time, his son Robert was serving out his military obligations, so with the help of his staff at Maison Drouhin, Maurice was able to continue his duties at the family *négociant* through 1956, but he resigned his position at the Hospices de Beaune in the wake of his stroke in 1955. When Robert Drouhin returned to Beaune from the military at the end of 1956, he assumed direction of the family business and Maurice fully retired in the beginning of 1957. Monsieur Drouhin passed away in 1960, so the first vintage of this cuvée actually produced by the Hospices de Beaune was the 1961. The Hospices de Beaune's Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is made up of a blend of parcels in four different premier crus: les Avaux, Champs Pimonts, Boucherottes and Grèves. This is one of the largest bottlings produced by the Hospices de Beaune, as the Drouhin family's donation amounted to 2.69 hectares of vines in the four premier crus. Forty percent of the vines are located in the vineyard of les Avaux (1.08

hectares), twenty-five percent each in les Pimonts and Boucherottes (.72 hectares each) and ten percent (27 *ares*) in Beaune “Grèves”. The Maison Joseph Drouhin has purchased it every year since it was first produced by the Hospices de Beaune in the 1961 vintage, following Maurice Drouhin’s passing the year before. As Robert Drouhin, recounts about the bidding for this cuvée at the Hospices auction each November, “we generally try and buy it all, but it has happened that other *négociants* have purchased some of it” in certain vintages through the years.

During their *elevage* of the wine, Maison Drouhin will remove their Hospices de Beaune purchases from the one hundred percent new oak that the wine is sold in, once it has completed its malolactic fermentation. In certain vintages, where the malolactic is long and drawn out, this will mean that the bottlings will spend a longer period in new oak than what the domaine would ideally like for the wine, but it is not advisable to change a wine’s cask while it is still undergoing malolactic fermentation. Consequently, in some vintages the Cuvée Maurice Drouhin will seem a bit more marked by its new oak than in other years, but this is a challenge that every buyer at the Hospices de Beaune auction faces each year. With so many of the Hospices’ top cuvées produced from vineyard sites in the Côte de Beaune, the one hundred percent new oak regimen of the Hospices may not always be ideally suited to the underlying style of the wines. But, as the following notes will attest, Maison Joseph Drouhin does an admirable job in managing the new wood of this bottling in their cellars and it is the rare vintage that does not fully absorb its generous serving of new oak over the course of its life in bottle and blossom into an absolutely stunning example of Beaune premier cru.

Like all of the Hospices de Beaune wines, the Cuvée Maurice Drouhin bottling arrives at the *maison’s* cellars already well on its way to a finished wine, and though the *elevage* is of course of paramount importance, much of the character of the wine has already been shaped by the winemakers at the Hospices de Beaune. As these have changed over the years, the personality of the wine has shifted a bit with the stylistic preferences of the respective *Régisseurs* at the Hospices, but in the vertical tasting of the bottling that Véronique Drouhin-Boss and the domaine so kindly organized to assist in the preparation of this article, it was remarkable to see how consistent the style of the wine proves to be over time, despite the changes in winemakers over the years at the Hospices de Beaune. Of the notes that follow on the Cuvée Maurice Drouhin, the vintages from 2013 back to 2000 were all made by the Hospices’ recently retired *Régisseur*, Roland Masse (who retired after crafting the 2014 vintage here). The 1990 vintage was made by his predecessor, and the 1985 was made by the well-known André Porcheret during his first period as *Régisseur* at the Hospices de Beaune (Monsieur Porcheret was winemaker at the Hospices from 1976 through 1987, and then after a brief sabbatical at Domaine Leroy in Vosne-Romanée, returned to the Hospices again from 1994 through 1999).

I am deeply indebted to Véronique Drouhin-Boss and Robert Drouhin for assisting in the preparation of this article, which I had talked about doing with Véronique for several years and which we were finally able to make happen during my most recent visit in the spring of 2016. Her father Robert was very gracious to field all of my questions about the history of the domaine during Maurice Drouhin’s times and of his father’s extraordinary life beyond the walls of the *maison*. As he commented, “it is always a pleasure to think of my father- a model of intelligence, curiosity, integrity and generosity” and share some of his legacy. Robert Drouhin’s recounting of the history of his father was greatly appreciated, as I found that several other sources that

included mention of Maurice Drouhin's era as head of the family domaine and the Hospices de Beaune were not always entirely accurate as to dates or events. This is not surprising, as Maurice Drouhin was a man of great energy and passion and accomplished a great many things over the course of his life- many of which reached far beyond the boundaries of the world of wine- and it is understandable that memories will be hazy and less exact as time marches on. I hope this brief narrative will assist in setting the record right on a few facets of the exceptional life of Maurice Drouhin. Toasting his extraordinary accomplishments with a glass of properly aged Hospices de Beaune "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin" seems like a very fitting way to celebrate his legacy. Though this legacy extends far beyond the wines that bear his name, he was first and foremost a man in love with his native Burgundy- of the people and wines that are interwoven here in such a beautiful and timeless tapestry of life- and though his influence will reach far beyond the world of wine, Robert Drouhin probably says it best when he reflects that "I also learned so much from him on Burgundy and its traditions."



Véronique Drouhin-Boss with a very promising lineup of the Hospices de Beaune "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin".

The following wines were all tasted in March of 2016, with the exception of the 1972 and the beautiful 1964 bottling of Cuvée Maurice Drouhin. The 1964, which I was fortunate enough to find six bottles of at auction back in the late 1990s and drank with immense pleasure over the ensuing years, was last tasted back in 2008, when I finished up my last of six extremely enjoyable bottles. I should also mention that the last time I toured the cellars of the La Tour d'Argent

restaurant in Paris, they still had a fine supply of the 1978 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin in the cellars and had not yet put the wine on the main wine list. If you happen to be there and it has not yet found its way onto the list, enquire, as it was perhaps Monsieur Porcheret's greatest vintage during his tenure at the Hospices de Beaune, and I cannot help but imagine that the wine would be drinking brilliantly today.

2013 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2013 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is a lovely wine that shows all of the intensity and bounce of this fine, middleweight vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a youthful blend of red berries, cherries, vinesmoke, a lovely base of soil, fresh herb tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and tightly-knit, with lovely intensity of flavor, moderate tannins and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This needs time, but it will be a fine bottle. 2023-2060. **91.**

2011 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2011 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is quite closed down at the present time, and it may prove that my score is slight conservative as a result. The more black fruity bouquet is still quite primary, but shows fine potential in its blend of black cherries, dark berries, incipient notes of gamebird, espresso, woodsmoke and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and properly reserved at the present time, with a fine core of fruit, lovely length and grip and a moderately tannic, well-balanced and classy finish. This will be a very good bottle, but it seems likely to need a few more years than the 2013 to really blossom and presently is showing its new oak just a bit more than the '13. 2025-2060. **90.**

2010 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2010 vintage of Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is really superb and probably one of the finest examples of this bottling that has been produced in the last twenty-five years. The excellent nose remains youthfully pure, wafting from the glass in a fine mélange of plums, black cherries, gamebird, raw cocoa, a superb base of dark soil tones, woodsmoke, violets and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a sappy core, great transparency and outstanding length on the nascently complex and ripely tannic finish. This wine has the sappy depth to carry its new oak seamlessly. 2022-2070. **94.**

2009 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

I really like the 2009 vintage of the Cuvée Maurice Drouhin, but this will likely be one of the shorter-lived vintages of this wine in the new millennium. It is already starting to drink quite nicely, wafting from the glass in a juicy blend of black cherries, chocolate, woodsmoke, a touch of *garrigue*, a nice bit of meatiness and spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush on the attack, with a good core, bright acids and a long, moderately tannic and quite wide open finish. This is already showing fine complexity and generosity, but it does not seem to have the grip and structural backbone to go anywhere near as far down the road as the 2010, for instance. A very good bottle and a ringing success for the 2009 vintage, but a wine to drink over the relative mid-term. 2016-2035. **91+.**

2008 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2008 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is a fine example of its vintage, but it is struggling just a bit to carry the one hundred percent new oak of the Hospices and still shows just a whisper of oak tannin on the backend. The bouquet is very high class, wafting from the glass in a fairly red fruity constellation of cherries, pomegranate, a touch of blood orange, developing notes of heather and *sous bois*, gamebird and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows

lovely mid-palate depth, with excellent soil signature, fine focus and grip and a long, modestly tannic and tangy finish. This is a classic 2008 and a fine bottle that only needs a few more years' worth of bottle age to reach its plateau of maturity, where it should cruise along very nicely for several decades. Fine juice. 2018-2045+. **92+**.

2005 Beaune "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin"- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2005 vintage of Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is top flight and will compete with the 2010 as the finest bottling of this wine in the new millennium. This is more powerfully built than the 2010 version, offering up a deep, sappy and really fine bouquet of black cherries, sweet dark berries, raw cocoa, a superb base of soil tones, espresso, gentle balsamic tones and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully sappy at the core, with a still quite primary personality, ripe, beautifully integrated tannins, great focus and mineral drive and a long, tangy and very, very promising finish. This is still a puppy and needs plenty of time in the cellar to blossom, but it will be stellar once it blossoms completely. 2025-2075+. **93+**.

2003 Beaune "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin"- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2003 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is quite ripe and shows the warm vintage character of this torrid summer in Europe. The bouquet offers up a blend of baked black plums, a touch of prune, roasted venison, dark soil tones and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush on the attack, with fairly good depth at the core and a wide open, ready personality on the fairly long finish. There are some gritty tannins on the backend here that will probably always be part of the equation, but this is a wine to drink over the next fifteen to twenty years, as there is not the customary structural chassis in the '03 as most of these other vintages. 2016-2035. **88**.

2001 Beaune "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin"- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2001 vintage of Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is now into its apogee of peak drinkability and was really showing well at the time of our tasting. The beautiful nose offers up a mature constellation of cherries, desiccated red berries, woodsmoke, forest floor, a touch of heather, spit-roasted game and a dollop of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely tertiary today, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and meltingly tannic finish. A lovely bottle. 2016-2035. **90**.

2000 Beaune "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin"- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 2000 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is even a step up from the very pretty 2001 version and is showing more mid-palate depth and backend length than its younger sibling. The bouquet is excellent, wafting from the glass in a very classy blend of black cherries, *sous bois*, dark soil tones, espresso, woodsmoke, *pigeon* and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with more mid-palate stuffing than the 2001, lovely complexity and a long, vibrant and impressively tangy finish. This wine is now fully *à point*, but has the balance and structural integrity to cruise along at least another fifteen to twenty years. A very impressive showing. 2016-2035. **93**.

1990 Beaune "Cuvée Maurice Drouhin"- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 1990 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is one of the best 1990 red Burgundies I have tasted in quite some time, as it has retained its freshness of fruit better than many wines of higher appellation. The bouquet is deep, plush and very nicely vibrant, wafting from the glass in a black fruity blend of dark berries, black plums, woodsmoke, forest floor, a touch of mustard seed, a lovely note of heather and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and impressively soil-driven in personality, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and balance and a long, meltingly tannic and complex finish. Really a lovely bottle. 2016-2040. **92**.

1985 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 1985 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is a dynamite wine at its apogee, but still with plenty of structural elements to carry it flawlessly for at least another couple of decades. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a mature blend of dried cherries and plums, a touch of orange zest, gamebird, forest floor, heather and a smoky topnote redolent of bonfires. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and focused, with fine complexity, a lovely core of fruit, excellent soil signature and a long, bouncy and focused finish that closes with fine grip and energy. Really a classy wine, from back when André Porcheret was making the wines for the Hospices de Beaune. 2016-2035. **94.**



1972 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

The 1972 Cuvée Maurice Drouhin is getting a tad volatile as it nears the end of its life, or at least this was the case with our particular bottle. The bouquet offers up a complex blend of cherries, raspberries, coffee, *sous bois*, and lovely spice tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and tangy, with good mid-palate depth, but a fair bit of volatile acidity that soon consumes the finish of the wine. For the first fifteen minutes this was a lovely bottle, and then the collapse began in earnest, and ten minutes later the bottle was history. I suspect better bottles would be just lovely. This was **88** at its best, but that only lasted about fifteen minutes.

1964 Beaune “Cuvée Maurice Drouhin”- Hospices de Beaune (Maison Joseph Drouhin)

Maison Joseph Drouhin buys the Cuvée Maurice Drouhin each year from the Hospices. I was fortunate to come across a half case of this wine about a decade ago and have had great

pleasure from each and every bottle that I have opened. This is a blend of les Avaux, Champs Pimonts, Grèves and Boucherottes, and the '64 has consistently drunk with fine vigor over the course of the seven or eight years that I still owned bottles of this wine. The last bottle of the six pack, which I served a couple of years ago was still at its peak, offering up a deep and vibrant nose of cherries, a touch of red plum, woodsmoke, fresh herbs, gamebirds, forest floor and coffee. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and still generous at the core, with melted tannins, still quite tangy acids and lovely length and grip on the complex and tertiary finish. A lovely bottle of fully mature Beaune, I have little doubt that this wine will continue to cruise along beautifully for years to come. 2008-2025+. **92.**

**THE 2015 GERMAN VINTAGE:
A PERFECT INDIAN SUMMER
DELIVERS THE FINEST POTENTIAL IN FORTY YEARS**



The 2015 vintage in Germany is one of the finest young vintages I have ever had the pleasure to taste- at least at those estates who have embraced the style of the vintage and not sought to make wines in a style that is antithetical to the framework of the year. As readers may recall from last year's report on the 2014ers, unpredictable and difficult weather leading into and during harvest was part of last year's ordeal faced by winegrowers in all of Germany's many regions, and it was a constant struggle throughout most of the growing season of 2014. Things could not have been any different in the summer and fall of 2015, as Germany's wine producers were given one of the most beautiful *fin de saisons* that most of them can remember, with absolutely perfect weather for the last five to six weeks of the growing season allowing each estate to take its time in selection and only picking grapes in optimal conditions. To give some idea of just how beautiful the weather was in the autumn of 2015 in Germany and how pristine the grapes ended up as a result, one needs to only look at a few comments from some of the veteran winegrowers in the region to get some idea of just how special the 2015ers are going to be: Helmut Dönnhoff commented on the 2015s that "I have only had grapes this beautiful once in my entire career, and this was in my very first vintage of 1971." Willi Schaefer was equally enthusiastic, observing that "this vintage reminds me very much of 1975, which was one of my earliest vintages here and I have been waiting to see another one like it ever since." Hanno Zilliken echoed these comments, noting "that there is a vintage from early in my career that 2015

reminds me of very much and that is the 1975 vintage.” So there is some pretty widespread consensus amongst some of Germany’s greatest veteran wine producers that 2015 is very, very special indeed!

However, I should be quick to point out that the great end of the year growing conditions were really only available to the producers in the northern part of Germany, as those in the Rheinpfalz and Baden had the ripeness come on earlier and ended up having to pick the grapes in September and missed out on the beautiful Indian Summer conditions of the entire month of October. Given how superb so many vintages have been in Germany since the new millennium began, it is hard to say right now that 2015 will eventually take its place at the very top of the list of great vintages across German wine country, but at the top addresses that I visited on my spring trip, it has all of the potential to vie with anything from any vintage in the last forty years and I would be very, very surprised a quarter century down the road if the top 2015ers are not spoken of with the same reverence as vintages like 1961 in Bordeaux, 1978 in Burgundy or 1971 and 1975 in Germany- it is simply that magnificent. However, despite the glorious Indian Summer and the absolutely perfect picking conditions across all of Germany’s northern wine regions in late September and all of October, not everyone has made brilliant wines, as there were possible temptations that some producers have fallen into and they have missed some of the potential inherent in this great growing season. For starters, 2015 is a very high acid vintage and some estates have been tempted to de-acidify, and though I only tasted at one estate during my trip where de-acidification was resorted to with some frequency, I have heard reports from folks who tasted wines from a wider range of estates at the Prowein fair in Düsseldorf that it is not an infrequent occurrence in the vintage. With the advent of climate change, de-acidification is a skill that has not needed to be resorted to very often in the last twenty to twenty-five years and many younger producers have not honed their skills with this process, so many who de-acidify manage simply to take out cut, lift and precision in their wines. This was a possibility that was particularly strong in the 2015 vintage, as a lot of the acidity early on was tartaric acid and a significant percentage of this precipitated out during the course of the winter the wines spent in the cellar. For producers who looked at the very early analysis and de-acidified according to those numbers, they will have ended up with gentle and fairly low acid wines as the winter took even more acidity away with cold temperatures, so there will be some 2015ers that really are a far cry from the heights scaled by so many of the finest producers this year.

Another potential pitfall for producers in Germany’s wine regions in 2015 was that in certain sectors, the style and quality of the grapes was far better-suited to producing classic, noble sweet wines than it was to producing dry wines. This is a problem on a couple of fronts, as the domestic German wine market has rediscovered its vinous heritage only in the last several years, but their passion is almost exclusively for dry wines, and many producers needed to produce primarily dry wines for their clientele, even if the raw materials were not ideal for this genre and they could have done even better with sweeter styled wines. Given that so many estates in Germany have been struggling for years to find clients within their home country, it is perfectly understandable that they would desire to craft the dry wines for which their customers are craving, even if they could have produced even finer wines in a sweeter style, as this is hardly the time at most estates to not cater to the desires of their hard-won new German clientele. So it was not every estate that could do what Christophe Schaefer of Weingut Willi Schaefer decided to do in this vintage, as he commented that “we saw that the vintage was really best-

suited to produce classic Prädikat wines and we felt it would be a wasted opportunity to try to make a great many dry wines in this vintage, given that the grapes were so perfect for sweeter wines.” He told a humorous anecdote about a merchant arriving to taste 2015ers at the estate and stating that he “only wanted to taste the Grosses Gewächs this year”. Christophe laughed and said, “okay, but this is going to be a very short visit for you, as we did not produce any.” The merchant finally decided to reverse course and taste the entire range from the 2015 vintage, after which he commented to Christophe “that you may never again in your career produce such a complete range of absolutely beautiful wines!”

The above comments might be seen to infer that the 2015 vintage did not produce any outstanding dry Rieslings, and this is most emphatically not the case, but twenty or thirty years down the road, it is probably going to be the noble sweet wines that end up defining the absolute greatness of this vintage. The comparisons to the 1975 vintage are very apt, as the 2015 vintage is a year that has produced gloriously pure, minerally and precise wines, with many of the sweet wines made without any botrytis at all, and though there is some lovely noble rot to be found scattered around the different wine-producing regions, far more sweet wines that I tasted this year were produced from perfectly ripe, golden berries and desiccated grapes that have dehydrated from extended hang time, rather than botrytis. The French call these kind of desiccated, shriveling berries *Passerillage* and these types of grapes tend to make some of the most gloriously pure and minerally sweeter-styled wines, with a perfect example of this style of wine being the legendary range of Moelleux wines made at Domaine Huët in the 1989 vintage. There are loads and loads of 2015ers made from these beautifully concentrated grapes, and they deliver truly magical minerality and racy precision to go along with their gloriously exotic fruit tones. In my experience, Germany’s sweeter bottlings of Riesling made from these non-botrytized grapes age even better than those with botrytis in a great many cases, retaining their mineral complexity far, far longer than wines made with botrytized grapes, and many of these wines will be amongst the legends of 2015 for future generations to savor.

This is not to say that there is not some botrytis to be found in 2015, but where there is some noble rot, it is also amazingly pure and clean botrytis and generally just adds a supporting base of exotica to the wines where it is present, as it is not a very aggressive style of botrytis such as one found in the middle Mosel in a vintage like 2006. Over and over again, winegrowers with whom I visited commented that the small percentage of botrytis that is present in some of the wines is absolutely clean in nature and some of the most beautiful noble rot that they have ever had the chance to work with. The reason the botrytis that is present in 2015 did not become more of a powerful defining element of the vintage had to do with the very, very cool and crisp nights that defined the month of October in 2015. These cool, dry evenings simply kept what little botrytis was present in the vintages from spreading and really developing, so that winegrowers could simply keep an eye on the bunches with botrytis, or pick them a bit earlier, in their purest form, as there was no temptation that leaving those bunches out on the vine was going to deliver a higher degree of noble rot with more hang time. Some producers, such as Hanno and Dorothee Zilliken in Saarburg, even went so far to make single berry selections of their desiccated grapes, separating those with a touch of botrytis from those with none, and also making selections of varying degrees of shriveling and golden berries to go to specific cuvées. It has been a long time since a harvest was so relaxed and pressure free as to allow producers this

type of precision sorting and selection and the beauty of the resulting wines is simply breathtaking!

The midsummer of 2015 was very hot in Germany, as was the case in many other wine-growing regions around Europe. Hydric stress was an issue in the best-drained, steep slate vineyards, and there were periods of time during the heat of July that ripeness was at a standstill for younger vines, but a bit of rain got things going again by the end of the month and growers could not have asked for better conditions from that point onwards. In the warmer regions of the Rheinpfalz and Baden, ripeness came on very briskly and the harvest was early in these regions, with grapes starting to be collected by the middle of September and producers here simply were not given the same opportunity as those in the less warm regions. However, in the cooler regions of the Mosel, Rheinhessen, Rheingau and the Nahe, the grapes were still gently mounting in ripeness into the month of October and the potential of a magical vintage began to unfold. As Klaus-Peter Keller noted, late harvesting was very important to get the most out of the potential of 2015, as “after the fourteenth of October, the character of the vintage changed.” He continues, this was “due to the extremely low evening temperatures that arrived in the middle of the month and from this point forward the flavors exploded, with healthy berries quickly drying out and it became a fantastic and completely unique year.” Producers who waited, and this was virtually everyone with whom I visited in March, were able to pick each section of vines at simply perfect ripeness and make multiple passes through the vineyards, as there was no pressure of rot or spreading botrytis, and the cold nights kept the acidity levels up nice and high as the sugars continued to slowly mount. Tim Fröhlich of Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich spoke for many producers when he noted that “with six weeks to harvest, we could be precise and pick every parcel and every grape variety at optimal conditions.”

The midsummer heat also had another effect on the style of the harvest, as the grapes developed thick skins in the hot weather and the berries stayed small throughout the year, even when temperatures dropped back to normal levels in the last few months and a bit of rain helped plump up the berries again after the drought of July. As Helmut Dönnhoff observed, “we lost ten percent of a normal crop simply because there was less juice in the berries this year, with the normal number of bunches not producing as much liquid at pressing.” This served to only further enhance the concentration of flavors in the vintage of 2015, and make no mistake, the best wines produced in this vintage are destined for a very, very long and exhilarating life in bottle and will be pointed out for decades to come as exemplars of just how brilliant German Riesling can be in a great, legendary vintage. For that is exactly what 2015 is in Germany, one of the great vintages of the last half century and destined to be viewed as one of the greatest in history as the years roll by. As I noted above, there are some absolutely great dry wines in 2015, but this is not the natural strength of the vintage, and it was the Prädikat wines that I found the most extraordinary of the large number of brilliant wines that I tasted during my trip. And believe me, I tasted a ton of utterly stunning wines during my week in Germany! The 2015 vintage is just the kind of vintage that I adore, as the wines have glorious spines of acidity (where they have not been sloppily de-acidified) that will provide the structural chassis for very, very long lives in bottle, and which give the wines an inner tension that is extremely rare and utterly beautiful to behold. The fruit tones in the wines are so very pure and vibrant that one feels like a newborn man tasting the perfectly ripe fruit for the first time off of the vine and conceiving names new and wonderful for the flavors that wash across the senses. There is a primordial beauty in these

2015ers that is extremely rare. And I would be remiss in not mentioning that the level of minerality in all these top wines is also extraordinarily present- it is just that good of a vintage!

At the Prädikat level, I tasted so many utterly brilliant Kabinetten from 2015 that fans of this level of delicate, ethereal Riesling are going to be well-served to purchase with wild abandon from the top examples of the vintage, as there are so many filigreed, dancing examples of Kabinetten in this year that any fan of this level would be insane not to stock up aggressively on 2015ers. At the Spätlese level, things are just as magical, as the wines exude pure, succulent fruit tones, great *terroir* and such beautiful *nervosité* from the vintage's high acids that the wines just sizzle across the palate. In all cases that I tasted, the high acids are impressively ripe texturally and seamlessly woven into the bodies of the wines, so as Werner Schönleber of Weingut Emrich-Schönleber observed, "the impression in the wines is of lower acidity than the actual analysis shows, as the acids are perfectly ripe." The combination of high acids, very clean and pure fruit tones and great minerality translates into wines of such extraordinary precision, with each element both shining individually in the wine- so that the fruit soars from the glass, the minerality drives the wines on the palate and there is such exceptional lift on the finishes of so many wines from the acids- and also weaving a completely seamless whole, as one simply cannot imagine better balance in a vintage of young German wine. Perhaps the greatness of the vintage is best exemplified at the level of Auslesen in 2015, as here one has fruit that exudes a perfection of ripeness, coupled to glorious transparency, cut and elegance, as so many of the examples have no influence of botrytis and are concentrated by gentle, natural desiccation on the vine during the glorious Indian Summer of 2015. Most of the producers whom I visited saved their gently botrytized grapes for Goldkapsel Auslesen and higher Prädikat wines, so there is a glorious array of non-botrytized Auslesen to choose from in this vintage. Klaus-Peter Keller actually went so far as to make Goldkapsel, Beerenauslesen and Trockenbeerenauslesen from non-botrytized grapes as well in 2015, just allowing the *Passerillage* to work its magic and dehydrate and concentrate the grapes. There really is an other-worldly sheen to many of these wines!

As readers probably already know, I really love Auslesen that do not show a lot of effects of botrytis, so a vintage like 2015 has produced a wide array of wines that are really in my own personal sweet spot. This is not a taste that I began my German wine appreciation with early on, as in my earlier days in the wine trade, I was more often drawn to the wines that showed a lot of influence from botrytis in their aromatic and flavor profiles in the Auslesen that I loved best. But, in those days (having just begun to build my cellar), I was drinking mostly young wines and it is probably quite understandable that the more heavily glazed examples of Auslesen that I was drinking would catch my attention with the most frequency. As was the case with Burgundy, the 1985 vintage in Germany is really where I began my journey with these wines and my love for Riesling began to be fostered, but what was nice in these days, was that it was pretty easy to find top wines from previous vintages available in the market, so that I was able to taste quite widely from the 1983 vintage, not to mention many examples from the 1976 vintage as well. Both of these previous vintages were quite heavily glazed and fit nicely with my palate preferences at the time. However, as the years rolled by and I had a chance to leave some of my bottles of German Riesling alone in the cellar (I was notorious for drinking my German wines almost as quickly as I put them in the cellar over the first several years of my wine collecting, but eventually I had amassed enough Riesling that some of the bottles had a chance to stay in the cellar for some

years, rather than the matter of months that characterized my early German wine days), I began to notice that it was the non-botrytized or less-botrytized examples of Auslesen that I really began to love with extended bottle age. Ironically, while I was learning this lesson, one of the most beautiful recent vintages for non-botrytized Auslesen had come and gone under my purview, as I had sold plenty of examples of the 1988 vintage from Germany, but had focused almost all of my own buying on the following vintages of 1989 and 1990, where the botrytis was again far more prevalent in the upper Prädikat wines. Live and learn. Today, I have plenty of 1988ers in my cellar that I was able to backfill and they are some of my most cherished German wines from that era. The 2015ers promise to be significantly superior to those marvelous 1988ers, as it was simply a more perfect vintage from beginning to end and the gift of a flawless Indian Summer to harvest the grapes in 2015 is evident in so many examples of this vintage. So, do not miss these wines!

One of the elements that I found quite often as I tasted across samples of the young 2015ers at some of my favorite estates in Germany, was a gentle signature note of botanicals or gentle herb tones that were very evident in many different bottlings. Perhaps this element comes from the thicker skins that developed during the drought portion of the summer? I am not sure of its origin, but it is one of the unmistakable signature elements of the vintage in general and one can find it up and down the levels of ripeness in the various Prädikat bottlings, as well as in many of the dry wines. It manifests itself differently from village to village and producer to producer, so that in Piesport, it is quite prevalent as a note of currant leaf, or more exotic botanical overtones in the Saar and Ruwer, or an touch of lemongrass in several of Klaus-Peter Keller's Grosses Gewächs bottlings. In many of the wines it just adds another, slightly exotic element to the flavor and aromatic profile of the wines and it will be very interesting to see how this vintage signature element develops as the wines age in bottle over their very long lives. I really like this element in the mature wines that I have in my cellar (for example, many of my 1988s from Maximin Grünhäuser show this type of aromatic addition in spades today) and found this touch of the herbal or botanical, where it was present in the young 2015ers, to really be a promising addition for even more aromatic complexity when the wines finally reach full maturity.

I should take a moment to talk a bit about the 2015 vintage in the context of some of the other recent high quality vintages in Germany. In particular, the vintage that comes to mind most often when writing about the 2015ers is the 2010 vintage, which is also a very high acid vintage. When thinking back on the 2010ers at a similar point in their evolutions, I do not recall the same seamless sense of grace and balance as is absolutely pervasive in the top 2015ers. I do not know how the relative statistical analyses of the two vintages will compare, as many of the 2015ers that I tasted on this trip had only just been finalized and most cellars had not yet had the wines sent off to the lab for their final numbers. But, even if the numbers for the acidity levels in the two vintages end up being pretty close, I do not think that the palate impressions of the two vintages will ever resemble each other, as the acidities just seem so ripe in the 2015ers that they are woven into the bodies of the wines in such a way as to be almost invisible, providing lift, vibrancy and tension without ever jumping out on the backend in the same way that I recall the 2010 vintage doing at a similar stage. Of course, the memory five years on is never precise, but my overall impression today is that the 2015 vintage is simply more complete, more elegant and a step up from the very, very good, electric 2010 vintage. And of course, with the wines in each

vintage that include some botrytis, the noble rot in 2015 is cleaner and more pure than was the case in 2010, so this gives the higher Prädikat wines of 2015 an edge.

I did not get to spend as long as I had initially planned in Germany for my first round of the 2015ers, as my travel schedule was dictated by a long-planned and deep vertical of the beautiful wines from Mount Eden Vineyards, the fruits of which will appear in the next issue (and which I actually attended on my way to the airport to start my trip), and the timing of Les Grands Jours this year in Burgundy. Consequently, I was only in Germany for six days on this visit, which was woefully too short, given the immense magnitude of the vintage at the finest addresses in German wine country. I hope to have a chance to pass through again in June for another round of cellar visits, but my summer schedule is not yet finalized. In any event, I was able to visit enough of my favorite estates during this trip to at least give a strong sense of just how good the potential is in the 2015 German vintage, and those who did not take any missteps early on with de-acidification in the more northerly wine regions in the country have probably made some of the finest wines to have emerged from the country in decades and decades. With a vintage of this sheer beauty, I would have loved to have had fully two weeks to spend tasting 2015ers, as it would have been nice to see a much larger number of estates, not to mention perhaps not packing in quite so many visits on each day of the trip to try and cover as much ground as possible in my limited number of days for tasting before moving on to Burgundy. Given the high acidity of the vintage, one less cellar stop per day would certainly have been much easier on the system!

Saar and Ruwer

Weingut Karthäuserhof

I did not hear the news prior to my arrival at Weingut Karthäuserhof in mid-March to taste the 2015ers, but the latter half of 2015 brought about whirlwind changes in the management of the estate. Long-time Cellar Master, Christian Vogt, who had been promoted to Managing Director a couple of years ago when Christophe Tyrell sold the family property to his cousin, New York-based real estate mogul, Albert Behler, was let go right before the harvest of 2015. The reasons for Herr Vogt's dismissal were unclear, as the new management team at Karthäuserhof did not really want to discuss it, and other winegrowers in the region that I spoke of only hinted of Mr. Behler not being happy with the profitability of the estate since his acquisition. Most likely, Christian Vogt, who is an extremely talented winemaker, was probably far more at home in the vineyards and cellars than he was running the entire management structure at Karthäuserhof, and one can safely assume that the business cultures between the quiet Ruwer and the turbo-charged New York real estate market are hardly compatible. In any case, Herr Vogt departed the estate just before the harvest of 2015 and the new team was brought in at probably the worst possible time. Johannes Rumpf, whose family estate in the Nahe, Kruger-Rumpf is quite well-established, was brought in as the new Managing Director, after having most recently been in charge of the German market for the Lafite-Rothschild group. The new Cellar Master is Sascha Dannhäuser, who has had two stretches working at Karthäuserhof, having first worked here under Herr Tyrell from 1991 to 1994, and then returning to the estate in 1998 and working here since that time. During the period when Christophe Tyrell was the owner, Herr Dannhäuser was primarily responsible for the vineyard management of this fine old Ruwer estate, lending a hand in the cellars in the latter days of the Tyrell era at Karthäuserhof, when Christian Vogt was the Cellar Master.



The new team at the helm at Karthäuserhof- Johannes Rumpf on the left and Sascha Dannhäuser on the right.

To ease the transition period during the harvest of 2015, the previous Cellar Master to Herr Vogt was also brought in to consult, but all these changes on the brink of the picking was hardly ideal timing. As a result, the range of 2015ers I tasted here was good and solid, but it did not scale the heights I was anticipating, as I was expecting the vintage to have been crafted here by Christian Vogt. Many of the 2015ers here were de-acidified, giving them rounder and more accessible textures and many missed the electric precision of the greatest wines of the vintage. Cultured yeasts were also used for all of the dry wines here in 2015, with the handful of off dry wines here made with a combination of cultured and indigenous yeasts. In addition, it seems quite clear that the estate will focus primarily on dry wines in the coming years, desiring to produce primarily a Grosses Gewächs bottling, an estate Trocken wine (essentially a Grand Cru and Premier Cru dry Riesling wine from the Karthäuserhofberg vineyard), and far smaller amounts of Prädikat wines than were produced here in the past. Given that Weingut Karthäuserhof has produced some of the finest dry Rieslings in the Mosel, Saar and Ruwer regions over the last twenty years, the change in emphasis here is hardly surprising (given the domestic market's focus on dry wines) and I can see no reason why it cannot be extremely successful in the future. However, it is also clear that this market strategy missed an opportunity in 2015 to make historic noble sweet wines, which many of the estate's peers did not miss in Germany's northern wine-producing regions. It will be very interesting to taste the 2016ers here

next year, after the management changes have had a full year to settle in and take effect, and it is certainly not fair to judge the new team based on the 2015ers here, which were made right in the midst of all of this management change. With the exception of the 2015 Kabinett, which had been bottled just the week before my stop at the estate, all of the other wines were still in tank at the time of my visit. After working through the 2015ers, we tackled a couple of 2014ers and then a vertical of the estate's Grosses Gewächs, which showed that the belief in primarily dry Rieslings here is not entirely misplaced.

2015 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2015 Estate Riesling Trocken has a pretty nose of white cherries, tart orange, slate, citrus peel and a gentle topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely round and accessible on the attack, with a solid core and good length on the fairly gentle finish. This wine finished at 7.9 grams per liter of acidity and 7.7 grams per liter of residual sugar, after having been de-acidified by one gram per liter. It is a bright and pleasant wine that will drink well from the outset. 2016-2030. **88.**

2015 Estate Kabinett Riesling Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2015 Kabinett Trocken was de-acidified by half a gram per liter. The nose is more reserved than the above wine and a tad more precise, offering up a blend of grapefruit, petrol, fine, salty slate minerality and a touch of cherry blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, crisp and nascently complex, with good focus, length and grip on the bouncy finish. This too will be accessible right out of the blocks. 2016-2030+. **89.**

2015 Estate Spätlese Riesling Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

I did not take down the technical information on the 2015 Spätlese Trocken, but this was also de-acidified and lacks a bit of cut and grip on the backend as a result. The bouquet is cool and classy, offering up scents of white cherries, grapefruit, slate, dried flowers and a nice touch of saltiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, elegant and precise on the attack, with a good core, lovely shape, but it is a bit lacking in grip and raciness on the bright, but fairly easy-going finish. Very tasty, but not what it could have been. 2016-2035. **89.**

2015 Alte Reben Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2015 Old Vine bottling of Spätlese Trocken is deeper and more primary than the regular bottling, offering up quite a bit more cut and grip on the backend and more depth at the core. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of grapefruit, white cherries, salty soil tones, a touch of smokiness and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and still quite youthful, with a good core, fine soil signature and a long, vibrant and zesty finish. This is still not one of those electric 2015ers, but there is quite a bit more grip here on the finish than in any of the previous wines. 2018-2040. **90.**

2013 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The estate's vineyard team made two passes through the vineyard to harvest grapes for the Grosses Gewächs bottling, with the bunches brought in on October 8th and October 12th. The wine was not de-acidified this year. The bouquet is pure and still quite primary, but shows lovely promise in its mélange of white cherries, a touch of tangerine, grapefruit, slate and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and focused, with a good core, bright, snappy acids and a very long, straight and youthful finish. It is still very early days for this wine and it may well be deserving of a higher score down the road. 2018-2040. **90+.**

2015 Schieferkristall Riesling Feinherb- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2015 Schieferkristall Riesling Feinherb was finished off with eighteen grams per liter of residual sugar and it too was de-acidified a bit. The nose is pretty, offering up notes of blood orange, white cherries, slate, spring flowers and a saline topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and succulent, with a good core and a bright, but easy-going finish. Again, the de-acidification here has taken away cut and grip on the backend. 2016-2035+. **89.**

2015 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2015 Karthäuserhofberg Kabinett was not de-acidified and finished off with forty-four grams per liter of residual sugar and 7.9 grams per liter of acidity. The wine offers up a very pretty bouquet of pear, white cherry, slate, bee pollen and white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, filigreed and long, with lovely intensity of flavor, a vibrant personality, but a pretty laid back and round finish. Perhaps the wine will show more grip and snap when it has had a chance to recover more fully from its bottling. 2016-2035. **89-91+?**

2015 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2015 Karthäuserhofberg Spätlese was my favorite wine of the roster here, though it is a slightly bigger style of Spätlese. The wine's numbers are seventy grams per liter of residual sugar and 7.8 grams per liter of acidity and the bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of apple, white cherries, bee pollen, apple blossoms and a fine undertow of salty slate minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and nicely filigreed, with a lovely lightness of step, fine focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and ethereal finish. This is a very pretty Spätlese in the making. 2016-2040. **92+.**

A 2014er I did not taste last year:**2014 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese AP #12- Weingut Karthäuserhof**

I did not have a chance to taste the 2014 Auslese AP #12 on my trip last March and was very happy to have a chance to visit it prior to launching into the excellent vertical of Grosses Gewächs generously prepared by the estate. This is an absolutely superb bottle of young Auslese, wafting from the glass in a gently glazed blend of pear, white cherry, honeycomb, salty slate, orange zest and a pungent floral topnote redolent of cherry blossoms. On the palate the wine is fullish, racy and very long, with excellent focus and cut, excellent complexity and a long, vibrant and very poised finish. Classy juice. 2018-2050. **94.**

A Vertical of Grosses Gewächs**2014 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Karthäuserhof**

The 2014 Grosses Gewächs is outstanding, and I was very happy to have a chance to taste this at the estate in March, as I had not tried it last year. The wine is a very strong example for this difficult vintage, offering up a deep and pure bouquet of grapefruit, tart orange, wild yeasts, citrus peel, gently saline slate tones and a nice topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full and a touch leaner in style than is customary with this cuvée, but with a lovely core, fine cut and grip and a long, focused and quite classy finish. A fine, fine result. 2020-2050. **92+.**

2013 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2013 Grosses Gewächs is showing as beautifully this year as it did a year ago, wafting from the glass in a salty constellation of tart pear, pink grapefruit, plenty of smokiness, dried flowers, a touch of lemongrass and lovely slate-driven salinity. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and absolutely seamless, with fine youthful complexity, a lovely core, bright acids

and a very long, refined and racy finish. This is a touch lower in alcohol than the 2014 version (11.5 versus twelve percent), but is just a tad more tightly-knit and complete. A fine bottle in the making. 2020-2050. **93+**.

2012 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2012 Karthäuserhofberg Grosses Gewächs was really singing in March and showed beautiful, seamless depth and intensity and is clearly destined to be a classic vintage for this bottling. The first class nose jumps from the glass in a blend of tart orange, dried cherries, salty minerality, beeswax, dried flowers, plenty of smokiness and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with a superb core of fruit, lovely mineral drive and a very long, focused and racy finish. Fine, fine juice here. 2020-2050+. **94+**.

2011 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2011 Grosses Gewächs is a bit riper than most of the other vintages in this range, coming in at a full thirteen percent, and the wine is noticeably broader shouldered than the 2012. The bouquet is a riper mix of bread fruit, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, smoky overtones, plenty of slate and a touch of straw and dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with fine cut and grip, a rock solid core and a long, well-balanced and fairly powerful finish. This is a very good wine in the making, but it lacks the seamless beauty found in the 2012, 2010 or 2009 versions. 2021-2045. **90+**.

2010 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2010 GG from Karthäuserhof is every bit as ripe as the 2011, but it seems a tad more complete structurally. The bouquet is blossoming into a fine and complex mélange of white cherries, tart orange, salty slate, citrus oil, lemongrass and that telltale smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off a beautiful synthesis of ripe fruit and racy acidity. The core is quite solid, the wine is focused and balanced and the finish is long and complex. Of these two riper vintages of GG from Karthäuserhof, I like the 2010 a bit better, but the slightly higher alcohol here can still be sensed on the palate (though neither wine is hot) and I really enjoy the balance of this wine when it is under thirteen percent. 2018-2040. **92.**

2009 Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Karthäuserhof

The 2009 here is just a touch less powerfully built than the 2011 and 2010, coming in at 12.5 percent alcohol and this seems to give the wine a more chiseled and precise profile as a result. The gorgeous bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of sweet grapefruit, tart orange, wet stones, lemongrass, a nice dollop of salinity and that Karthäuserhofberg smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely beautifully balanced, with a rock solid core, fine focus and grip and a very, very long, seamless and laser-like finish, Superb juice that is now starting to fully blossom and drink with generosity and precision. 2016-2040. **95.**

2001 Eitelsbacher Karthäuserhofberg Riesling Auslese Trocken- Weingut Karthäuserhof

This was the first time I had tasted the 2001 Auslese Trocken from the Karthäuserhofberg and the wine is excellent. Like many of the Grosses Gewächs bottlings from later in this decade, the wine comes in at twelve percent alcohol and offers up excellent precision and mineral drive. The superb bouquet is now wide open and delivers excellent mature complexity in its blend of white cherry, yellow plum, salty slate minerality, bee pollen, white flowers, petrol and just a dollop of residual smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and complex, with a lovely core, outstanding focus and grip, bright acids and a very long, seamless and impeccably balanced finish. Lovely wine. 2016-2035+. **93.**



Spring stirring in the beautiful Karthäuserhofberg, one of Germany's greatest monopole vineyards.

Weingut Egon Müller (Scharzhof)

Egon Müller joked upon my arrival that I was too early to taste the vintage this year at the Scharzhof, as many of his Auslesen and above were still gently fermenting away in the cellars or the team here had not yet settled on which wines would stand alone and which would be blended to make larger cuvées, so we only tasted the tip of the iceberg here in 2015. Egon Müller and his harvest team started collecting their very first berries on October 3rd of this year, making careful selections to target specific bottlings in the cellar, but not making as many passes through the vineyards as one might expect in such picture perfect conditions as October of this year presented. Egon recalled that in one of his earliest vintages, the 1983ers, he made many, many more passes through the vineyards than he did in 2015, and found that he had actually missed a bit of an opportunity as a result, as in the end certain picking lots ended up being blended in any case and he came away thinking that he might have found even a bit more complexity in each wine if he had made fewer passes through the vineyards and taken in the ripe grapes in a slightly more heterogeneous state than was the case when they made thirty or forty passes and ended up picking almost all the grapes at similar moments of ripeness. So, in 2015, the team generally made six passes through the vineyards to bring in the grapes, taking larger sections at a time and allowing nature a freer hand in the composition of complexity in the finished wines by the slight variations in ripeness from one section to another. There are several more 2015ers here beyond what I tasted on my first visit to the Scharzhof, so for instance, in

addition to the outstanding Scharzhofberger Kabinett that I did taste, there is a second one that will be reserved for the auctions in Trier in September and a third one that Egon Müller noted “we might just keep for the family.” I am sure that the same is true at the level of Spätlesen and Auslesen, though I did not take notes on what was still down in the cellars, and there are Goldkapsel, BAs and TBAs also still down there waiting for a bit more age to make their debuts. Given Egon Müller’s love of classic, noble sweet wines, the 2015 vintage provided just perfect raw materials and though the tip of the iceberg that I tasted in March was absolutely stunning, I have little doubt that the greatest wines produced here in 2015 were still gently bubbling away downstairs!

2015 Scharzhof Riesling QbA- Weingut Egon Müller

I learned on this trip that the superb estate Riesling from Weingut Egon Müller includes a sizable chunk of Saarburger Rausch in its blend, as the estate has a fine parcel in this vineyard that they choose not to bottle on its own. While part of my heart yearns to taste a Rausch bottling from Egon Müller, the realization that a significant percentage of the blend of this fine *villages* level bottling is from such a grand cru vineyard makes this wine even more attractive. The 2015 is a stellar wine, offering up a pure and classy nose of apple, lime, a touch of cress, a beautiful base of slate and a gentle topnote of petrol. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and vibrant, with lovely nascent complexity, bright, zesty acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very promising finish. This will need a few years in the cellar to develop some of its secondary layers of complexity and should age long and gracefully. 2019-2040+. **91.**

2015 Scharzhofberger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Egon Müller

The 2015 “regular” Kabinett from the Scharzhof is outstanding and I cannot wait to taste the other two waiting in the wings! The bouquet soars from the glass in a blaze of tart pear, fresh lime, a complex base of slate, bee pollen and again, a touch of those signature 2015 botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, filigreed and rock solid at the core, with great cut and grip, laser-like focus and a very long, youthful and utterly refined finish. Fine, fine juice. 2023-2060. **93+.**

2015 Braune Kupp Riesling Spätlese #5- Weingut le Gallais

The 2015 Braune Kupp Spätlese from le Gallais is a stunning young wine. The bouquet is pure, refined and exceptional, offering up scents of white cherries, pear, beautiful cool slate tones, a touch of fresh mint, lilacs, bee pollen and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and vibrant, with a beautiful, gentle creaminess of perfectly ripe fruit on the attack, a marvelous core, great focus and grip and a very long, energetic and long finish of seamless balance and marvelous lift. A hauntingly beautiful wine in its youth, the 205 Braune Kupp Spätlese is going to age superbly well and it would be an absolute crime to crack a bottle until it has had at least five or six years in the cellar to really start to unwind. 2021-2050. **94.**

2015 Scharzhofberger Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Egon Müller

The Scharzhofberger Spätlese that we tasted was also absolutely superb on both the nose and palate. The bouquet offers up a cool and classy constellation of apple, pear, lime zest, a gorgeous base of slate and a potpourri of very gentle floral tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and feline in personality, with a fine core, ripe, seamless acids and stunning focus and grip on the poised, pure and perfectly balanced finish. This wine is very, very long and still quite primary and in need of a bit of cellaring to really blossom. 2023-2050+. **94+.**

2015 Braune Kupp Riesling Auslese - Weingut le Gallais

The 2015 Braune Kupp Auslese that I tasted (and I assume there may be another one in the cellar, or a Goldkapsel perhaps?) is really superb, offering up a simply stunning nose of white cherries, fresh lime, a touch of honey to come with bottle age, a lovely base of slate minerality, violets and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, elegant and very, very long and vibrant, with laser-like focus, a lovely sense of creaminess in the core, zesty acids and a beautiful, long and youthful finish. Knowing Herr Müller's preferences, I would imagine that this has a nice, gentle touch of very clean botrytis to it, rather than having been made solely from golden berries. A simply beautiful wine in the making. 2025-2075+. **95.**

2015 Scharzhofberger Riesling Auslese- Weingut Egon Müller

The 2015 Auslese from the Scharzhofberg vineyard that I had the pleasure to taste from Egon Müller is utterly brilliant. The bouquet offers up a very, very pure and discreetly glazed bouquet of white cherries, pear, bee pollen, a touch of orange zest, gentle slate undertow and a pungent topnote of cherry blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and stunningly pure, with a creamy core, ripe, juicy acids and magical length and grip on the nascently complex and absolutely electric finish. This is a breathtakingly magical wine in the making, and keep in mind, this is only the tip of the Auslesen iceberg at Weingut Müller! 2025-2100. **97.**

Weingut Forstmeister Gertz-Zilliken (Saarburg)

Hanno and Dorothee Zilliken have fashioned a stunning lineup of wines in 2015. Like several of their neighbors in the Saar and middle Mosel, the Zillikens have decided to produce a bit less dry wine this year and take advantage of the vintage's great potential for Prädikat wines. However, the dry Rieslings that they have produced in 2015 were amongst the most beautiful dry wines that I tasted on this trip and it seems likely that this is one cellar where the legends of the vintage will not be exclusively Prädikat wines twenty years down the road! As I noted in the introduction to the vintage, Hanno Zilliken feels that the 2015 vintage is very reminiscent of the legendary 1975ers for his estate, and he is one of the few winegrowers still active who can remember very well the harvest conditions of the 1975 vintage. It is one of my favorite vintages of all time in Germany and, based on the stunning quality of the entire range of 2015ers in the Zilliken cellar this year, the comparison certainly seems apt. One of the most interesting characteristics of the range of wines from dry up to the some of the Spätlesen in the cellars this year is the gentle signature note of botanicals that I found in almost every wine. I do not know how to really describe this aromatic leitmotif for the vintage at this great Saarburg estate, but it is a very discreet, but unmistakable savory note in many of the wines that I often find in the wines from Hanno Zilliken or Egon Müller when they are mature, but which is fairly rare to find in a range of their young wines. I assume that this note is a reflection of the absolutely perfect ripeness of the grapes that each and every wine was made from here in 2015, as the meticulous selection of the father-daughter team at Weingut Zilliken during the harvest was very much in evidence in the perfect balances and very precise personalities of each and every wine. Hanno and Dorothee Zilliken have made some absolutely monumental sets of wines in the last decade, but my gut feeling is that these 2015ers may well prove to be the greatest vintage ever produced by Hanno Zilliken in his very long and illustrious career! Time will tell, but there is not a single wine in this lineup that I would not like to have in my personal cellar, as everything I adore in classic Saar Riesling is evident in the 2015ers from Weingut Zilliken. When presented with this type of beauty, words simply fail.

Dry Wines

2015 Zilliken Riesling Trocken- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #19 (screwcap)

The 2015 Estate Riesling Trocken from Weingut Zilliken was finished off with eight grams per liter of residual sugar to balance the acids this year. The wine had already been bottled a week or so before Prowein and was showing very nicely at the time of my visit, offering up a bright and stylish nose of pink grapefruit, lemon, salty slate minerality and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, impressive complexity out of the blocks and a long, vibrant finish. Good juice and a lovely “basic bottling”. 2016-2030. **89.**

2015 Saarburger Riesling Trocken- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #18

The Saarburger Trocken from 2015 is a lovely wine that beautifully synthesizes great, ripe fruit and racy acidity, all tied together gracefully with the inimitable Saar Riesling minerality. The bouquet is a fine blend of tart pineapple, grapefruit, a touch of wild yeasts, slate, gentle botanicals and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and seamless, with a great core of fruit, fine transparency and a very long, racy and still quite primary finish. This will be approachable out of the blocks, but really deserves three or four years in the cellar to start to blossom. A lovely wine. 2019-2035+. **90+.**

2015 Saarburger Riesling “Alte Reben” Trocken- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #17

The *Vieilles Vignes* bottling from the Saarburger hails from vines that range from sixty to seventy years of age and the wine is absolutely gorgeous, with its 11.5 percent alcohol providing a middleweight of absolutely perfect balance. The gorgeous nose jumps from the glass in a blend of fresh pineapple, lemon, lovely slate underpinnings, already a touch of saltiness and just lovely, discreet botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and really impressively filigreed, with a fine core, laser-like precision, ripe acids and outstanding balance and grip on the very long, racy and youthful finish. Just superb bottle of dry Riesling in the making, but give it a few years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2020-2050. **92+.**

2015 Rausch Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #16

The 2015 Rausch Grosses Gewächs from the Zillikens is a dynamite young wine and destined to be one of the finest vintages of GG yet produced from this superb estate. The bouquet offers up a youthfully complex constellation of tart orange, grapefruit, wild yeasts, a beautifully complex base of slate minerality, the vintage’s signature botanicals and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and absolutely seamless, with a fine core, excellent focus and nascent complexity, ripe acids and perfect balance on the very long, still quite primary finish. A beautiful GG in the making. 2023-2060. **95+.**

Off-Dry Wines

2015 Zilliken Riesling Butterfly- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #15 (screwcap)

The Butterfly from Weingut Zilliken is one of my favorite all-purpose wines from Germany and the 2015 will be another crowd pleaser. The wine is made for easy sipping and great flexibility at the table and the new vintage will excel at this, as it offers up a very pretty nose of apple, lemon, slate, dried flowers and a touch of Saar smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and juicy, with a good core, bouncy acids and fine focus and grip on the long and wide open finish. A lovely vintage for the Butterfly. 2016-2020. **89.**

2015 Saarburger Riesling Feinherb- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #14

The 2015 Saarburger Feinherb is more reserved out of the blocks than the Butterfly, but this is destined to be a very serious bottle of wine with a bit of bottle age and will be one of the finest values to be found in this great vintage. The deep and quite serious nose offers up scents of pink grapefruit, complex slate undertow, wild yeasts, spring flowers and the telltale touch of botanicals that I find in so many of these beautiful Zilliken 2015ers. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very elegant on the attack, with a fine core, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the pure and classy finish. Fine, fine juice and an awful lot of wine for the price! 2018-2035+. **91.**

2015 Rausch Grosses Diabas- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #13

There was no Diabas bottling in the 2014 vintage and I was quite pleased to see that Dorothee and Hanno Zilliken have produced one in 2015. The wine is a bit fruitier in style than the Grosses Gewächs bottling, as it was finished off this year with between seventeen and eighteen grams per liter of residual sweetness. The bouquet is very pretty, wafting from the glass in a blend of lemon, green apple, dried flowers, a touch of fresh coconut, salty slate and a bit of fern in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and utterly refined, with a good core, lovely nascent complexity and fine cut and grip on the long and vibrant finish. Lovely wine. 2018-2040. **92+.**



Dorothee and her father, Hanno Zilliken, in their beautiful tasting room at the winery in Saarburg.

Traditional, Prädikat Wines

2015 Saarburger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #11

The three bottlings of Kabinett from Weingut Zilliken this year are all classics. The Saarburger Kabinett is a beautiful wine that will drink well from the moment it is released, offering up a very classy bouquet of pineapple, sweet grapefruit, a lovely base of slate, gentle mossiness and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, filigreed and complex, with lovely intensity of flavor, seamless balance and a very long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. This wine will age beautifully, but will be hard to keep one's hands off of in its charming youth. 2016-2035. **91.**

2015 Bockstein Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #10

The inherent elegance of the very finest 2015 Kabinetten is very much in evidence in the Zilliken version from the Bockstein. The bouquet is pure, refined and youthfully complex, wafting from the glass in a constellation of pineapple, a touch of tart orange, smoky tones, marvelous slate minerality and those telltale botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave on the attack and utterly seamless, with crisp, perfectly integrated acids, lovely complexity and a very long, poised and elegant finish. Fine, fine juice. 2020-2045+. **93.**

2015 Rausch Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #9

The 2015 Rausch Kabinett is beautifully filigreed and nascently complex and is destined to be a cellar treasure with sufficient bottle age. The magical nose jumps from the glass in a crystalline blend of pineapple, sweet grapefruit, loads of youthful smokiness, gentle mossiness and a great base of slate minerality. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, complex and dancing, with great intensity at the core, bright, ripe acids and stunning length and grip on the still quite primary finish. A superb young Kabinett. 2021-2045. **94+.**

2015 Rausch Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #8

The two Rausch Spätlesen from 2015 are extremely special from the Zillikens this year. The "regular" bottling is flat out stunning, soaring from the glass in a vibrant mélange of pineapple, a touch of white cherry, bee pollen, saline slate tones and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and filigreed, with a lovely core, great mineral drive, bright acids and a very long, perfectly focused and electric finish. A marvelous wine. 2020-2050. **94.**

2015 Rausch Riesling Spätlese (Auction Bottling)- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #7

If the 2015 Auction Spätlese behaves as so many of its Rausch predecessors have done, this wine will be quite closed down come September when it is presented in Trier. But, at the time of my visit in March, the wine was really singing and showing all of its enormous potential. The bouquet is brilliant, offering up notes of fresh pineapple, lemon, a touch of the citrus oil to come, bee pollen, hauntingly ethereal botanical tones and again, really salty slate minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, medium-full, pure and laser-like in its focus, with stunning depth, ripe, racy acidity and seamless balance on the very long, nascently complex finish. I love the inner tension of this wine. This will be legendary Spätlese in the fullness of time! 2020-2050. **97.**

2015 Rausch Riesling Auslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #6

The first of the 2015 Auslesen from the Rausch is a beautiful wine that should drink well from a fairly early age, but also age very, very long, due to its impeccable balance. There is absolutely no botrytis in this bottling, which offers up a superb bouquet of pineapple, a hint of the white cherries to come, orange zest, a beautiful base of slate, bee pollen, white flowers and a touch of ocean breeze in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and quite creamy on the attack, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a very long, pure and vibrant finish. Lovely, succulent and elegant Auslese. 2022-2060. **92+.**

2015 Rausch Riesling Auslese Versteigerung- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #5

The 2015 Auction “regular” Auslese from the Rausch is a brilliant wine in the making. Again, the purity of perfect golden berries and desiccated, non-botrytized grapes has produced a wine of blazing precision and mineral underpinning, coupled to stunning fruit tones. The bouquet is a mix of pineapple, orange, citrus zest, a dollop of honeycomb, gentle botanical overtones and lovely minerality. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and laser-like, with a rock solid core, brilliant length and grip, electric acids and magical, building complexity on the utterly seamless finish. Stunning juice. 2025-2075. **96+**.

2015 Rausch Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #4

The 2015 Rausch Gold Kap Auslese from Weingut Zilliken is another magical wine, with very, very clean botrytis adding an exotic sheen to an extraordinarily pure wine on both the nose and palate. The nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of pineapple, candied lemon, white cherries, still a whisper of the vintage’s Zilliken botanicals, honeycomb, lilacs and a very delicate touch of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and absolutely loaded with the cleanest botrytis one can imagine. The core is creamy and dreamy, coupled to electric acidity and laser-like precision on the very long, seamless and complex finish. Another absolutely brilliant wine. 2020-2075. **95**.

2015 Rausch Riesling Auslese Lange Goldkapsel- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #3

The Long Gold Kap Auslese has even more botrytis to it, but retains the same high-toned purity of the “regular” Goldkapsel (now that is an oxymoron!) and is amazingly light on its feet for such a celestially glazed wine. The bouquet is a magical blend of white cherries, honeycomb, a nice undertow of salty minerality, gentle smokiness, lilacs, lime blossoms and still just a touch of exotic botanicals (that a fellow taster concluded were woodruff). On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and exquisitely focused, with a creamy mid-palate, great cut and grip and stunning purity on the long, elegant and vibrant finish. Wines that synthesize this much botrytis and this much purity and precision are extremely rare and precious! Stunning juice. 2020-2075. **95**.

2015 Rausch Riesling Auslese Lange Goldkapsel Verst.- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #2

By this point in the tasting, my senses were simply reeling, so it may well be that I have underrated the Auction version of Long Gold Kap Auslese! The wine has even more botrytis than the non-auction version, but I have never encountered such purity of glazing before and this wine really seems to be made of stuff from another world. The bouquet is gorgeously vibrant and nuanced, soaring from the glass in a blend of white cherries, yellow plum, plenty of smokiness, tangerine, dried flowers, honey, a nice touch of salty minerality and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and again, very creamy at the core, with blazing acidity, seamless, perfect balance and a very long, focused and still quite primary finish. This is still a young wine and I tremble to think how complex it will be once it has had a chance to really blossom with some bottle age! 2022-2075. **98**.

2015 Rausch Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Geltz-Zilliken AP #1

In all honesty, the last couple of wines are probably perfect and will get their appropriate score down the road, but when one tastes so many brilliant wines in a row, it gets awfully hard to keep searching to place the wines on a truly arbitrary scale. By this point, the temptation was to just put the pen down and simply surrender to the beauty of the wines. The 2015 Rausch BA is again, a stunningly pure high wire act, soaring from the glass in a beautiful bouquet of tangerine, pineapple, lemon blossoms, honeycomb, salty slate undertones, violets, lilacs and amazingly, even at this exalted level of botrytis, a bit of the vintage’s botanical signature. On the palate the

wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and electric, with a bottomless core, marvelous creamy purity on the attack, laser-like focus and a finish that is endless, racy and energetic in the extreme. How this gorgeous dessert wine manages to stay so light on its feet is a mystery that may never be solved, but can certainly be shared. 2016-2100. **100.**

Middle Mosel

Weingut Julian Haart (Piesport)

Last year was my first visit to taste with Julian Haart in Piesport and I left mightily impressed. This year, my timing for tasting the 2015ers was not as ideal as last year, as I arrived after several of the cuvées had just been filtered and some were still a bit agitated as a result. Julian farms four hectares of vines and has quickly become one of the most important producers on the Mosel, despite having only started his small estate in 2011. As readers may recall from last year's article on his estate, Julian left a career as a chef to make wine and apprenticed at some of the finest wineries in Germany prior to opening up his doors in 2011. His stages included stays at Weingut Egon Müller, Weingut Emrich-Schönleber and finally, with Klaus-Peter Keller, and he clearly picked up plenty of fine experience at each stop along the way. I have listed his grand cru bottlings below, as was the case last year, as Grosses Gewächs bottlings, though this term does not appear on the label, as it is a term that is registered property of the VDP and only member estates are allowed to use it on their labels. It really seems to me that it would make more sense to allow the term to be used by everyone with holdings in the vineyards that have been granted grand cru status- just for the sake of simplicity- rather than maintain the use of the term solely for estates in the VDP. I have included a paragraph from last year's visit to Julian in this introduction, which covers his philosophy in the cellars, for those who may not recall his various techniques for his different cuvées.

Julian Haart's four-plus hectares of vines that he currently cultivates, which are a combination of parcels he owns and a few he rents from his uncle, include 1.3 hectares in the fine Ohligsberg vineyard in Wintrich, two and a half hectares of vines in the Goldtröpfchen and a seven-tenths of a hectare in the special sub-section of the Goldtröpfchen, called the Schubertslay, which is surrounded by red slate outcroppings that create a unique microclimate in this vineyard and which are planted with one hundred and ten year-old, ungrafted Riesling vines. If one looks at the sweep of the Goldtröpfchen from across the river, the Schubertslay lies on the left hand side of the mighty hill, at the same level as the subsection known as the Domherr that sits immediately to its east (and right above Weingut Reinhold Haart). It is a very special terroir within the larger Goldtröpfchen, and Julian Haart makes small quantities of stunning wines from this tiny section of the vineyard. Julian uses both old wooden fuders and stainless steel tanks for his fermentations, depending on the wine, and he varies his fermentation temperatures as well to more precisely hone the personality of each wine. His estate bottlings such as the "Thousand Liters" and the "Mosel Riesling" bottling are fermented at cool temperatures, but all of the Goldtröpfchen bottlings are done at a bit higher temperatures. There is also a bit of variation in terms of maceration on the skins that he allows for various wines, again depending on the parcels that are used and the ultimate identity of the wine. For example, there is virtually none for the more basic level bottlings, "so as not to lose that good acid kick on the finish" explains Julian, whereas the grand cru bottling of Goldtröpfchen saw fully twenty-four hours on its skins in 2014, and the Ohligsberg grand cru bottling spent only three to four hours on the skins, as Julian utilized a technique of stamping the grapes with rubber boots in the

vineyard prior to transporting them back to the cellars, and then racked them off the skins to start the fermentation. Everything in the cellar is done very thoughtfully and the results show in the wines, which are across the board excellent.

Like Julian's good friend, Klaus-Peter Keller, the 2015ers here are equally superb on both the dry and sweeter sides of the ledger. I really like the elegance of Julian's dry Riesling bottlings in the two vintages that I have had a chance to taste them, but in 2015, it was the Prädikat wines, and particularly the stunning array of Kabinetten that Julian has fashioned, that really stood out at our tasting. This is not to say that the Spätlesen here are not also absolutely stunning in 2015, and the two Auslesen that I tasted (one each from the Schubertslay and Ohligsberg) were also outstanding. Given the fact that almost all of these 2015ers had just been recently filtered, the possibility certainly exists that my scores may well prove conservative for some of these wines, which is a pretty scary concept, given how highly they scored, even when a few were still quite obviously agitated from their recent handling in the cellars. While Julian Haart has only been producing wines at his own domaine for five vintages now, he is clearly one of the stars on the Mosel these days and his 2015ers are well worth a special search to latch onto in the market, as they will be some of the reference point wines of this great vintage!

2015 "1,000 Liters" Riesling- Weingut Julian Haart

The lovely "1,000 Liters" bottling, which is made in a single, fifty year-old *fuder*, finished off at 10.5 percent alcohol and carries fifteen grams per liter of residual sugar this year to balance its formidable, ripe acidity. This is really a lovely wine, offering up lovely balance and filigree and the potential to age quite gracefully. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of green apple, pink grapefruit, slate, a touch of wild yeasts and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and shows nice generosity on the attack, with a good core, ripe acids and fine length and grip on the bouncy finish. Really a fine entry level bottling. 2016-2030. **89+.**

2015 "Mosel Riesling"- Weingut Julian Haart

The 2015 Mosel Riesling bottling is mostly Goldtröpfchen fruit this year. The wine was raised in its customary blend of fifty percent *fuder* and fifty percent stainless steel and is a fine bottle in the making. The bouquet offers up a youthful blend of pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, citrus peel, a fine base of slate minerality and a touch of Goldtröpfchen currant leaf in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and beautifully balanced, with fine focus and grip, a lovely core and a very long, vibrant and beautifully transparent finish that shows excellent mineral drive and precision. Fine juice. 2016-2035+. **91.**

2015 Piesporter Riesling Trocken- Weingut Julian Haart

The Piesporter Riesling this year carries the Trocken designation, as it was finished around five grams per liter of residual sugar. This is made from the youngest vines that Julian works with in his parcels in Goldtröpfchen, which were all planted in 1985 and are now thirty years of age. The wine offers up a complex and classy bouquet of tart pear, orange zest, petrol, a fine base of slate, wild yeasts, a bit of currant leaf and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with outstanding focus and grip and a long, racy finish. Another really lovely bottle that will drink well out of the blocks, but age very well. 2016-2040. **92.**



Julian Haart in his tasting room at his home in Piesport, with maps of the Burgundy region behind him on the wall.

2015 Wintricher Riesling Trocken- Weingut Julian Haart

The 2015 Wintricher Trocken is also outstanding, offering up a pure and youthfully complex nose of grapefruit, wild yeasts, citrus peel, plenty of smokiness, a touch of lemongrass and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and really suave on the attack, with a lovely core, fine focus and balance, vibrant, seamless acids and excellent length and grip on the bouncy and classy finish. 2016-2035+. **91+**.

2015 Goldtröpfchen Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Julian Haart

The grand cru Trocken bottling from the Goldtröpfchen hails from a parcel of ungrafted vines that were planted in 1905. This was one of the wines that was a bit upset from its recent filtering, so I have scored it within a range, but it is clearly destined to be an outstanding wine. The bouquet is deep and pure, offering up notes of grapefruit, orange peel, a beautiful base of slate minerality, wild yeasts, gentle smokiness and a lovely topnote of botanicals. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and absolutely rock solid at the core, with fine nascent complexity, ripe acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and classy finish. This will need some bottle age to start to truly blossom. 2020-2050+. **93-95**.

2015 Ohligsberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Julian Haart

The Ohligsberg grand cru bottling hails from a parcel of vines planted in 1925, and these ninety-plus year-old vines have also produced an excellent wine in the 2015 vintage. This came in at 13.1 percent alcohol and was finished with three grams per liter of residual sugar. This too

was grumpy from its recent filtering, but shows lovely constituent components in its bouquet of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, wild yeasts, slate and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with an excellent core, a fine girdle of acidity and a very long, very mineral and pure finish. I am sure this too will be outstanding, despite tasting it at a moment of agitation in its *elevage*. 2019-2050+. **93-94+**.

2015 “J. J.” Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Julian Haart

The “J. J.” Kabinett is a new bottling that Julian crafted from Goldtröpfchen fruit that did not find its way into the Kabinett from that vineyard designate bottling. The wine came in at ten percent alcohol and ten grams per liter of acidity, which were balanced out with thirty-two grams of residual sugar this year. The wine is very expressive and pretty on the nose, wafting from the glass in a mix of green apple, tart orange, currant leaf, petrol and a fine base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied and shows classic Kabinett filigree, with a fine, delicate and ethereal palate impression and great backend cut and grip on the long and nascently complex finish. Fine juice. 2016-2035+. **91**.

2015 Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Julian Haart

The 2015 Goldtröpfchen Kabinett is a stunning wine, with even a bit more acidity than the “J. J.” bottling providing even more inner tension for the wine and more lift and length on the finish. This is breathtakingly beautiful Kabinett, jumping from the glass in a beautifully complex nose of sweet grapefruit, a bit of black currant, lovely slate undertow, citrus peel, dried flowers and a nice touch of the vintage’s botanicals in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied and gossamer-strung, with classic well water Kabinett purity. The finish is long, racy and beautifully filigreed, with the cut, weightlessness and backend bounce of the very finest Kabinetten of the vintage. The numbers here are eleven grams per liter of acidity, 7.5 percent alcohol and fifty-nine grams per liter of residual sugar to balance those snappy acids. Great wine. 2019-2040+. **94+**.

2015 Schubertslay Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Julian Haart

As readers may recall from last year’s article, Julian Haart ascribes to Dr. Manfred Prüm’s mantra that great, classic Kabinetten must be made from very old vines and higher yields, so as to capture that inherent, ethereal delicacy of true Mosel Kabinett. However, this was not possible in the very, very old vines that Julian has in the Schubertslay, as these ancient, one hundred and ten year-old vines only produced twelve hectoliters per hectare in 2015! Nevertheless, though this wine has not been produced by the Kabinett maxims of Dr. Prüm, it is an utterly brilliant wine. The numbers are 11.5 grams per liter of acidity, seven percent alcohol and forty-one grams per liter of residual sugar. They add up to an absolutely stunning wine on both the nose and palate, with the beautiful bouquet offering up stunning delicacy in its mélange of currant, a touch of white cherry, lime blossoms, a bit of mint, a very refined base of slate and a topnote of iris blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, very complex and filigreed, with lovely delicacy and bounce, fine focus and outstanding lift from its zesty acids on the very long and dancing finish. Brilliant juice. 2019-2040. **96**.

2015 Ohligsberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Julian Haart

The grapes for the 2015 Kabinett from the Ohligsberg were the very last that Julian collected this year, as this is a shady section of the vineyard. The wine is fairly similar in its numbers to the Schubertslay Kabinett, with seven percent alcohol, forty grams per liter of residual sugar and a touch more acidity, coming in at fully twelve grams per liter. The wine is equally ethereal to the Schubertslay, with a gorgeous, youthful nose of gooseberry, slate, white flowers, wild yeasts, citrus zest and an outstanding base of slate minerality. On the palate the

wine is medium-bodied, pure and utterly seamless, with those snappy acids ripe and buried in the body of the wine. The focus is impeccable and the wine is very long, filigreed and beautifully delicate in personality. Another stellar Kabinett. 2019-2040. **96.**

2015 Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Julian Haart

Julian estimates that perhaps five percent of the bunches that went into the Goldtröpfchen Spätlese had a touch of botrytis to them this year. All of these superb Spätlesen in the cellars have 11.5 grams per liter of acidity, with the Goldtröpfchen balancing this with eighty-nine grams per liter of residual sugar. The wine offers up a beautiful bouquet of white cherries, a touch of gooseberry, slate, bee pollen and a lovely floral topnote redolent of violets. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and very racy in personality, with a lovely core, fine filigree and laser-like focus on the very, very long and vibrant finish. This shares the same high wire act sense of balance and tension as the Kabinett. 2021-2050. **94+.**

2015 Schubertslay Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Julian Haart

The 2015 Schubertslay Spätlese from Julian Haart carries just a touch less residual sugar in its profile this year than the Goldtröpfchen (sixty-seven grams per liter) and is a shade more delicate and refined in personality. The wine jumps from the glass in a fine aromatic blend of white cherries, bee pollen, a touch of petrol, spring flowers, a beautiful base of slate and a bit of lime zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and low fat in profile, with a fine core, electric acidity, great intensity of finish and a very, very long, intense and filigreed finish. Stunning juice. 2022-2050+. **95+.**

2015 Ohligsberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Julian Haart

The 2015 Ohligsberg Spätlese was another of the wines in the cellar that was showing a bit grumpy after its very recent filtering. The nose, with some urging, shows notes of white peach, white cherry, slate, gentle notes of petrol, iris blossoms and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and racy, with a lovely core and a very long finish that shows off fine cut and grip. The detail and focus here is not available for dissection, due to its recent filtration, but I am sure that this will come back very well with a bit of recovery time. 2020-2050. **93-94+?**

2015 Schubertslay Riesling Auslese- Weingut Julian Haart

The 2015 Auslese from the Schubertslay included twenty-five percent botrytized berries, but as Julian noted, this was really very, very clean botrytis. The wine carries twelve grams per liter of acidity and one hundred grams per liter of residual sugar to balance it out. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a pure and elegant blend of white cherries, bee pollen, lovely minerality, lime blossoms and a gentle topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very filigreed, with a fine core, great intensity of flavor, lovely focus and balance and a long, vibrant and youthfully complex finish. A classic, lifted and electric 2015 Auslese. 2023-2070. **94+.**

2015 Ohligsberg Riesling Auslese*- Weingut Julian Haart**

The 2015 Ohligsberg Three Star Auslese also includes about twenty-five percent botrytis this year, but it shows more glazing in its aromatic and flavor personality. The bouquet is really quite lovely, wafting from the glass in a blend of white cherries, yellow plums, honeycomb, orange zest, violets and a touch of iris blossoms as well in the quite floral topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and really a lovely example of botrytized Riesling, with a fine core, great acids and a very long, racy and complex finish. Lovely juice. 2021-2060+. **93.**

Weingut Reinhold Haart (Piesport)

Johannes Haart began harvesting on October 4th and had gathered in everything by the 27th of the month. This is one estate on the Mosel where I had the sense that more of the vintage was devoted to dry wines this year, or at least this was the case of the number of dry bottlings that we sampled at the time of my visit vis à vis the Prädikat wines. Weingut Reinhold Haart has become properly famous on the Mosel for the quality of its dry Rieslings, as the often broader-shouldered style of the wines from the Goldtröpfchen have proven to be a fine foil for Johannes Haart's crafting of impressively high quality Trocken bottlings. The 2015 vintage here produced the very first Grosses Gewächs bottling from the Haart family from the Gräfenberg vineyard in Piesport, which has turned out quite well. I liked the dry wines very much this year, but my heart was won over by some of the upper Prädikat wines in 2015, which hit some celestial highs when they were presented in March.

2015 Estate Riesling Trocken - Weingut Reinhold Haart (screwcap)

The 2015 Estate Riesling Trocken had been bottled two weeks prior to my visit, so it would be presentable at Prowein. The wine is pretty right now on the nose, offering up scents of white cherries, apple, petrol, wild yeasts and a nice underpinning of slate. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and focused with a good core, bright acids and good length and grip on the finish. It will want to be drunk on the younger side. 2016-2025. **88.**

2015 Piesporter Riesling Trocken- Weingut Reinhold Haart

Johannes Haart had not quite decided on the final blend for this bottling, which was carrying only 1.8 grams per liter of residual sugar right now. The wine is 12.5 percent alcohol and there is a possibility that Johannes will increase the residual sweetness just a touch to more finely tune the balance before he bottles. The sample was showing very well at the time of my visit, offering up a complex and vibrant nose of gooseberry, pear, petrol, wild yeasts and slate. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and well-balanced, with a good core, ripe acids and lovely focus and grip on the long finish. A fine bottle. 2016-2035+. **90+.**

2015 Gräfenberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The very first Grosses Gewächs vintage from the Gräfenberg from the Haart family was raised in stainless steel, rather than the customary *fuders* that Johannes Haart uses for most of his other GGs. The wine is pure and nascently complex, delivering a fine aromatic blend of pear, apple, a touch of currant leaf, gentle overtones of petrol, wild yeasts and a lovey base of slate minerality. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and shows off fine mid-palate depth, with snappy acids and a long, still quite primary finish. This will need a few years to blossom. 2019-2040+. **91+.**

2015 Kreuzwingert Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The tiny, one-tenth of a hectare monopole vineyard of Kreuzwingert has produced a deep, rock solid and still quite reticent GG this year and this wine was still pretty buttoned up behind its substantial girdle of acidity at the time of my visit. The bouquet offers up a complex and nicely musky bouquet of pear, wild yeasts, a touch of cress, plenty of smokiness and a bit of upper register mossiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still very tightly-knit, with a good core, plenty of cut and grip and a very long, youthful and presently, fairly austere finish. It is still very early days for this wine and my score could eventually prove to be quite conservative. 2022-2040+. **91.**

2015 Goldtröpfchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2015 Goldtröpfchen GG is excellent this year and was quite a bit easier to taste than the still fairly hermetically-sealed Kreuzwingert. The bouquet is deep and classy, wafting from the glass in a blend of white cherry, a touch of *mirabelle*, wild yeasts, currant leaf, a complex base of slate and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with ripe, snappy acids, fine focus and grip and a very long, well-balanced and promising finish. 2021-2050. **93+**.

2015 Wintricher Riesling Trocken- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The Wintricher Trocken hails from some of the younger vines in the Ohligsberg vineyard that did not go into the Grosses Gewächs bottling. The younger vines produced a bit more ripeness than the GG here, so that this is 13.1 percent octane in comparison to 12.5 for the Grosses Gewächs. The wine was raised in stainless steel tanks and delivers a fine nose of tart pear, grapefruit, a touch of iron-like minerality, plenty of smokiness, slate and a touch of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with fine structure and balance and a long, youthful and slightly angular finish. I would imagine that this wine will develop a bit more of the vintage's elegance with bottle age. Good juice, but give it a few years in the cellar to blossom. 2018-2035. **90**.

2015 Ohligsberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2015 Ohligsberg GG is an excellent wine in the making, delivering a fine aromatic constellation of white cherries, tart pear, smoky overtones, a superb base of slate minerality, a touch of wild yeasts and a topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with lovely elegance to its structural chassis, bright, ripe acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. Really a lovely wine. 2019-2040. **93+**.

2015 Haart to Heart- Weingut Reinhold Haart (screwcap)

Like the 2015 Estate Riesling Trocken, the Haart to Heart was bottled two weeks before my visit, so as to be ready for showing at Prowein. The wine is very stylish this year and maybe the finest example of this cuvée I have had the pleasure to taste. The bouquet is bright and bouncy, offering up scents of apple, peach, a touch of wild yeasts, slate, a discreet touch of smokiness and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, vibrant and focused, with a nice core and really quite good mineral drive on the long and well-balanced finish. Really stylish. 2016-2020. **90**.

2015 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2015 Goldtröpfchen Kabinett is a bit riper in style than many of the more ethereal examples that I tasted and is really a bit more like a light Spätlese in personality. That said, it is really a very pretty wine, wafting from the glass in a mix of white cherries, apple, wild yeasts, slate, iris blossoms and just a whisper of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, juicy and well-balanced, with a nice cornerstone of minerality, fine focus and goo length and grip on the zesty finish. Not a classic example of Kabinett, but a very tasty bottle. 2016-2035+. **91+**.

2015 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2015 Goldtröpfchen Spätlese is quite a bit more classically proportioned than the slightly more generous Kabinett this year, as this wine shows bounce and filigree on the palate. The bouquet is superb, offering up notes of pear, delicious apples, bee pollen, wild yeasts, just a touch of smokiness and lovely slate bass notes. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and

focused, with nice intensity of flavor, fine complexity and nice mineral drive on the long, zesty and really impressively filigreed finish. This is a classic 2015 Prädikat wine! 2016-2040. **93+**.

2015 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

There is only a single “regular” Auslese from the Goldtröpfchen in the Haart cellars this year, as the vineyard has produced a bevy of higher Prädikat wines as well in 2015. Johannes estimates that about fifteen percent of the bunches used here had some botrytis, with the rest made up of shriveled and golden berries. The bouquet is lovely, jumping from the glass in a fine blend of white cherries, a touch of currant leaf, incipient notes of honeycomb, iris, slate, wild yeasts and a gently tropical topnote redolent of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite classy on the attack, with lovely mid-palate depth, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the vibrant and succulent finish. A fine bottle. 2022-2050+. **93**.

2015 Wintricher Ohligsberg Riesling Auslese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2015 Ohligsberg Auslese is a lighter-styled example and is really beautiful in its own right. Johannes was toying with the idea of bottling this as a Spätlese, but probably will leave it as an Auslese. It will certainly not disappoint fans of classic Auslesen, as it offers up a beautiful bouquet of peach, delicious apple, slate, bee pollen, spring flowers and a lovely topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and filigreed, with fine focus and grip, an excellent girdle of acidity and excellent balance on the long, nascently complex and filigreed finish. Quite classic. 2020-2050. **93**.

2015 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The Haart’s parcels in the Goldtröpfchen have obviously produced some gloriously pure botrytis wines, and this and the two dessert wines were my absolute favorites in the cellar this year! The Gold Kap Auslese is stunning, soaring from the glass in an exotic blend of mango, orange, candied herb tones (I know, it makes no sense, but they were there!), a touch of mint, a nice dollop of minerality, honey and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, vibrant and beautifully light on its feet, with great focus and grip, excellent complexity and a very long, zesty finish that shows great backend lift from the vintage’s exceptional acidity. A stellar wine. 2020-2060+. **95**.

2015 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2015 BA from the Goldtröpfchen is even more defined by its beautifully pure botrytis and is even better! The gorgeous bouquet offers up a constellation of yellow plum, orange, honeycomb, a beautiful base of soil, orange oil and a touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and just exudes the vintage’s purity and precision, with a bottomless core, a great girdle of acidity and laser-like focus on the very long and complex finish. A dynamite Beerenauslese. 2016-2080. **97**.

2015 Piesporter Goldtröpfchen Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Reinhold Haart

The 2015 TBA from the Goldtröpfchen is far more primary at the present time than its Beerenauslese counterpart, but it is equally deep, pure and focused, and it will be interesting as the years go by to see if it is able to eventually pass the beautiful BA in quality. The bouquet is loaded with very clean botrytis, offering up scents of papaya, apricot, honey, orange blossoms and hints of the leather to come. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely seamless in its balance, with dazzling creaminess at the core, great cut and grip and a very long, electric and utterly seamless finish. Another great wine in the making. 2021-2080. **97**.

Weingut Schloss Lieser (Lieser)

There are a few new additions to the vineyard patrimony at Schloss Lieser, and there will be some interesting bottlings in the lineup starting next year. As readers will recall, the 2014 vintage saw the first bottling from the estate's new small parcel in the Wehlener Sonnenuhr, and beginning in 2016, this will be augmented by three new parcels of vines in the town of Piesport—two in the Goldtröpfchen and one in Falkenberg. Additionally, Thomas Haag was the high bidder on a nine year lease of a twenty-six ares parcel of “very old vines” in the fabled Doctor vineyard in Bernkastel, so there will be a Doctor bottling from Schloss Lieser as well starting in the 2016 vintage. At the time of my visit, Philip Vesper, the Cellar Master at Schloss Lieser was out working on this parcel in the Doctor, getting it ready for the 2016 growing season. All of these will be very exciting new additions to the lineup next year, and the 2015 vintage was not without its own new bottling in the lineup, as the one half hectare plot of vines the estate owns in the Himmelreich vineyard in Graach was bottled on its own as well this year, producing and absolutely beautiful Kabinett. But, beauty was the defining theme of the entire range of 2015ers from Thomas Haag and his magnificent Schloss Lieser estate, as this is one of the finest lineup of wines that I tasted during my March trip to Germany. None of the wines were bottled at the time of my visit, but final blending decisions had been made and the wines were all assembled and ready for bottling in the coming days. I did not taste any of the Grosses Gewächs bottlings from 2015 during this vintage, as the wines were simply not ready to be shown. I should also note that as none of the wines had been bottled yet, it is possible that some of the wines that I list below as being sealed under screwcap may also appear under natural cork, but I have left the wines listed with the closure that they have had in the last couple of years, assuming that there has been no change in the demands of the estate's clientele for the preferred closure for the entry level wines here. While I was smitten with the entire range of 2015ers from Schloss Lieser, special mention should go out to the three utterly classic, filigreed Kabinetten that I tasted here this year, which show all of the delicacy and ethereal beauty that only the most traditionally-styled Kabinetten can deliver. The 2015 vintage provided stunning raw materials for classic Kabinett bottlings and Thomas Haag and Philip Vesper have produced three of the most beautiful examples of the vintage at this Prädikat level this year. At the higher Prädikat levels, none of the regular Auslesen this year include any botrytis at all, as the nobly rotten bunches were reserved for Goldkapsel bottlings and up, while the Auslesen were made from golden berries and naturally shriveled bunches from passerillage. There are several dessert wines in the cellar in 2015 that were still fermenting at the time of my visit, and thus not tasted.

2015 Schloss Lieser Riesling QbA Trocken- Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The Estate Riesling Trocken from Schloss Lieser is a lovely example of the vintage and will be a fine entry level bottling of dry Riesling. The bouquet is bright and impressively complex, wafting from the glass in a blend of grapefruit, bread fruit, wild yeasts, slate and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with a good core, fine cut and grip and impressive length on the zesty finish. Good juice. 2016-2030.
89.

2015 Schloss Lieser Riesling Kabinett Trocken- Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The 2015 Estate Kabinett Trocken is also outstanding, offering up just a bit more length and precision than the QbA version. The excellent nose offers up scents of grapefruit, lime peel, wild yeasts, smoke, a touch of water cress and a beautifully complex base of slate. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and racy, with lovely filigree, excellent balance and a very

long, nascently complex and vibrant finish. A really suave middleweight in the making. 2018-2030+. **90+**.

2015 Schloss Lieser Riesling Spätlese Trocken- Schloss Lieser

The 2015 Spätlese Trocken is an outstanding wine in the making, offering up excellent depth on both the nose and palate and impressive complexity out of the blocks. The lovely nose jumps from the glass in a youthful blend of lime peel, pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, a complex base of slate and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, suave and utterly complete, with a fine core, impeccable focus and balance and a very long, seamlessly beautiful finish. 2018-2040+. **92**.



2015 Schloss Lieser Riesling QbA Feinherb- Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The 2015 Estate Feinherb is really a beautiful example of the vintage, as the slightly sweeter iteration over its Trocken stable-mate really allows the vintage's character to come shining through. The wine is 10.5 percent alcohol and was finished with forty grams per liter of residual sugar to balance its snappy acidity, with the overall impression that of a very slightly off-dry wine. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a blaze of white cherries, lime, salty slate tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and very minerally in personality, with excellent focus and grip and a very long, zesty and well-balanced finish. A lovely bottle and a great bargain. 2016-2030+. **90**.

2015 Schloss Lieser Riesling Kabinett - Schloss Lieser (screwcap)

The 2015 Estate Kabinett from Schloss Lieser is a slightly broader-shouldered example of its Prädikat (and the only one that is not completely filigreed in the superb array of Kabinetten that Herr Vesper and Herr Haag have crafted in this great vintage), but a wine of considerable complexity and charm. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, white cherry, wild yeasts, a lovely undertow of slate and a topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with bright acids, fine focus and grip and a long, classy and wide open finish. A crowd-pleaser in the making. 2016-2035. **91.**

2015 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett- Schloss Lieser

The new addition in 2015, the Himmelreich Kabinett is an absolutely classic, gossamer-strung example of its Prädikat and a wine that will make fans of classic Kabinetten euphoric. The stunningly complex nose offers up scents of lime, pear, a touch of petrol, wild yeasts, crystalline minerality, bee pollen and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-bodied and absolutely delicate and filigreed, with lovely intensity of flavor, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the vibrant and ethereal finish. An utterly classic Kabinett. 2016-2040. **94.**

2015 Brauneberger Juffer Riesling Kabinett- Schloss Lieser

The 2015 Juffer Kabinett is also a superb wine and another beautifully filigreed example. The fine nose wafts from the glass in a mélange of pear, gentle smoky tones, a nice touch of cress, slate, lime zest and a bit of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focus and beautifully refined, with a lovely core, zesty acidity and excellent focus and grip on the very long and classy finish. Another very filigreed example. 2019-2045. **93+.**

2015 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Kabinett- Schloss Lieser

Due to the perfect harvesting conditions in October of 2015, the team at Schloss Lieser was able to make several passes through their parcel in the Sonnenuhr vineyard and have produced utterly classic examples at three different Prädikat levels. The 2015 Kabinett from this great vineyard is an utterly brilliant wine, offering up a magical bouquet of pear, white cherry, vanilla bean, a great base of slate, a youthful touch of petrol and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure as well water and beautifully filigreed, with a lovely core of fruit, superb structural tension and a very, very long, laser-like and pristine finish. A stunning Kabinett! 2020-2045. **95.**

2015 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Spätlese- Schloss Lieser

The 2015 Helden Spätlese from Schloss Lieser is outstanding, jumping from the glass in a vibrant blend of fresh lime, pear, a touch of mossiness, a lovely base of slate, wild yeasts and lime zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, tangy and complex, with a lovely core, excellent focus and bounce, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the seamless and bouncy finish. Lovely juice. 2016-2045. **93.**

2015 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese- Schloss Lieser

The 2015 Spätlese from the Juffer-Sonnenuhr vineyard is outstanding this year. The bouquet is pure and nascently complex, offering up a lovely constellation of pear, white cherry, a fine base of slate minerality, bee pollen, a touch of wild yeasts and a topnote of iris blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, refined and marvelously transparent, with fine filigree and core. The finish is long, pure and electric, with a taught interplay of fruit, minerality and snappy acidity. Just a stunning young Spätlese! 2020-2050. **94+.**

2015 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Spätlese- Schloss Lieser

The 2015 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Spätlese from Schloss Lieser is another outstanding young wine in the making, with a classic expression of this great *terroir* coupled to the glorious

balance and vivacity of the vintage. The bouquet is very elegant in its expression of white cherry, delicious apple, vanilla bean, bee pollen and a lovely topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and utterly seamless, with a fine core, impeccable mineral drive and a very long, nascently complex and zesty finish. Another stellar wine. 2020-2050. **94.**

2015 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese- Schloss Lieser

The “regular” Auslese from the Helden was filtered in the morning before my afternoon visit, in anticipation of bottling in the next several days, but was still showing very well indeed. The bouquet is deep, pure and complex, offering up scents of pear, fresh pineapple, smoky overtones, wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate and the first signs of the honeycomb to come in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very racy, with a fine sense of filigree, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. This will be a stunning wine with a bit of bottle age! 2022-2075. **94+.**

2015 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese- Schloss Lieser

The 2015 Auslese from the Sonnenuhr is another absolutely beautiful bottle in the making, and again, it is the purity and *nervosité* that the wine shows from its concentrated grapes (without any influence of botrytis) that makes the wine so special. The stunning nose is still a puppy, but will be magical with bottle age, as it offers up scents of pear, white cherry, bee pollen, vanilla custard, apple, blossoms, wild yeasts and a classic underpinning of slate. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a refined, seamless personality, superb depth and grip and a very, very long, energetic and vibrant finish. Great juice. 2020-2065+. **95.**

2015 Lieser Niederberg Helden Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Schloss Lieser

The Goldkapsel Auslese from the Helden vineyard is absolutely stellar as well, as here the clean nature of the botrytis gives the wine a lovely tropical sheen without taking any of the mineral precision away from the wine. The bouquet is a gorgeous blend of pineapple, honey, salty soil tones, tangerine, a nice touch of wild yeasts and potpourri of floral scents. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and beautifully glazed, with a great core, vibrant acids and superb lift and grip on the very long, nascently complex finish. 2019-2075+. **95.**

2015 Brauneberger Juffer-Sonnenuhr Auslese Goldkapsel - Schloss Lieser

The 2015 Goldkapsel from the Juffer-Sonnenuhr has quite a bit deeper expression of noble rot to it than the Helden version, though it is equally pure and clean botrytis. The bouquet is a marvelously complex blend of white cherries, custard, wild yeasts, gentle smokiness, a nice undertow of minerality and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and vibrant, with a lovely core, glazed complexity and really light on its feet from the superb chassis of racy acidity. The finish is very, very long and nascently complex, but this wine is still fairly primary in its development and will need more time in the cellar to fully blossom than the Helden Gold Kap. 2022-2075. **94+.**

Weingut Willi Schaefer (Graach)

Weingut Willi Schaefer is in an enviable position in the eyes of many of their neighbors, as the estate has such a loyal following for their Prädikat wines that they are practically immune from the market pressures within Germany for more dry bottlings. This has given them the flexibility in the 2015 vintage to produce almost entirely Prädikat wines, with only a few drier-styled bottlings made in small quantities to round out the range. As Christophe Schaefer noted, “with this vintage’s great acidity, we thought it would be a shame not to make more sweet wines, and consequently, we have more Auslesen in the cellar this year than QbA.” In fact, there are

small quantities of an Estate Riesling Trocken and an Estate Riesling Feinherb in 2015, and the remainder of the Schaefer family's range is in as stunning an array of Prädikat wines as one can imagine. Willie Schaefer was another of the veteran winegrowers that I visited with on this trip that immediately made the comparison between the 1975 and 2015 vintages, and having tasted a few of his beautiful 1975ers over the years, the comparisons seem very apt. Christophe, Andrea and Willi Schaefer started picking this year on the first of October and had collected everything by nightfall on the 27th of the month. Christophe commented that "due to the dry weather in October, there was no reason to hurry and we had plenty of time to harvest each parcel selectively." As I noted in the introduction, there is no Grosses Gewächs bottling from the Himmelreich this year at Weingut Schaefer, but there are some of the most beautifully filigreed Kabinetten from the family's vineyards to get the true fireworks of 2015 rolling in earnest in the tasting room! After tasting through the range of utterly brilliant and classical Kabinetten, I was tempted to say that this is the real sweet spot here in Graach in 2015, but the wave after wave of simply stunning Spätlesen and Auslesen that follow quickly disabuse one of this notion, as this is simply a brilliant range from start to finish at Weingut Willi Schaefer this year and there is not a single wine I would not want to put into my personal collection. There are single Kabinetten from the Himmelreich and Domprobst, one Himmelreich Spätlese and fully three distinct Spätlesen from the Domprobst. At the Auslesen level, there are one each from the Himmelreich and Wehlener "Sonnenuhr" and again, three from the Domprobst. The remarkable range of Prädikat wines here in 2015 is topped off with as pure a young Beerenauslese as I have ever tasted! I have had a fortunate life, as I started drinking the wines from the Schaefer family with the 1985 vintage and my cellar has a nice pile of bottles of the family's wines, but I do have to honestly say that I have not tasted a portfolio from a vintage from the Schaefer family as utterly brilliant from top to bottom as these 2015ers. Every forty years nature seems to give something very, very special and happily, the Schaefer family has not missed the opportunity to put together a legendary collection of wines!

2015 Graacher Riesling Trocken AP #6- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 Estate Riesling Trocken is really a lovely wine and will not disappoint fans of drier wines who shop here at Weingut Schaefer. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a blend of grapefruit, petrol, lovely slate minerality, lime peel and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and crisp, with a fine core of fruit, a very racy personality and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This will be accessible out of the blocks, but to my palate, a couple of years in the cellar will start to pay dividends. Really a fine basic Trocken and a terrific value! 2016-2035+. **90+**.

2015 Graacher Riesling Feinherb AP #7- Weingut Willi Schaefer

I have really liked a lot of the 2015 Feinherb bottlings that I have tasted on this trip, as the high acids of the vintage really enjoy the buffering of a bit more residual sweetness than what is allowed in Trocken bottlings. The 2015 Estate Feinherb from Christophe Schaefer is a very lovely wine, offering up a lovely aromatic constellation of tart orange, pink grapefruit, gentle smokiness, a fine base of slate and plenty of lime blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with a lovely core, a succulent, wide open personality and lovely cut and grip on the beautifully balanced finish. 2016-2035+. **90+**.



The Mosel Bridge boondoggle starting to take shape over the most beautiful of wine regions.

2015 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Kabinett AP #2- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 Himmelreich Kabinett is a stunning young wine. The nose soars from the glass in the most vibrant and precise blend imaginable, offering up scents of lime, tangerine, beautiful slate tones, white flowers and a very discreet topnote of petrol. On the plate the wine is medium-full, suave and filigreed, with lovely mineral drive, superb focus and grip and a very long, racy and utterly classic finish. This has the dancing, ethereal beauty of Kabinett at its finest! 2021-2045+. **95.**

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Kabinett AP #3- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 Domprobst Kabinett is also outstanding and is showing simply gorgeous fruit out of the blocks, which is hardly typical of the Domprobst! The bouquet is a lovely mélange of fresh orange, apple, plenty of slate, petrol, citrus zest and a distinctively smoky topnote. ON the palate the wine is deep, medium-full and far more reserved on the palate than the nose suggests (this is the Domprobst after all!), with a fine core, outstanding filigree already in evidence, snappy, perfectly integrated acids and a very long, pure and dancing finish. This too will be tremendous. 20122-2050. **94+.**

2015 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Spätlese AP #8- Weingut Willi Schaefer

There is only a single Himmelreich Spätlese in 2015 from the Schaefer and it is a beautiful wine and one of the best Spätlese that I tasted from the entire trip (though not even the best Schaefer Spätlese this year!) and will be worth a special search to find and put in your cellar! The superb bouquet offers up scents of lime, orange zest, kaleidoscopic minerality, a hint of licorice and a pungent topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and poised on the edge of a knife, with a lovely core, succulent and pristine fruit on the attack,

great mineral drive on the backend and a vibrant, snappy dancingly ethereal finish. Brilliant juice. 2020-2060. **96+**.

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #10- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The AP #10 Spätlese from the Domprobst is a beautiful wine, wafting from the glass in a vibrant blend of tangerine, a touch of pear, beautiful slate tones underneath, spring flowers and a plenty of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and again, marvelously filigreed out of the blocks, with a fine core, impeccable focus and balance, plenty of nascent complexity and exceptional length and grip on the mineral bath of a finish. Gorgeous wine. 2022-2060. **94+**.

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #5- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The Domprobst AP #5 Spätlese shows a different face of the vintage, with a bit more creaminess to the fruit tones than the previous two wines, though still no botrytis. As Christophe Schaefer observed, “this is a perfect Spätlese to lead you to the Auslesen.” The bouquet offers up a superb combination of fresh pineapple, orange, slate, a touch of petrol, gentle wild yeast nuances and a lovely topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and a bit more tightly-knit out of the blocks than the above Spätlese, with a great core of fruit, ripe acids and superb length and grip on the focused and very, very promising finish. This will need a few more years in the cellar to fully blossom, but it will be a legend in due course. 2025-2065.

95.

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Spätlese AP #13 (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer

In this amazing lineup of Spätlesen from the 2015 vintage, the Auction bottling from the Domprobst stands alone at the summit. This does not show more volume or complexity than any of these other bottlings at this level, but it is the most pure, most elegant and most hauntingly perfect of all of these marvelous Spätlesen. The bouquet is a celestial blend of pear, tangerine, lime blossoms, a marvelous base of slate minerality, a gentle touch of petrol, violets and bee pollen in the esthery upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, refined and weightless, with a great core, laser-like focus and a very, very long, filigreed and energetic finish. Life-altering beauty in a bottle! 2021-2065. **98.**

2015 Graacher Himmelreich Riesling Auslese AP #4- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 Himmelreich Auslese contains just a whisper of noble rot, as Christophe notes that “this was made almost entirely from golden berries and shriveled bunches, with just a touch of botrytis.” The beautiful bouquet offers up a stunning panoply of tangerine, fresh lime, gorgeously complex minerality, bee pollen, iris blooms, citrus blossoms and just a whisper of custard-like creaminess. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very light on its feet, with great cut and nascent complexity, a marvelous base of minerality, zesty acids and laser-like focus on the seamless and electric finish. Stunning juice. 2025-2080. **97.**

2015 Wehlener Sonnenuhr Riesling Auslese AP #17- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 vintage was the “third leaf” for this replanted parcel, and as many readers may already know, the fruit from three year-old vines is usually the finest from young vines until they reach their twentieth birthday, as in year three, they have not yet attained the vigor to produce abundantly and their energy gets channeled into a more modest quantity of bunches. The wine is stunning, offering up a pure and vibrant nose of pear, white cherry, superbly mineral slate tones, a bit of vanilla bean and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very filigreed, with a lovely core, ripe, brisk acids and stunning length and grip on the youthfully complex finish. Breathtaking! 2023-2080. **96.**

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #11- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 Domprobst Auslese AP #11, which is one of three different Auslesen from this vineyard in the Schaefer cellars this year, is utterly superb. The bouquet delivers up a pure and classic blend of pear, lime, a gorgeous base of slate, a touch of fresh orange, lilacs and a gentle touch of glazing that will turn to honey in due course, but today seems a touch more creamy in personality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very racy, with a great core of fruit, lovely cut and grip and a very, very long, nascently complex and electric finish. Stellar juice. 2025-2075. **95+**.

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese AP #14- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The Domprobst Auslese #14 shows more influence of botrytis than the wine above, but this is botrytis at its most clean and pure. The nose jumps from the glass in a mélange of white cherries, a bit of yellow plum, tangerine, lovely minerality, honeycomb and a lovely floral tone redolent of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and really quite defined by its exquisitely clean botrytis, with a superb core, fine focus and complexity and a very, very long, vibrant and zesty finish. Different in personality than the above, the wine is equally beautiful. 2025-2075. **96**.

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Auslese (Auction)- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 Auction Auslese from the Domprobst is another clean and very precise wine, with even more botrytis influence in evidence on both the nose and palate, but with the same purity and precision of both its predecessors. The bouquet is stunning, offering up scents of white cherries, orange, pear, bee pollen, creamy undertones, lovely minerality, citrus zest and orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is very, very pure, full-bodied and dancing, with racy acids, a great core of fruit, laser-like focus and great cut and grip on the very long, very poised and nascently complex finish. Liquid poetry in a bottle. 2025-2075+. **98**.

2015 Graacher Domprobst Riesling Beerenauslese AP #16- Weingut Willi Schaefer

The 2015 Beerenauslese from the Domprobst is yet another magical wine from Christophe Schaefer. The beautiful nose offers up the vintage's purity and precision in spades, wafting from the glass in a creamy constellation of pear, white cherries, a beautiful touch of minerality, honeycomb, orange blossoms and a really lovely, almost perfumed topnote of iris blossoms as well. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very, very refined in profile, with great depth and balance, marvelous acidity and a very long, pure and dancing finish. This is a bottomless BA that is also stunningly light on its feet and vibrant. Great juice. 2020-2080. **97**.

Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch (Bernkastel)

Sofia Thanisch very kindly agreed to see us late in the afternoon on one of my last days in Germany, which I was very grateful for, as my scheduling was more difficult than usual on this trip. The resulting wines were a great reward for squeezing in another tasting at the end of the day, as they are absolutely scintillating examples of the 2015 vintage and perhaps the very finest young group I have ever had the pleasure to taste from this great old estate. Keep in mind that I was only tasting the Estate bottlings and the Prädikat wines up to the level of Spätlese on this trip, as the higher Prädikat wines (there are Auslesen, Gold Kaps and BA and TBA still to come!) were not yet ready to show. In addition to a fine lineup of 2015ers, I also had the chance to catch up with a couple of 2014 Grosses Gewächs bottlings that I had not had a chance to taste during my visit last year, including the very first GG from the estate's holdings in the Graben vineyard in Bernkastel. I was also very happy to hear from Sofia that she has decided to produce less wines under screwcap beginning in 2015, perhaps partly as a result of the very reduced

bottle of 2012 Weingut Dönnhoff Krötenpfuhl Kabinett sealed under screwcap that we shared together when Sofia and her husband Hans were visiting New York in the summer of 2014. Like many producers in Germany, Frau Thanisch had been pretty agnostic about the closure for wines destined to be drunk when young, but the bad state of reduction of the 2012 Kabinett that evening had really been quite surprising to Sofia and Hans and I am sure that the state of this wine from a top producer such as Weingut Dönnhoff only a bit more than two years out from its bottling under the screw was food for thought. As I had written about in my profile on the estate a few years ago, the style of the wines here from the Doctor vineyard tend to be broader-shouldered out of the blocks than many of the other very top terroirs in the middle Mosel, and the synthesis of this more powerful style of the Doctor with the racy, transparent and electric style of the 2015 vintage has produced legendary wines from this magical terroir. I cannot wait to taste the higher Prädikat wines from 2015 on my next visit, as I am sure that there are more great, great 2015ers here than what I had the great pleasure to taste during my March visit! In case folks have not noticed, the twenty-first century has been another golden age at Weingut Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch, with great collections produced in vintage after vintage in the new millennium, but to my palate, the 2015ers seem destined to be the greatest vintage here in a very, very long time. Do not miss these wines!

2015ers

2015 Estate Riesling QbA Trocken- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2015 Estate Trocken is a fine bottle that beautifully balances the racy acidity and the pure and perfectly ripe fruit of the vintage. The wine offers up a youthful bouquet of bread fruit, tart par, a fine base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and promising, with a good core, bright acids and a long, focused and racy finish. This will drink well from the outset, but a couple of years' worth of bottle age will allow it to show its secondary layers of complexity. A superb "basic" Trocken. 2016-2030. **89+**.

2015 Estate Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch

Perhaps nothing demonstrates the relative strengths of the 2015 vintage better than the comparison of the Estate Kabinett and Estate Trocken bottlings at Weingut Dr. Thanisch. Both wines are made superbly well, but the inherent strength of the vintage at the Kabinett level takes this wine to just a slightly higher plateau of quality. The vibrant bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of apple, pear, gentle wild yeast tones, lemon blossoms and a beautiful base of Bernkastel soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and shows off lovely mid-palate depth, with fine focus and filigree, zesty acids and a long, complex and classic finish. This is going to be one of the absolute steals of the vintage! 2016-2040. **91+**.

2015 Estate Riesling QbA- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2015 Estate Riesling QbA from Dr. Thanisch is another excellent wine, offering up a vibrant and quite complex bouquet of white cherries, apple, a touch of wild yeasts, a fine base of soil, bee pollen and a bit of lilac in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and focused, with fine filigree, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the poised and classy finish. This is just another terrific entry level wine from this fine old estate. 2016-2035+. **91**.

2015 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett Feinherb- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch

The 2015 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett Feinherb is truly exceptional, again showing just how good so many of the Kabinetten are in this vintage. The excellent nose jumps from the glass in a vibrant blend of green apple, lime zest, a complex base of soil, just a touch of wild yeasts, spring flowers and a lovely, esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is

very, very pure, medium-full, crisp and filigreed, with lovely intensity of flavor, bouncy acids and impeccable balance on the very long, complex and electric finish. Stunning juice. 2016-2040. **93+**.

2015 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch

The 2015 straight Badstube Kabinett is also excellent, but I have to give a very slight nod to the version above in this vintage. The nose is pure and classy, offering up scents of pear, white cherry, slate, white flowers and a gentle touch of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and filigreed, with fine focus and grip, bright acids and a long, nascently complex finish. The Feinherb version seems to have just a touch more complexity out of the blocks, but this wine may catch up to it with a bit of bottle age. Another very classy Kabinett. 2016-2035. **92+**.

2015 Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Kabinett- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

Given the penchant for the great *terroir* of the Doctor vineyard to not show all of its layers of complexity until it has spent several years in bottle, the glorious early expressiveness of the 2015 Kabinett (and Spätlese as well) from the Thanisch family this year fully underscores just how special this vintage will be seen as the decades flow away. The 2015 Doctor Kabinett is a brilliant wine in the making, delivering a superb bouquet of apple, a touch of white cherry, a very complex base of soil, bee pollen, incipient notes of laurel and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and shows the broader shoulders of the Doctor vineyard, but with great filigree and classic Kabinett sensibilities at the same time. The wine is rock solid at the core, pure and transparent, with outstanding cut and grip on the laser-like and racy finish. This will be a very, very long-lived and stunning vintage of Doctor Kabinett! 2021-2060. **95**.

2015 Bernkasteler Badstube Riesling Spätlese - Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2015 Badstube Spätlese from Weingut Dr. Thanisch is a lovely wine, wafting from the glass in a complex and vibrant aromatic blend of white cherries, delicious apple, slate, lime blossoms and a topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and very elegant, with lovely filigree, racy acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex, vibrant and bouncy finish. I really love the structural tension of this wine. 2016-2040. **93**.

2015 Bernkasteler Doctor Riesling Spätlese - Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

If I have ever tasted a young vintage of Doctor Spätlese from Sofia Thanisch that is better than the 2015, I cannot recall it and have to imagine that this is as magical a synthesis of this great *terroir* and Spätlese as has been fashioned here in forty years! The bouquet is young, primary and utterly stunning in its promise, as it delivers scents of pear, white cherry, laurel, salty soil tones, orange blossoms and the vintage's signature esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, crisp and very complex, with a great core, laser-like focus and grip and absolutely stunning backend mineral drive and cut on the very long finish. This will be a legend in the fullness of time. I cannot wait to see what the vineyard has done in 2015 at the higher Prädikat levels! 2025-2065. **96**.

A Few 2014ers Not Tasted Last Year

2014 Bernkasteler Graben Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2014 vintage is the first where the Thanisch family has produced a Grosses Gewächs bottling from the Graben and the wine has turned out beautifully. It comes in at 11.5 percent alcohol and offers up a pure and classy nose of apple, tar pear, a touch of mossiness, a fine base of slate, petrol and a touch of laurel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish

and nascently complex, with a fine core, bright acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and racy finish. A very classy bottle that will need a few years to blossom. 2018-2040. **93.**

2014 Berncasteler Doctor Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Wwe. Dr. Thanisch Erben Thanisch

The 2014 Doctor Grosses Gewächs is a simply stunning wine in the making. Like the Graben GG, this wine comes in at 11.5 percent alcohol and is as svelte a young Doctor as one could ask for. The outstanding nose shows great purity and precision in its constellation of apple, par, laurel, wild yeasts, a hint of orange blossoms and a beautifully complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, great cut and grip, laser-like focus and a very long, seamless and energetic finish. This will need six or seven years to really blossom, but it will be brilliant once it really starts to hit on all cylinders. 2022-2050+. **95.**

2014 Bernkasteler Lay Riesling Feinherb- Wwe. Dr. Thanisch

I love Feinherb bottlings, as I often find the bit of extra residual sweetness in these wines finds a point of perfect balance. The 2014 Feinherb from the Lay vineyard is an excellent wine, and one I was happy to taste this year, as I did not try it on my last visit to the estate. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, gentle mossiness, a complex base of soil tones, dried flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with a fine core, impeccable balance and excellent focus and grip on the racy finish. This is an outstanding value! 2016-2035. **92.**



Sofia Thanisch posing with her two truly exceptional Grosses Gewächs bottlings from the 2014 vintage.

Nahe

Weingut Hermann Dönnhoff (Oberhausen)

As I noted in the introductory remarks on the vintage, Helmut Dönnhoff has never seen such beautiful fruit as the 2015 growing season provided since his very first vintage in 1971. Helmut, his son Cornelius and their team did not start picking any grapes until the very end of September, when they began bringing in the Pinot Blanc. All their Riesling was harvested within the month of October, with most coming in the second half of the month. The dry months in the middle of the summer caused the ripening to stall for a bit here, but things got rolling again after a bit of rain and given the glorious Indian Summer of 2015, Helmut noted that “we had simply perfect harvesting conditions” and the grapes produced “fine must weight and great acids.” There is a very, very fine range of both dry and sweeter Prädikat Rieslings in the Dönnhoff cellars this year, including the very first Grosses Gewächs bottling ever from the Brücke vineyard in Oberhausen. As Helmut Dönnhoff related, “Cornelius mentioned to me at the end of September that the possibility was there and asked what I thought about making a GG from the Brücke, as there was a section with absolutely perfect grapes for it and he said that ‘we may never get another chance this perfect to make a dry wine in the Brücke’ and I had to agree with him.” The Brücke Grosses Gewächs will be auctioned off in Bad Kreuznach in September, as there is a very small quantity of the wine produced. The vintage has also produced a wide array of Prädikat wines from the Hermannshöhle this year, as Herr Dönnhoff noted that “since we want absolutely no botrytis for the dry wine here, we had the opportunity to make several passes through the vineyard in October and make sure that any botrytis was selected out and picked and we have made some really fine sweet wines here as a result this year.” The drier wines in the Dönnhoff portfolio in 2015 are deep, structured and fairly powerful wines that will mostly demand some extended time in the cellar to fully blossom. On the Prädikat side of the ledger, it seemed like the Spätlesen and Auslesen were the real sweet spots at the estate this year, as there are some absolutely magical wines at these levels. I did not write down in my notebook what other wines might have still been bubbling away in the cellars that we did not taste during my visit, but have to imagine that there may be a bit more down there that was not yet ready to taste. This was a very exhilarating range to taste in 2015, which comes as no surprise!

Dry Wines

2015 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The Estate Riesling from 2015 came in at a very svelte 11.9 percent alcohol and really is a lovely “basic” bottling. The bouquet is bright and complex, offering up scents of grapefruit, a touch of white cherries, lovely, wild yeast overtones and a classy base of minerality. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, crisp and focused, with a rock solid core, lovely backend mineral drive and fine length and grip on the vibrant finish. 2016-2030. **88.**

2015 Tonschiefer Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Tonschiefer Trocken is just a whisper riper than the Estate Trocken, coming in at an even twelve percent and the wine is really quite powerfully built and tightly-knit this year. The youthful bouquet offers up scents of white cherry, grapefruit, a touch of petrol, gentle yeasts tones, a fine base of slate and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and brisk, with a great core, fine focus and grip and a very long, intense and quite powerful finish. This will be approachable out of the blocks, but could really do with a couple of years in the cellar to more fully unwind. 2016-2035. **89+.**

2015 Kahlenberg Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Kahlenberg Trocken (as well as the Höllenpfad) is 12.5 percent alcohol, which is just a touch below the level of the Grosses Gewächs bottlings this year from Weingut Dönnhoff. The wine is very deep and pure, offering up a fine nose of apple, tart orange, wild yeasts, citrus peel and a lovely base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and shows off plenty of backend energy, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long finish that closes with a note of lemongrass. 2018-2040. **90.**

2015 Höllenpfad Riesling Trocken- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Höllenpfad Trocken is another very strong effort, but the wine is a bit more bound up in its youthful structure today than the Kahlenberg and will want a year or two longer in the cellar to start to blossom. The primary bouquet delivers scents of grapefruit, lemongrass, wild yeasts, dried flowers, a touch of the vintage's botanical overtones and gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nascently complex, with a very solid core, brisk acids and fine backend mineral drive on the long and well-balanced finish. A lovely bottle that will need a bit of time in the cellar to start to drink with generosity. 2020-2050. **90+.**

2015 Felsenberg "Türmchen" Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Dönnhoff

While the final analysis was not completed on any of the GGs, Helmut Dönnhoff felt that they would all be around 12.9 to thirteen percent in the 2015 vintage. The Felsenberg GG is a superb wine in the making, offering up a deep and youthful nose of grapefruit, blood orange, wild yeasts, petrol, stony minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with brisk, seamless acids and outstanding length and grip on the still quite primary finish. When one reaches the level of the Grosses Gewächs here, the wines are notably more refined than the very good Trocken bottlings from the Höllenpfad and Kahlenberg. The 2015 Felsenberg GG looks likely to be the earliest drinking of the grand crus from the Dönnhoff family this year, but will also age long and gracefully. 2021-2060. **92+.**

2015 Dellchen Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Dellchen GG is a superb wine in the making, but it is still quite young and will need some time in the cellar to start to unwind. The bouquet offers up a nascently complex constellation of grapefruit, tart orange, petrol, wild yeasts, lemongrass, lovely minerality, dried flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and bottomless at the core, with racy acids, excellent focus and grip, impeccable balance and a serious load of backend energy on the very long finish. 2023-2060. **94.**

2015 Hermannshöhle Riesling Grosses Gewächs – Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Grosses Gewächs from the Hermannshöhle is utterly complete and a great wine in the making. Whereas the Dellchen and Felsenberg are cut from the more powerful side of the vintage, the Hermannshöhle really exudes the elegance and seamless beauty that the top 2015ers have in spades. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a still quite youthful blend of grapefruit, tart orange, a gorgeous base of slate, petrol, wild yeasts and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and superbly well-balanced, with great depth in the mid-palate, racy acids and great grip and focus on the very long and very, very promising finish. This will be a great bottle of Hermannshöhle GG and is my favorite Grand Cru dry Riesling in the cellar this year. 2022-2065+. **96.**

2015 Brücke Riesling Grosses Gewächs Versteigerung- Weingut Dönnhoff

There is only a single cask of the 2015 Brücke Grosses Gewächs, which is the only time that a GG has been produced from this vineyard by the Dönnhoff family. It is going to be fascinating as the years go by to see how this wine blossoms, as it shows even more filigree out of the blocks than the supremely elegant 2015 Hermannshöhle GG. The bouquet is superb, offering up scents of tart orange, pink grapefruit, complex slate minerality, wild yeasts, lemongrass, dried flowers and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and very primary in personality, with a fine core, snappy acids and outstanding grip and focus on the very long and very pure finish. This will be a dynamite wine in the fullness of time and it will be interesting to see how high its price goes at the auctions in Bad Kreuznach in September, as it has never been made before! 2024-2065. **95.**

Classic Off-Dry and Noble Sweet Wines

2015 Dönnhoff Estate Riesling QbA

The 2015 Estate Riesling QbA is very tasty and shows fine balance and bounce on the palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, tart orange, wild yeasts and a nice base of minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and well-balanced, with a good core, fine focus and nice mineral drive on the long and zesty finish. This will drink very well out of the blocks and is a lovely basic bottling. 2016-2025+. **88.**

2015 Kreuznacher Krötenpfuhl Riesling Kabinett – Weingut Dönnhoff (screwcap)

The 2015 Krötenpfuhl Kabinett is a very lovely wine out of the blocks and will not demand any cellaring before it starts to charm. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a blend of tangerine, apple, dried flowers, a whisper of petrol and lovely minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and juicy on the attack, with lovely acids and transparency and a long, complex and vibrant finish. A lovely bottle of Kabinett. 2016-2030. **90+.**

2015 Oberhäuser Leistenberg Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Dönnhoff (screwcap)

The 2015 Leistenberg Kabinett is a bit more powerful in personality in this vintage than is customarily the case for this wine at Weingut Dönnhoff. The deep and classy nose delivers a blend of apple, white cherry, slate, a nice touch of wild yeasts and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and nascently complex, with a good core, fine cut and grip and a very long, succulent finish. This is not as filigreed as many of the Kabinetten that I tasted from the vintage, but it is a beautifully proportioned wine of style and grace. 2016-2035. **91.**

2015 Norheimer Kirschheck Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Kirschheck Spätlese is a classic example in the making, as here the filigree of the vintage is very much in evidence. The nose wafts from the glass in a very pure and classy blend of apple, white cherry, beautiful slate undertow, wild yeasts, bee pollen and a topnote of apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and shows lovely inner tension, with a fine girdle of acidity, excellent focus and grip and a long, complex finish. The inherent delicacy of the Kirschheck works perfectly with the style of the vintage. 2019-2040+. **92.**

2015 Schlossböckelheimer Felsenberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

Helmut Dönnhoff related that there was one parcel of the Felsenberg this year where the grapes were a tad riper than what they wished to use in the GG bottling, and also had just a faint touch of botrytis to the bunches, so he and Cornelius picked this parcel separately and produced this Spätlese. The wine is superb, wafting from the glass in a really vibrant constellation of white cherries, pear, a complex base of minerality, dried flowers, bee pollen and a nice touch of orange

zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and complex, with a really strong vein of minerality, a lovely core of fruit, fine, nascent complexity and outstanding length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. I have just begun drinking my 2002 Felsenberg Spätlese and the wine is stunning- if the 2015 ages along those lines, this will be a cellar treasure a dozen years down the road. 2018-2045+. **93+**.

2015 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Brücke Spätlese is a stunning young wine and it is extremely floral in personality this year. The gorgeous bouquet delivers a great blend of pear, white cherries, wild yeasts, orange blossoms and a lovely potpourri of gentle Brücke spice tones. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, filigreed and beautifully complex, with great cut and grip, laser-like focus and a very, very long, electric finish that closes with a nice note of orange peel in reserve. This is fully ten grams per liter of acidity, buffered by somewhere around seventy grams per liter of residual sugar. It is a brilliant wine that should age for a very, very long time. 2022-2055. **95+**.

2015 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Hermannshöhle Spätlese is every bit as stunning as the Brücke, but it is not quite as concentrated at the core and shows a more delicate personality out of the blocks. The glorious bouquet soars from the glass in a mélange of pear, white cherry, citrus peel, a superb base of slate minerality, bee pollen, white flowers and gentle, wild yeasts overtones. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and very filigreed, with great focus, seamless balance and truly stunning elegance and refinement already in evidence right out of the blocks. The finish is very, very long, nascently complex and oh, so promising. It will be very interesting to follow these last two Spätlesen over the course of the unfolding decades and see if they start to dovetail a bit stylistically as the years go by. Another brilliant wine! 2022-2060+. **95+**.

2015 Oberhäuser Brücke Riesling Goldkapsel Auslese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Brücke Gold Kap Auslese is another absolutely beautiful wine in the making, but interestingly, at the time of my visit, the nose was fairly closed and reticent and the palate was amazingly expressive. The nose offers up a reserved, but very pure blend of pear, white cherry, apple, blossoms, wild yeasts, lovely minerality and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is fullish, clean and very racy, with a superb core, seamless balance, electric acidity and stunning length and grip on the nascently complex and vibrant finish. This was made from a combination of thirty percent botrytized bunches and the remainder golden berries or gently shriveled grapes from *Passerillage*. I love the combination of filigree and lift on the backend here- this will be a legendary Auslese down the road. 2021-2075. **96**.

2015 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Goldkapsel Auslese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Hermannshöhle Goldkapsel Auslese is also a stunning wine in the making, but at least at this early stage, it does not seem to have quite the same completeness of its Brücke counterpart. The bouquet is pure, refined and very vibrant in its blend of apple, white cherry, citrus zest, white flowers and beautiful minerality. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, racy and very classy in profile, with a fine core, exceptional complexity in the making, racy acids and laser-like focus on the long, refined and classic finish. Dynamite wine. 2021-2075. **94**.

2015 Niederhäuser Hermannshöhle Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Dönnhoff

The 2015 Hermannshöhle BA is still a baby and was in its primary stage of development, but this will clearly be a great wine as well. The bouquet offers up scents of baked apple, tangerine, a touch of papaya, gentle smokiness, orange oil and honey. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, bright and very, very deep, with great focus and grip, a very long, perfectly balanced and nascently complex finish. This will of course be approachable from the moment

that it is released, but I would strongly suggest giving it at least four or five years in the cellar to allow it to start to really blossom and show some of the secondary layers of complexity that will come with bottle age. 2016-2075+. **95.**



Helmut and Cornelius Dönnhoff outside of their tasting room in Oberhausen.

Weingut Emrich-Schönleber (Monzingen)

Werner Schönleber is very, very excited about the potential of the 2015 vintage, which he thinks is “like the 2002 vintage with better acidities and deeper concentration.” He noted that hydric stress in July and August during the hottest part of the summer kept ripening on a more normal tack than one might have expected from the high temperatures, and the classic September and October weather made the vintage. As he noted, “a bit of early October rain plumped up the grapes that were desiccated and then ripening proceeded very slowly from that point forwards until picking.” I get so accustomed to the Weingut Emrich-Schönleber wines showing rather tightly-knit and bound up behind their structures during my March visits that the utterly seamless balance of these 2015ers, which gives a gleam of accessibility to the wines out of the blocks came as a bit of a surprise and can only be seen as auguring extremely well for their future evolutions in bottle. During our visit, Werner Schönleber talked a bit about the evolution of the great Halenberg vineyard, which in the decade of the 1980s, was partially abandoned and much of it was overgrown and for sale. In 1992, the Schönleber family, along with Weingut Schafer-Fröhlich, purchased many of the prime parcels that were sale at the time

and both estates began to bottle wines from this vineyard, which was the first time in many years that any label bore the name of Halenberg on a bottle of wine. Over the course of the ensuing years, both estates were able to add to their holdings in this great grand cru vineyard and the reputation of the Halenberg began to be resuscitated, and today, it is rightly recognized as one of the prime vineyard sites in all the Nahe. Werner Schönleber quipped that “I think some of our neighbors now regret not buying parcels in the vineyard back when it was so readily available.” Of the notes that follow on the 2015ers, the pair of Spätlesen that I tasted had been opened the day before and it is possible that the wines are even better than my notes indicate (though the bottles seemed to be showing very well and I saw no reason to ask Herr Schönleber to venture down to the cellar and pull replacements). But, keep in mind my scores may well prove a tad conservative for those two wines. Beyond what I tasted during this visit, there are some upper Prädikat dessert wines here that were still gently bubbling away at their fermentations at the time of my visit. As the notes below will attest, Frank Schönleber and his father Werner have absolutely captured all of the potential of the great 2015 vintage and this is destined to go down in history as one of the greatest collections to issue forth from this outstanding Nahe estate.

Dry 2015ers

2015 Estate Weissburgunder Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Weissburgunder Trocken came in at 12.5 percent alcohol in this vintage and offers up beautiful purity and focus on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a fine blend of pear, white peach, dried flowers and a lovely base of minerality. On the palate the wine is fullish, poised and juicy at the core, with lovely balance, bright acids and a long, still quite primary finish. A lovely example of Pinot Blanc. 2016-2030. **89.**

2015 Estate Grauburgunder “S” Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Grauburgunder from Weingut Emrich-Schönleber is also 12.5 percent in alcohol and another very elegant rendition of this varietal. The bouquet offers up a lovely, floral constellation of apple, peach, a touch of acacia blossom, a nice base of soil and a bit of sweet, fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite mineral in personality, with fine cut and grip, a rock solid core and a long, poised and nascently complex finish. Fine juice that will be even better with a year or two in bottle to fully blossom. 2016-2030. **90.**

2015 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The fruit for the 2015 Estate Riesling Trocken hails seventy percent from the two superb grand crus of Halenberg and Frühlingsplätzchen, with the other thirty percent coming from neighboring vineyards owned by the Schönleber family. The wine is 11.5 percent alcohol this year and carries 8.8 grams per liter of acidity in an effortless fashion. The fine nose wafts from the glass in a blend of pink grapefruit, tangerine, fine minerality, a touch of lilacs and a bit of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely filigreed, with a good core, bright acids and a long, focused finish that closes with promising nascent complexity and lovely grip. This is very good indeed. 2016-2035+. **89+.**

2015 Riesling “Lenz” Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Lenz bottling from Emrich-Schönleber is just a tad higher in acidity than the Estate Trocken bottling, tipping the scales at a full nine grams per liter, but the wine is seamlessly balanced and integrates these snappy acids beautifully. The bouquet is really superb, delivering a fine mélange of apple, sweet grapefruit, dried flowers, a fine base of soil, orange peel and a nice touch of smokiness on top. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and

succulent on the attack, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip, impressive precision and a long, classy finish. Another really fine value in this vintage! 2016-2035. **91.**

2015 Riesling “Mineral” Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Mineral Trocken is perhaps even a touch more precise than the lovely Lenz bottling. The bouquet is pure, youthfully complex and very transparent, offering up scents of blood orange, pink grapefruit, lemongrass, striking minerality, a hint of petrol and a topnote of fresh almond. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a fine core, lovely cut and grip and a very long, vibrant and perfectly balanced finish. Another stellar wine. 2016-2035+. **91+.**

2015 Frütau Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Trocken has been renamed in 2015 as Frütau (which means Morning Dew in German), as it is no longer allowed to use the name of the vineyard for both a Grosses Gewächs bottling and a second Trocken from the same vineyard. The 2015 Frütau Riesling Trocken is an excellent wine, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of apple, lime peel, gentle botanicals, wild yeasts, dried flowers and a lovely base of red soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and precise, with plenty of filigree, a good core, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the long and dancing finish. A lovely example that really shows the elegant and energetic side of the vintage. 2016-2040. **92.**

2015 Halgans Riesling Trocken- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

Similar to the above, the Halenberg Riesling Trocken has been now given the proprietary name of Halgans starting in the 2015 vintage. This too is an absolutely terrific wine, which hails from a parcel of younger vines planted in one of the warmer sections of the Halenberg. The bouquet is an outstanding blend of pear, grapefruit, plenty of smokiness, a fine base of slate, just a touch of moss and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, long and complex, with bright, seamless acids, great focus and a very long, refined and vibrant finish. *Tout en finesse!* 2016-2040. **92+.**

2015 Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The two GGs this year at Weingut Emrich-Schönleber come in at 12.5 percent octane and offer up all of the elegance and seamless beauty that one could ask for from the great 2015 vintage. The bouquet on the Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs is stunning, soaring from the glass in a fine blend of pink grapefruit, a hint of gooseberry, plenty of smokiness, gorgeous minerality, wild yeasts, a hint of mossiness and a topnote of lime peel. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully light on its feet, with a rock solid core, bright, seamless acids and stunning length and grip on the very, very elegant and perfectly balanced finish. This wine will age for decades and is one of the most beautiful dry Rieslings I tasted on this trip. 2020-2050+. **95.**

2015 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs is every bit as refined and beautiful as the Frühlingsplätzchen this year, delivering a stunning young bouquet of tart orange, wild yeasts, a touch of the vintage’s botanicals, lemongrass, a gorgeous base of slate, citrus peel and a topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and utterly refined, with a superb core, impeccable focus and balance, lovely backend energy and a very, very long, nascently complex finish. Stunning juice. 2020-2050+. **95.**

2015 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen “Auf de Lay”- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Auf de Lay is destined to be one of the greatest dry wines produced in this vintage, but it is a bit less developed than either of the Grosses Gewächs bottlings and will

require a few more years in the cellar to blossom. The bouquet is utterly superb, wafting from the glass in a youthful blend of pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, gorgeous slate minerality, citrus peel, dried flowers and hints of the botanicals that will come with extended cellaring. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and laser-like in its focus, with a rock solid core, snappy, seamless acids and stunning poise and elegance on the nascently complex and oh, so promising finish. A great, great wine in the making! 2022-2055+. **96+**.



Frank Schönleber and his father, Werner, sharing a sample glass of their superb 2015 Auf de Lay.

Prädikat 2015ers

2015 Monzinger Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Monzinger Kabinett is a lovely example of the vintage, with perhaps not quite the ethereal delicacy of the finest Kabinetten from the middle Mosel or Rheinhessen, but still plenty of filigree and lovely complexity and balance. The wine is ten percent alcohol and carries forty-three grams per liter of residual sugar to balance its fully nine grams per liter of acidity this year. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a blend of tart orange, pink grapefruit, plenty of smokiness, wild yeasts, lovely minerality, a touch of mossiness and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and light on its feet, with superb focus and grip, classic Kabinett filigree and a very long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. A lovely example. 2016-2040. **92+**.

2015 Monzinger Frühlingsplätzchen Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Frühlingsplätzchen Spätlese is a lovely wine that offers up a complex and very elegant bouquet of pear, white cherries, mossy overtones, lovely minerality and an esthery topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very refined, with a fine core of fruit, a lovely touch of creaminess at the core and a very long, dancing and zesty finish that is every bit as light on its feet as the Kabinett. 2016-2040. **92.**

2015 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Spätlese from the Halenberg is also superb and even a touch longer than the Frühlingsplätzchen example. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a classy constellation of pear, tangerine, lovely smokiness, more of the vintage's botanical signature, citrus zest and a lovely base of slate minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very long, with seamless balance, bright acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very long and very classy finish. Fine, fine juice in the making. 2016-2040. **93.**

2015 Monzinger Halenberg Riesling Auslese- Weingut Emrich-Schönleber

The 2015 Halenberg Auslese from the Schönleber family is a beautiful wine, wafting from the glass in a nascently complex and very precise blend of sweet grapefruit, lime, bee pollen, slate, a potpourri of spring flowers and a delicate topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is elegant, suave and medium-full, with a creamy core of fruit, vibrant acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very, very long, seamless and nascently complex finish. This will be an outstanding wine with a bit of bottle age. 2019-2055. **94+.**

Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich (Bockenheim)

Tim Fröhlich was in an extremely good mood as he pulled back the curtain on his stunning range of 2015ers. Tim started picking on September 15th for his old vine Müller-Thurgau vines and the pinot noir that goes into his Blanc de Noirs bottling. The first Riesling grapes for the dry wines were brought in on the 10th of October this year and parcels were collected as they reached optimum ripeness over the course of the next thirty days, with the very last selections for the Grosses Gewächs bottlings being brought in over the course of the first ten days in November. Contrast this with the harvest of 2014, when everything had to be brought in between the 29th of September and the 19th of October, due to inclement weather and the pressure of rot and it is easy to imagine how much more relaxed the picking was here in 2015. Given fully six weeks to harvest in leisurely and precise fashion, it is not surprising that each and every Schäfer-Fröhlich 2015er that I tasted was showing beautifully and this seems likely to be one of the greatest vintages in the career (thus far) of Tim Fröhlich. Where it was the case that some of the dry wines in other cellars seemed a bit forced stylistically, this is emphatically not the case at Schäfer-Fröhlich in 2015, and the dry bottlings were every bit as fine as the Prädikat wines that I sampled during my visit, and certainly Tim Fröhlich will have (once again) produced some of the most beautiful Grosses Gewächs bottlings in the vintage. But, one should also pay attention to the other Trocken Riesling bottlings here in 2015, which are really of exceptional quality and the gap between them and the GGs this year is smaller than in less gifted vintages and they will represent some of the best values to be found in 2015 dry Riesling. As far as the Grosses Gewächs bottlings go in 2015, the distance out of the blocks in quality between this set and the really strong 2014ers here is not immense, as Tim Fröhlich really made stunning examples of the 2014 vintage, but there is an effortless beauty to the 2015 GGs that is really magical and augurs so very, very well for their future development in the cellar. Perhaps, ten years down the road, the 2015ers will have opened up a bit more distance between themselves

and the superb 2014 GGs here, but out of the blocks, the two vintages' GGs are really fairly close in quality. Beyond the range of 2015 Prädikat wines that I sampled on my visit, there are gold kap and some dessert wines also in the cellars here from this great vintage, but they were either not ready to show or still gently bubbling away in fermentation. A great range of 2015ers!

2015 Fröhlich Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Fröhlich Trocken bottling is produced from the estate's fifty year-old Müller-Thurgau vines planted in the Stromberg vineyard. The 2015 version comes in at 11.5 percent alcohol and offers up a fine nose of wet stones, apple, dried flowers and a touch of wheat chaff in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nascently complex, with good acids, focus and grip on the impressively long finish. A lovely basic bottling. 2016-2025. **88.**

2015 Fröhlich Blanc de Noirs Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Blanc de Noirs Trocken has just the palest wisp of salmon color and offers up a lovely, vibrant bouquet of peach, white cherry, a nice dollop of slate and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and fairly complex, with a fine core of fruit, bright, zesty acids and fine length and grip on the seamless finish. A very pretty example this year. 2016-2025. **89.**

2015 Estate Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

For the first time in several vintages the Estate Trocken bottling includes some Riesling grapes from younger vines in the Felseneck vineyard. This is a very high class basic Trocken, as it offers up a precise and classy nose of apple, wild yeasts, complex, slatey minerality and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, crisp and filigreed, with a good core, fine focus and bounce, again, a seamless integration of snappy acids and lovely minerality on the long and focused finish. This will be a terrific bargain. 2016-2035+. **90.**

2015 Vulkangestein Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Vulkangestein Riesling Trocken, which is the selection of younger vines from the estate's volcanic soil grand crus, is really a classy bottle this year. The blend is a fifty-fifty mix of fruit from Felsenberg and Stromberg, with the vines averaging between thirty-five and forty years of age, so this is not a young vine cuvée. The final analysis had not yet been done for the 2015ers, but Tim Fröhlich imagined this would end up carrying about four grams per liter of residual sugar. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a fine blend of lemon peel, grapefruit, plenty of smokiness, wild yeasts and stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure on the attack and rock solid at the core, with excellent, ripe acids and superb backend cut and grip on the long finish. A complete and very classy wine. 2018-2040. **91+.**

2015 Schiefergestein Bockenaaur Riesling Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Schiefergestein is another terrific bottle that approaches the quality of many Grosses Gewächs in lesser vintages and will age beautifully. The bouquet is superb, wafting from the glass in a youthfully complex blend of pink grapefruit, tart orange, wild yeasts, a fine base of slate (this is all fruit from the Felseneck after all), lemongrass and a lovely, smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and utterly seamless in balance, with lovely purity on the attack, a fine core, ripe, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. 2018-2040+. **92.**

2015 Felsenberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Felsenberg GG is an outstanding young wine. The wine comes in at around 12.5 percent alcohol and offers up a refined and very classy bouquet of grapefruit, white cherries,

wild yeasts, dried flowers, a lovely base of minerality, petrol and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and just beautifully balanced, with a fine core, superb focus and grip and a very, very long, classic and refined finish. Just a beautiful wine in the making. 2022-2060. **94+**.

2015 Kupfergrube Riesling Grosses Gewächs - Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

I love Kupfergrube when it is good and the 2015er from Tim Fröhlich is absolutely stunning. The bouquet is very pure, very precise and very promising, as it delivers scents of pink grapefruit, apple, petrol, a touch of blood orange, wild yeasts, citrus peel, superb minerality and a touch of Chablis-like straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and sports outstanding mid-palate depth, with racy acids, great intensity of flavor, seamless balance and outstanding mineral drive on the very, very long and pure finish. 2023-2060. **95**.

2015 Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Frühlingsplätzchen Grosses Gewächs comes from one of the steepest parts of the vineyard, though lower down on the hillside, where the soil is hard red slate and the Fröhlich family's parcel of vines here is more than fifty years of age. The 2015 version is outstanding, offering up a deep and vibrant bouquet of grapefruit, tart orange, slate, petrol, wild yeasts, lemongrass and plenty of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, precise and absolutely rock solid at the core, with superb backend lift and grip, racy acids and laser-like focus on the very long and very classy finish. All this superb wine needs is time in the cellar to fully blossom. 2021-2060. **95**.

2015 Halenberg Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Halenberg GG is utterly brilliant. The bouquet is pure, youthfully complex and very, very precise in its blend of pink grapefruit, plenty of smokiness, a very complex base of slatey, flinty minerality, wild yeasts, petrol, a bit of the vintage's mossiness and a touch of tangerine as a topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with bottomless depth, seamless personality and a very long, snappy and superbly focused finish. This has stunning potential. 2023-2060. **96**.

2015 Stromberg Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

Tim Fröhlich noted that the family now owns 3.5 hectares of vines here, as they purchased a neighbor's winery in 2013 that included a section of very old vines in what he calls "the filet section of the vineyard." Currently, only 1.5 hectares is used for the Grosses Gewächs bottling, but Tim noted that he had just finished replanting a section that has absolutely great *terroir* "and this parcel will be the Grand Cru for my son" in the years to come. The 2015 Stromberg is outstanding and nicely reserved in profile out of the blocks, wafting from the glass in a youthful blend of tart orange, lemongrass, grapefruit, a lovely base of minerality, lemongrass, a nice dollop of wild flowers and wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, like all of these 2015 GGs, very, very precise, with a fine core, seamless acids and outstanding focus and balance on the very long and very classy finish. Another stellar wine. 2022-2060. **95**.

2015 Felseneck Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

Along with a few of the GGs from Klaus-Peter Keller, the Schäfer-Fröhlich Felseneck is probably the greatest dry Riesling produced in 2015. This young wine is the stuff that legends are made from, as it soars from the glass in a blaze of grapefruit, tangerine, kaleidoscopic slate minerality, a touch of lavender, wild yeasts, citrus peel, dried flowers and plenty of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and laser-like in focus, with

a rock solid core, great cut and grip and a very long, seamless, nascently complex and electric finish. Sheer brilliance. 2024-2065. **98.**

2015 Bockenaur Weissburgunder Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Weissburgunder Trocken this year includes twenty percent barrel-fermented juice in the blend, and as has been the case for the last two years, none of the blend went through malolactic fermentation. The wine is 12.5 percent alcohol this year and offers up a stylish nose of white peach, tart orange, lovely minerality, white flowers and just a whisper of vanillin oak from the percentage of the blend that was barrel-fermented. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and quite elegant in profile,. With a good core and a long, zesty finish. A very classy example of Pinot Blanc. 2016-2025. **89.**

2015 Bockenaur Weissburgunder “S” Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Weissburgunder “S” Trocken hails from fifty-plus year-old vines, plated in red slate soils and is made entirely with indigenous yeasts. The wine offers up a tad more precision and youthful complexity than the regular bottling, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, white peach, spring flowers, a touch of straw and a lovely vein of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tightly-knit out of the blocks, with a fine core, zesty acids and very good length and grip on the youthful finish. This is a tad riper than the regular bottling, coming in at an even thirteen percent, but every bit as pure and really quite promising. I would give it a year or two in the cellar to blossom. 2017-2035+. **90+.**

2015 Bockenaur Grauburgunder Trocken- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Grauburgunder Trocken is made from vines on two distinct parcels of Pinot Gris, with one planted on volcanic soil sand the other on red slate. The 2015 did not go through malo and delivers a fine bouquet of white peach, some musky floral tones, stony minerality, a bit of straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and shows very good underlying minerality, with ripe acids and good length and grip on the finish. Good juice. 2016-2025. **88.**

Prädikat 2015ers

2015 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Kabinett- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Felseneck Kabinett 2015 was made from three small, very steep parcels in the vineyard that Tim Fröhlich likes to use for Kabinetten, as they do not face due south and mostly get afternoon sun. The grapes for this Kabinett were the first Riesling to be picked this year, being collected on September 29th. The wine is utterly classic in size, shape and filigree, offering up a really lovely bouquet of pear, lemongrass, a touch of currant leaf, a beautiful base of slate, wild yeasts and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, filigreed and dancing, with lovely intensity of flavor, crisp acids and a beautifully focused, racy finish. Classic, ethereal Kabinett. 2016-2040. **95.**

2015 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The Spätlese selection in the Felseneck comes from the very summit of the vineyard, with a due south exposition. The 2015 Spätlese is outstanding, as it has great acidity and mineral drive to gobble up the eighty gramps per liter of residual sugar in this bottling. The nose jumps from the glass in a lovely blend of white cherry, pear, bee pollen, a fine base of slate, wild yeasts and dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and again, marvelously filigreed, with fine complexity and bounce, excellent focus and a long, zesty and elegant finish. Lovely juice. 2019-2050. **93.**

2015 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Spätlese Goldkapsel- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Goldkapsel Spätlese this year hails from a similar section of the vineyard and the grapes were brought in on the same day, but this is an old vine selection of forty-five to fifty year old vines. The wine is very, very pure and saw no botrytis, delivering a superb aromatic constellation of white cherries, citrus zest, a gorgeous base of slate minerality, white lilies and an exotic touch of gentle spice tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and even racier than the “regular” Spätlese, with a more reserved personality out of the blocks, excellent focus and grip and simply stunning mineral drive on the very long, dancing and impressively delicate finish. Great juice. 2020-2050. **94+**.

2015 Bockenaur Felseneck Riesling Auslese- Weingut Schäfer-Fröhlich

The 2015 Felseneck Auslese that I tasted saw no botrytis, but was made from a fifty-fifty blend of golden berries and shriveled, *Passerillage* bunches. The bouquet is stunning, soaring from the glass in a blaze of fresh pineapple, white cherries, a delicate touch of fresh mint, bee pollen, wild yeasts, a lovely base of slate and a pungent topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and utterly seamless, with racy acids, great focus and grip and a very, very long, filigreed and complex finish. A great bottle of Auslese. 2020-2065. **95**.



Harvesting perfectly ripe, golden berries at Weingut Keller in the second half of October 2015.

Rheinhessen

Weingut Keller (Flörsheim-Dalsheim)

My visit with Julia and Klaus-Peter Keller was the last of my trip in Germany, before heading off to Burgundy for the second leg of my three part voyage this spring. I thought that it was going to be a relatively easy day, as it was a Saturday morning appointment at 10:30 AM, and when you have been doing four big cellars every day for most of the week, one portfolio of 2015ers seems like it is a pretty light day- particularly when one is anticipating the synthesis of a great vintage and Klaus-Peter's wines! What unfolded was more heavy lifting than any of us

imagined (with the exception of Julia and Klaus-Peter of course), as it took our group fully five hours to work through the stunning range of wines from the 2015 vintage here at Weingut Keller, though the wines were so brilliant that none of us noticed the time flying by while we sat in the tasting room and savored beautiful wine after beautiful wine. The Kellers began harvesting their pinot noir in 2015 on September 18th and then had three weeks to wait before getting started on their Riesling parcels, during which they collected a bit of Silvaner and Scheurebe. The Rieslings earmarked for the dry bottlings were picked between October 12th and October 25th, with selections for the Prädikat wines made along the way, or on into the last days of October. Klaus-Peter had no botrytis to speak of in the 2015 vintage, and his dizzyingly beautiful array of higher Prädikat wines were all produced from bunches shriveled by Passerillage, rather than noble rot. This was the first time I had ever tasted Beerenauslesen and TBAs that were made without a bit of botrytis and they are truly otherworldly in quality. In fact, as we finished the tasting, I told Klaus-Peter that there were probably a dozen wines this year that merited a perfect score, but it would seem utterly foolish to give out that many hundreds in one cellar, so I had to be stingy with scores, but there are so many utterly profound wines waiting in the wings here from 2015 that I truly hope that folks do not try and find only the wines with the very highest scores, as the numbers in the Keller cellars this year are more inaccurate than they have ever been before!

As has been the case in a few previous vintages, Klaus-Peter Keller has bottled his grand cru dry wines as either Grosses Gewächs or Grosse Lage, depending on whether or not he felt that the optimal balance point of the wine was to be found with more or less than ten grams per liter of residual sugar. By law, Grosses Gewächs bottlings must be Trocken wines and under ten grams per liter of residual sugar, but in such a high acid vintage like 2015, this is not always the ideal place to balance a wine. I have always thought that there should be a bit of flexibility with the German Wine Authorities when it comes to defining the RS of Trocken wines, with the style of the vintage taken into account, as there is certainly a tremendous difference in the perception of sweetness in a wine with ten grams per liter of residual sugar when the acids are six grams per liter or ten grams per liter (the former would seem almost sweet and the latter could be bone dry to the point of austerity), and this should be recognized in the wine regulations. However, given the already inordinate complexity of German Wine Laws, it probably makes sense to leave well enough alone and not make them more complex by trying to introduce another variable. For a grower such as Klaus-Peter Keller, who is going to sell every grand cru bottling every year, no matter how he labels the wine, this is not an issue, but for those with a bit less reputation, even better wines might be the result of a bit of flexibility in regard to residual sugar levels allowed for wines bottled as Trocken or Grosses Gewächs.

As we discussed the qualities of the 2015 growing season, Klaus-Peter related that “we have now been farming some of our plots biodynamically for the last three years- but we do not make a big deal about it- and I think we are really just starting to see the results from the change to this pattern of viticulture in these vineyards.” He continued, “I wish to treat my plants the same way I treat my body, and just as I want to know what I put in my body when I am eating, I do not want to use a lot of harmful products out in my vineyards.” Spoken like an intelligent man happily out of the long reach of the GMOs that we are the guinea pigs for here in the US. My notes on the wines that follow include a bit less technical detail than I have had in the last few vintages, as I wrote all of the information on the technical side of each cuvée on a tasting sheet that Julia had prepared for us (but which did not include enough space for my long-winded

tasting notes!), and then naturally lost it somewhere along the way in either Burgundy or Italy over the next two weeks of my trip. Sorry for the paucity of technical detail this year, as I had collected information on residual sugar levels, acidity levels and other interesting elements of some of these high wire acts, but as the miles rolled away under the continuing onslaught of non-stop tastings, I managed to leave that sheet in one of the many hotel rooms I passed through along the way. Happily, at least I still had my notes on this historic tasting of the Keller 2015ers!

Pinot Noir

As is the case each year when I visit Julia and Klaus-Peter Keller, we tasted the previous year's examples of pinot noir, so the 2014s were on the agenda for this tasting. These are excellent wines that have really turned out quite elegantly, and they will have no difficulties aging long and gracefully in the bottle. As has been the case for the last several years, they remain the gold standard for just what is possible with pinot noir in Germany and of all the other top producers of pinot noir that I have tasted in the country, none has yet been able to approach the consistent excellence that Klaus-Peter has been able to attend with his three grand cru bottlings of pinot noir.

2014 Bürgel Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2014 Bürgel pinot noir is a really lovely middleweight in the making. The red fruity bouquet is pure and already quite complex, wafting from the glass in a blend of cherries, a touch of blood orange, chalky soil tones, woodsmoke, a very discreet topnote of fresh herbs and just a touch of lead pencil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and tangy, with a good core, moderate tannins and a very long, focused and light on its feet finish. This will be just a lovely bottle with five or six years' worth of bottle age. 20201-2050+. **93+**.

2014 Frauenberg Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs (Selection Massale)- Weingut Keller

The 2014 Frauenberg is another really lovely wine that just exudes pure red fruit tones on both the nose and palate this year. The bouquet is bright and complex, offering up a constellation of red plums, raspberries, cocoa powder, mustard seed, a touch of bonfire and a gentle framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and very suave on the attack, with lovely intensity of flavor, moderate tannins and a long, tangy, and very soil-driven finish. Fine juice here. 2023-22060. **94**.

2014 Morstein Spätburgunder Grosses Gewächs "alte Reben"- Weingut Keller

As readers will recall, the Morstein pinot noir is produced from old vines that had pinot grafted onto them a couple of years ago, so that Klaus-Peter has been able to take advantage of the well-developed root systems to produce more minerality in this bottling right from the start. 2012 was only the first vintage for this bottling, and with each passing year the wine seems to get better and better. The 2014 Morstein is deeper and has a sappier element on the nose than either of its predecessors, offering up a fine and already very complex bouquet of raspberries, cherries, a touch of espresso, cinnamon, nutmeg, woodsmoke, a touch of gamebird, chalky soil tones and just a bit of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and very intensely flavored, with a good sappy core of red fruit, lovely soil signature, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, complex and vibrant finish. I love the backend lift on this wine in 2014. 2023-2060. **95**.

Scheurebe, Silvaner and Other Off the Beaten Path Varietals

2015 Scheurebe Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Scheurebe Trocken is very fine this year, as Klaus-Peter commented “that I did not want the wine to stay too long on the lees this year, as I wanted to keep this elegance.” The wine offers up a beautifully expressive bouquet of gooseberry, grapefruit, currant leaf, lovely minerality and a touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and very suave, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, vibrant and classy finish. Fine juice and a real bargain. 2016-2030. **89.**

2015 Grüner Silvaner Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Grüner Silvaner Trocken from Weingut Keller is another fine wine and one that will drink with great style right from the outset, which is a good thing, as most of this is consumed by the winery’s local clientele during the white asparagus season almost immediately after it is bottled! The wine offers up quite a smoky nose this year, to go along with scents of tart orange, lovely minerality, lemongrass and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely balanced, with vibrant acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and very stylish finish. Lovely Silvaner. 2015-2025. **88.**

2015 Sylvaner Trocken “Feuervogel” alte Reben- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Feuervogel Sylvaner is more reserved in personality than the above wine, and has more mid-palate stuffing from the old vines to carry it far into the future. The superb nose offers up a nascently complex blend of tart orange, a touch of gooseberry, chalky minerality, citrus peel, a bit of wild yeasts and a nice smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very elegant, with a fine core, plenty of complexity and cut and a long, vibrant and svelte finish. Lovely juice. 2016-2035. **91.**

2015 “Vom muscheligen Kalk”- Weingut Keller

As Klaus-Peter poured this wine for the eighteen of us seated at his very long tasting table, he commented that “I always like to have something new to show each year” that perhaps some of us at the table had not tried before. This was certainly the case for me with the Vom muscheligen Kalk bottling, which is produced from a field blend of old Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris vines that grow intermingled on this unique parcel of chalky limestone infused with fossilized mussels- hence the name of the bottling. The 2015 version is very, very elegant in profile, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, white peach, chalky minerality that is almost Chablis-like and a delicate floral topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with fine focus and grip, a juicy core and a long, well-balanced and energetic finish of impressive length and refinement. Lovely juice. 2016-2025+. **90.**

2015 Grauburgunder Trocken “S”- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Grauburgunder Trocken “S” from Weingut Keller is outstanding on both the nose and palate. The bouquet soars from the glass in a complex and vibrant blend of pink grapefruit, a touch of menthol, lemon,. Superb minerality and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully synthesizes ripe fruit and great minerality, with bright, ripe acids, outstanding focus and grip and a very, very long, complex and mineral finish. Stunning Pinot Gris! 2016-2035+. **92+.**

Riesling Trocken

Whereas in certain cellars, I felt that some of the dry Rieslings would have been better off if the grapes had been used for more Prädikat level wines, this was emphatically not the case at Weingut Keller. Klaus-Peter has been making such beautiful dry wines now for the last decade

or more, so it comes as no surprise that he would find a way to craft exquisite dry wines that perfectly captured the essence of the 2015 vintage, without sacrificing anything for his extraordinary lineup of Prädikat wines this year. As I mentioned in the introduction to the vintage, Klaus-Peter felt that the fulcrum of the vintage was on October 14th, as from this point forward the evening temperatures plunged and the days remained warm and sunny, allowing the grapes to begin to concentrate without botrytis in a most dramatic manner, and as he said, “the flavors just exploded.”

2015 Riesling Trocken- Weingut Keller

The “basic” Estate Riesling Trocken from Klaus-Peter Keller is superb in 2015 and will be one of the very best values to be found in the vintage. The bouquet is pure and very stylish, offering up scents of pink grapefruit, tart orange, a touch of petrol, chalky minerality, orange peel and a gentle topnote of wild yeasts. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very elegant, with a lovely core, bright, ripe acids and a long, seamless and complex finish. There is an effortless beauty to this wine this year that absolutely exemplifies the vintage. 2016-2030. **90.**

2015 Riesling “von der Fels” Trocken- Weingut Keller

The 2015 von der Fels is a step up from the very good Estate Trocken bottling, wafting from the glass in a complex and vibrant constellation of grapefruit, blood orange, stony minerality, gentle notes of wild yeasts, citrus peel, lemongrass and a moderately smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and supremely elegant, with a fine core, ripe, zesty acids, great focus and grip and a very long, vibrant and utterly refined finish. Great juice. 2016-2040. **92.**

2015 Riesling “RR” Trocken- Weingut Keller

There was no 2014 RR bottling from Weingut Keller, but happily, the 2015 vintage allowed for this cuvée and what an amazingly fine wine it is! The bouquet is very pure, very precise and nascently complex, as it soars from the glass in a stunning blend of tart orange, very complex, crystalline minerality, blood orange, petrol, gentle notes of wild yeasts and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and electric in its vibrancy, with a superb core of fruit, great mineral lift on the backend and laser-like focus on the very, very long and utterly refined finish. The best RR vintage I have yet tasted from KP! 2016-2040. **94.**

2015 Pettenthal Riesling Grosse Lage- Weingut Keller

I wish I had not lost my technical data on this wine, as I recall it being around fifteen grams per liter or so of residual sugar and north of ten grams per liter of acidity, but those details live on in some hotel room! I just remember being blown away by the sheer beauty of the balance of this wine and Klaus-Peter turning to me and saying “pretty cool John, *ja?*” So, left without the numbers, the words will have to suffice. The dazzling bouquet offers up the purest and most vibrant nose one can imagine, delivering notes of pink grapefruit, wild yeasts, orange blossoms, petrol, a stunning base of red slate minerality and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is very, very pure, medium-full and absolutely filigreed, with a superb core, great cut and grip and a very, very long, seamless and electric finish. A stunning beauty! 2020-2060. **96+.**

2015 Hipping Riesling Grosse Lage- Weingut Keller

As is the case with the 2015 Pettenthal bottling, Klaus-Peter felt the balance for the Hipping was best with a bit more residual sugar to balance the acidity than what would fall under the Trocken banner, so the wine will be bottled as Grosse Lage this year. This is more reserved aromatically than the Pettenthal and perhaps will be even a shade finer in the fullness of time.

The bouquet is pure and very complex out of the blocks, delivering a blend of tangerine, pink grapefruit, petrol, wild yeasts, orange peel, red slate, white flowers, lemongrass and a lovely, zesty topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and again, absolutely laser-like in its precision, with great depth at the core, just a whisper of balancing sweetness on the backend and a very, very long, dancing and utterly seamless finish. Another absolutely brilliant wine. 2020-2060. **97.**

2015 Kirchspiel Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Kirchspiel GG is a superb wine in the making. The bouquet is nascently complex and very precise, wafting from the glass in a mix of orange, sweet grapefruit, chalky minerality, just a touch of wild yeasts, citrus zest and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very, very racy, with a rock solid core, brisk, ripe acids and stunning backend mineral drive on the very, very long and oh, so promising finish. A magical vintage for the Kirchspiel! 2025-2075+. **95+.**

2015 Hubacker Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The yellow limestone of the Hubacker can sometimes seem the odd man out in the Keller lineup of GGs, as perhaps there is not quite the same perception of early elegance found in the wines from this vineyard as in the other limestone-based grand crus in the winery's impressive lineup of great Hügelland *terroirs*. However, the inherent elegance of the 2015 vintage has closed the early gap here and this is an amazingly beautiful vintage for this bottling, with the bouquet offering up an almost exotic constellation of tangerine, papaya, complex minerality, wild yeasts, a very discreet touch of petrol, citrus blossoms, gentle smokiness and a touch of grapefruit zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows a nice touch of early generosity on the attack. The core is deep and pure, the acids ripe and racy and the backend just soars with great mineral drive and inner tension from the great woven tapestry of ripe fruit, great minerality and racy acidity. Another brilliant wine. 2025-2075. **95+.**

2015 Morstein Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Morstein seems to exude just a bit more inherent complexity than any of the grand crus that have preceded it in the lineup thus far, as well as a more reserved personality that demands a bit more bottle age before it will start to really blossom and hit on all cylinders. The bouquet is utterly refined, wafting from the glass in a precise blend of pink grapefruit, tart orange, crystalline, limestone minerality, a touch of petrol, citrus peel, lemongrass, orange blossoms and just a whisper of the vintage's exotic herbal complications in the far reaches of the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite tightly-knit, with a rock solid core, racy, ripe acids and stunning precision on the very, very long, very pure and utterly magical finish. The Morstein vineyard is one of my favorite in all of Germany and the 2015 Keller GG may well be the most hauntingly beautiful expression of this great *terroir* that I have ever had the pleasure to taste. This wine is perfect, but we will leave a bit of space at the upper end of the range, so it can grow into adulthood without the weight of undue expectations! 2027-2075. **98+.**

2015 Abtserde Riesling Grosses Gewächs- Weingut Keller

Now that you know that I am a Morstein man, I do not know how to tell you that the 2015 Abtserde GG may be even a hair better than the "perfect" Morstein this year. The intellectual contradictions presented by trying to attach numbers to the unquantifiable beauty of these wines is readily self-evident with this wine in the glass! The bouquet of the 2015 Abtserde is strikingly brilliant, offering up a blend of kaleidoscopic, chalky minerality, sweet grapefruit, tangy tangerine, gentle smokiness, lemongrass and a youthful topnote of citrus peel. On the

palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and displays stunning mid-palate depth, with a seamless, electric girdle of acidity, stunning mineral definition on the backend and a very, very long, laser-like and vibrant finish. Another perfect wine that I will lie about and “only” give a ninety-nine. But, you get the idea. 2025-2075+. **99.**

2015 G-Max Riesling- Weingut Keller

As I lamented to my good friend, Peter Ruhberg, who was sitting next to me (and has an advanced degree in Philosophy) that “I was already out of numbers”, he promptly replied that “there are numbers on either side of one hundred, which is after all, only one number out of an infinite range.” Well said Peter. The 2015 G-Max is equally stunning, offering up a fine nose of tangerine, pink grapefruit, chalky minerality, citrus peel, a touch of wild yeasts, a discreet dollop of petrol, lemongrass and a lovely topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and perhaps shows just a touch more intensity at the core than either the Morstein or the Abtserde, with perfect, seamless balance, blazing, ripe acids and stunning cut and grip on the endless and utterly beautiful finish. 2025-2075+. **100.**

Noble Sweet Wines

2015 Riesling Limestone QbA- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Riesling Limestone QbA from Weingut Keller is a lovely wine and will be a terrific bargain for those lucky enough to find a few bottles. The wine wafts from the glass in a very pretty blend of apple, a touch of tangerine, limestone minerality, petrol and citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely focused, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, complex and zesty finish. Keep in mind that this wine just followed all of those grand crus in the tasting and held its own! 2016-2030. **89+.**

2015 Riesling Limestone Kabinett- Weingut Keller

The Keller 2015 Limestone Kabinett is a beautiful introduction to the dancing delicacy of the remainder of the Kabinetten in the cellar in this great vintage. There is not the same precision here, but there is filigree and purity, as it offers up a lovely bouquet of peach, tangerine, chalky minerality, bee pollen, spring flowers and again, just a whisper of petrol. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, pure and dancing, with lovely intensity of flavor, fine focus and bounce and lovely grip on the long and vibrant finish. Fine juice. 2016-2035. **90.**

2015 Niersteiner Riesling Kabinett “H”- Weingut Keller

There are two distinct Kabinetten from the Hipping vineyard this year, with the majority of the first one destined to go to the English Royal Family for their cellars, as this is the birth year of their daughter, Charlotte. This wine is a beautiful and classically delicate Kabinett that is certainly worthy of commemorating the birth of a daughter, as it wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of white peach, a touch of fresh pineapple, a lovely base of slate minerality, bee pollen and white flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-bodied and filigreed, with fine focus and grip, bright acids and impeccable balance and grip on the ethereal and very complex finish. A beautiful wine. 2019-2040+. **94.**

2015 Niersteiner Riesling Kabinett “H” Versteigerung - Weingut Keller

There will also be an Auction Kabinett from the Hipping in 2015, so make your September reservations for Bad Kreuznach early! This is a stunning and absolutely classic, light as well water example of Kabinett. The bouquet offers up a superb constellation of white peach, clementine, bee pollen, a beautifully complex base of slate, just a whisper of petrol and a lovely floral topnote redolent of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is again medium-bodied, delicate and dancing, with great filigree and vibrancy, ripe, zesty acids and laser-like focus on

the very, very long, delicate finish. Another example of just how brilliant this vintage is for Kabinetten! 2020-2050. **98.**

2015 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Spätlese- Weingut Keller

This is the only Spätlese in the Keller cellars in 2015 and it is a superb example. The bouquet offers up a pure and classic mélange of pear, white cherries, beautiful limestone minerality, orange blossoms, just a whisper of the vintage's herbal overtones and gentle notes of petrol in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very transparent, with zesty acids, superb, nascent complexity, lovely focus and grip and a very long, seamlessly balanced finish. The inherent delicacy found in the two Hipping Kabinetten is echoed here, at a higher Prädikat level. 2016-2045. **94.**

2015 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Auslese- Weingut Keller

The lone "straight" Auslese in the lineup this year from Weingut Keller is this utterly magical Abtserde bottling. The bouquet is vibrant and magically pure, wafting from the glass in a blend of clementine, peach, bee pollen, citrus blossoms, chalky minerality and a lovely topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full, very elegant and brilliant reflective of its underlying limestone minerality, with a succulent core, ripe, vibrant acids and stunning lift and grip on the very, very long and seamless finish. This is a supremely elegant Auslese. 2023-2065. **98+.**

2015 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Abtserde Goldkapsel Auslese is every bit as refined as the previous wine, but more exotic in profile from the inclusion of even more shriveled bunches. The magical bouquet delivers scents of orange, peach, a touch of mango, vibrant limestone minerality, honeycomb and a lovely topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and electric in its vibrancy and precision, with a lovely core, great complexity and a long, laser-like and dreamy finish of brilliantly pure fruit stretched to the extreme by piercing acids and perfect balance. Stunning juice. 2023-2065. **98+.**

2015 Westhofener Morstein Riesling Auslese- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Morstein Auslese is another beautiful wine, but it does not quite possess the same mineral tension as found in the two Abtserde Auslesen. The bouquet is still stunning, jumping from the glass in a blend of peach, yellow plum, honeycomb, a lovely base of limestone soil and a floral topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and delivers beautifully succulent fruit on the attack. The mid-palate depth is exemplary, the acids ripe and racy and the finish very, very long, complex and loaded with energy and unfolding beauty. Stunning juice in its own right. 2020-2065. **97.**

2015 Westhofener Morstein Riesling Auslese Goldkapsel- Weingut Keller

How does one go up the ladder from the superb Morstein Auslese? I really have no idea how this was done, but Klaus-Peter has managed to do so and the 2015 Goldkapsel from the Morstein is utterly brilliant wine. The magically pure and complex nose offers up a constellation of tangerine, lime, simply scintillating minerality, citrus zest, gentle hone tones, orange oil and just a whisper of the leather that will come with extended bottle age. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and dancing, with a creamy core of fruit, electric acidity and simply perfect focus and balance on the very, very long, complex and tensile finish. It is hard to imagine a wine of this concentration and purity, without any botrytis whatsoever, but there is no noble rot here at all, just desiccated berries from *Passerillage*! 2023-2065+. **99.**

2015 Dalsheimer Hubacker Riesling Auslese *- Weingut Keller**

The Three Star Auslese from the Hubacker in 2015 is another absolutely superb wine, but it cannot quite keep pace with what preceded it in this lineup from the Abtserde and Morstein! Klaus-Peter noted, in response to my query, “that this too is only made from healthy shriveled grapes” and no botrytis. The bouquet is beautiful, offering up scents of *mirabelle*, fresh apricot, a nice dollop of soil tones, honeycomb, violets and orange oil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with simply stunning, pure fruit at the core, great acids and focus and a very long, complex finish that sizzles with backend energy and grip. Another stunning Auslese. 2020-2065. **95.**

2015 Monsheimer Silberberg Rieslaner Beerenauslese- Weingut Keller

At this point in the proceedings, I was on sensory overload, but there were still fully six dessert wines to taste! The 2015 Rieslaner BA from the Silberberg vineyard reminds me very strikingly of the brilliant wines Hans-Günther Schwartz used to make at Müller-Catoir back in the 1980s and 1990s. The wine offers up a beautiful bouquet of candied grapefruit, yellow plum, honeycomb, orange zest, lovely minerality, a touch of petrol and a topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with a creamy core of fruit, racy acids and marvelous length and grip on the focused and very well-balanced finish. A very fine BA. 2016-2050. **94+.**

2015 Monsheimer Silberberg Rieslaner Trockenbeerenauslese- Weingut Keller

The Rieslaner TBA 2015er from the Silberberg is deeper and creamier than the Beerenauslese, but with the additional depth of fruit, it is just a hair less racy and light on its feet. The bouquet is stunning, wafting from the glass in a complex mix of candied grapefruit, pineapple, *mirabelle*, leather, honey and orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and very, very creamy in texture in the mid-palate, with great dimension and complexity, lovely framing acids and excellent length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. I am sure that the acidity levels here are sky high, but there is so much richness to the fruit that it cannot quite keep pace with the sheer beauty of the Beerenauslese version this year from the Silberberg. But, we are splitting hairs here, as both are superb wines! 2016-2050. **94.**

2015 Niersteiner Pettenthal Riesling Beerenauslese- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Pettenthal BA from Klaus-Peter Keller is a stunning and supremely elegant example of the vintage. The nose wafts from the glass with the freshest constellation of peach, pineapple, gorgeous slate undertow, honey, orange blossoms, citrus zest and a nice, pungent touch of iris blossoms as well. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, bottomless at the core and simply dancing with acidity. The finish is very, very long, focused and electric, with loads of complexity and a refined, pure personality that is the stuff of legend. 2020-2080. **97.**

2015 Niersteiner Pettenthal Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese GK (Verst)- Weingut Keller

The 2015 Pettenthal TBA Goldkapsel will find its way to the auction in Bad Kreuznach this year and seems likely to be one of the greatest dessert wines produced in this magical vintage. The brilliant bouquet soars from the glass in a blaze of yellow plum, candied peach, orange, a touch of leather, honey, tropical fruit blossoms, a very distinct note of orange oil and a very exotic, esthery topnote redolent of cinnamon. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and creamy at the core, with ripe, vibrant acidity, laser-like focus, beautiful balance and grip and a very, very long, unbelievably light on its feet finish. 2016-2100. **99+.**

2015 Niersteiner Hipping Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese GK- Weingut Keller

The Hipping Gold Kap Trockenbeerenauslese is another otherworldly wine from Klaus-Peter. The bouquet is again striking in its elegant beauty, delivering a magical blend of peach,

tangerine, honeycomb, orange zest, a nice touch of minerality and a topnote of candied pineapple. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and electric with ripe acidity, with a great core, stunning purity and complexity, impeccable focus and balance and a very, very long, vibrant and poised finish. Another absolutely brilliant TBA. 2016-2080. **98+**.

2015 Westhofener Abtserde Riesling Trockenbeerenauslese GK- Weingut Keller

Having run out of both points and adjectives, there was still one wine to taste in this amazing lineup of 2015ers! The Abtserde TBA Goldkapsel is another brilliant wine, with the limestone minerality here giving a different shading to the gorgeous, tropical fruit than is the case in the previous three wines from Nierstein. The bouquet is simply beautiful, offering up scents of tangerine, pineapple, honey, lavender, chalky minerality, honeycomb, lime blossoms and orange zest. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and bottomless at the core, with so much lightness of step, racy, ripe acids and perfect balance and focus on the very, very long, very complex and racy finish. Nectar of the gods. 2016-2080. **99**.



A Few Miscellaneous German Pinot Noirs Tasted On the Trip

2013 Koepfle Pinot Noir- Henrik Möbitz

To many wine lovers in Germany, Dr. Henrik Möbitz is one of the top producers of pinot noir and his very limited Koepfle bottling is his top wine. To give some idea of just how small the production is of this wine, this was bottle number 199 out of the 570 that were produced! The 2013 offers up a lovely young nose of tart cherries, cranberries, a dollop of fresh thyme, woodsmoke, stony minerality and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, bright and tangy, with a good core, lovely transparency, moderate tannins and good length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. This is a very classy and vibrant middleweight that is certainly approachable today, but I would be inclined to give it at least a few years in the cellar and let it develop some of its secondary layers of complexity. Fine juice. 2018-2035+. **92.**

2013 Pinot Noix “Ardoise”- Daniel Twardowski

Daniel Twardowski is an important rare wine broker based in Trier, who specializes in Burgundy wines, and this is a new project he has started to produce pinot noir in a slate vineyard that he recently planted on the Mosel. The wine is produced in tiny quantities (only eighteen hundred bottles were produced in the 2013 vintage) and quite pricey at eighty euros a bottle. Julian Haart opened these for us to try, as Herr Twardowski had asked for our opinions on the wines. All of these vintages were raised entirely in new French oak, and given the relative youth of the vines, this is one element that will need to change to get these wines up to the quality level aspired to be the proprietor. The 2013 is my favorite of the three vintages, as it does show good pinot character and balance underneath its generous coating of new wood. The bouquet has lovely fruit tones, of black cherries, dark berries, a touch of bitter chocolate and fine minerality, but all of these elements struggle against a pretty aggressive serving of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and classy on the attack, with good complexity and focus and a long, moderately tannic finish. This wine carries its new wood far better than the 2012 and 2011, but one wonders if it too will start to dry out from wood tannins with a year or two of bottle age. Ideally, the wine could use a handful of years in the cellar to soften. 2022-2045+. **89.**

2012 Pinot Noix “Ardoise”- Daniel Twardowski

The 2012 vintage of Pinot Noix from Daniel Twardowski is starting to already dry out from its new oak, as there are some uncovered wood tannins on the backend that are adding a degree of worrisome astringency on the fairly long finish. The nose is also starting to dry out, now offering scents of black cherries, cigar ash and spicy oak. The wine is medium-full, lacking in freshness to its remaining fruit component and drying out on the backend. Drink up. 2016-2018. **86.**

2011 Pinot Noix “Ardoise”- Daniel Twardowski

One assumes that the team in the cellars here is getting better with each passing vintage, so the demise already of the 2011 to over-oaking may not be indicative of how the 2013 will evolve with bottle age. This wine is pretty badly over-oaked and astringent today, with wood spice tones on the nose covering up dried black fruit and cigar ash tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, dull and astringent on the backend, which is now short and clipped. This is already DOA. The fruit tones in the 2013 version strongly suggest that this wine could end up being very successful if the new wood was eschewed in favor of using some of these casks again for a few years and taking some of the wood tannins out of the equation, as they are not being successfully carried by the young vine fruit.



I have tasted some really beautiful American wines for this report and I continue to be more and more excited about the wave of lower octane and more transparently-styled wines that are emerging from America's top viticultural regions. While there remain an awful lot of over the top wines produced in the US (happily, most of which never find their way to my office), the numbers of classically-oriented, balanced and food-friendly wines are continuing to grow and it is quite clear that American wine producers are in the midst of another great renaissance. I had the pleasure to taste several new producers to me this time around, led by the fine wines being crafted by Rajat Parr, the former San Francisco-based sommelier that several years ago created quite a stir by refusing to buy any wines to put on his wine list that were over fourteen percent alcohol. I applauded Raj's decision from afar back in the day and had heard really good things about the wines he was producing in recent years, many from some of the finest vineyards in the Santa Barbara region. I was finally able to roll through his complete lineup of wines, from his two labels- Sandhi for his chardonnays and Domaine de la Côte for his pinot noirs. They were across the board terrific and I was delighted to finally have the opportunity to taste and write about them. Another new winery to me this time around was Giornata, based in Paso Robles, who is specializing in Italian varietals and also making simply stellar wines. Giornata is the brainchild of Brian and Stefanie Terrizzi, who have made the pilgrimage from more standard

California varietals at their various previous positions to passionate and very gifted producers of truly Italian-styled wines from top vineyards in California's Central Coast. This is not something that I had ever thought about as overly promising, though probably much of my lack of enthusiasm for Italian varietals on American soil may have to do with the rather desultory examples of Sangiovese I have tasted over the years from California. Clearly, the Giornata wines are cut from a very different cloth! I was absolutely enthralled by the quality of their very classically-styled Nebbiolo, Aglianico and other bottlings and look forward to following their progress with each passing vintage.

Another new producer to me that I think is going to be really, really good as the estate gets rolling (the 2014s I tasted were only the second vintage produced here) is Franchere Wines in Oregon. The property has been started in the last two years by Mike Hinds, a native Oregonian who fell in love with wine several years ago and made a career shift to first work for five years as a wine merchant in the Chicago market, and then return to Oregon, study winemaking and start Franchere. I tasted three wines from Mike, two pinot noirs and one syrah, and was very impressed with what I tasted, particularly given that these are only from the second vintage that he has produced. The syrah is already top flight, and the pinot noirs, while not the most transparent examples one will find these days, are deep, complex and nicely built for the cellar. Mike Hinds at Franchere Wines is off to an excellent start and is a name to watch in the coming years. I was also able to taste a fine range of wines from Louis-Michel Liger-Belair's new Oregon project, called Chapter 24. Beyond the new wineries to me, there are a lot of notes on recent releases here from classically-inclined producers who have become very familiar in these pages in the last five or six years and are amongst the best producers to be found on the west coast of the US these days. Names such as Jamie Kutch, Thomas Fogarty, Kendric Vineyards, Calluna Vineyards and Masút Vineyards have now been covered in the newsletter for many vintages, and I was able to catch new releases from several other fine estates who I do not get to taste with quite the same regularity, such as Crowley Vineyards and Fausse Piste are also very well-represented in the notes that follow. I try to break up my coverage of American wines over at least a couple of separate features each year, rather than doing just one big piece, so that the producers get to shine a bit more in the shorter articles. If it was just one big, annual article on the American wines, it would be far more difficult to keep track of all the top producers who are worthy of attention these days in the US. So there will be another report in a few more issues, but there are no shortage of outstanding wines covered here in the pages that follow.

Chardonnay

2014 Kutch Wines "Santa Cruz Mountain" Chardonnay

The 2014 Santa Cruz Mountains chardonnay is the first white wine produced from Jamie Kutch, who has been specializing in Sonoma Coast pinot noir prior to this release. The wine is produced from a blend of two vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains- Zayante Vineyard (which is planted to forty-five year-old vines) and Trout Gulch Vineyards, whose vines are thirty-five years of age and planted on Wente Clones. The wine comes in at a cool 12.75 percent alcohol, was barrel-fermented and raised in twenty-five percent new wood and fermented solely with indigenous yeasts. The wine spends twelve months in cask and then another six months in tank after its *assemblage* prior to bottling. The bouquet is bright and classy, with a nice reductive touch that recalls Coche-Dury, offering up scents of pear, white peach, a bit of iodine, lovely soil tones, hints of *crème patissière* and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is

medium-full, crisp and focused, with a fine core, zesty acids and excellent focus and grip on the well-balanced, elegant and still quite youthful finish. This should age very gracefully and show even more complexity once it has had a chance to blossom; it is a truly exceptional first release of chardonnay from Jamie Kutch! 2016-2030+. **92.**

2013 Crowley “Four Winds” Chardonnay (Willamette Valley)

The 2013 Crowley “four Winds” chardonnay is a cool and classy customer, coming in at 12.5 percent octane and offering up lovely mineral zing and zesty acids. The bouquet offers up scents of pear, apple, a touch of hazelnut, citrus zest, a lovely base of soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and nicely balanced, with good mid-palate depth, fine focus and grip and a long, vibrant finish. This is still a young wine and could use a year or two in the cellar to start to show its secondary layers of complexity, but it shows fine intensity of flavor and really works well at the table. 2018-2028. **89+.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Santa Cruz Mountains” Chardonnay

The 2013 Santa Cruz Mountains bottling of chardonnay from Thomas Fogarty is excellent, offering up a fine nose of pear, a touch of pineapple, lovely soil tones, orange zest and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is focused, full-bodied and wide open, with fine framing acids, good, solid complexity and lovely balance on the long and stylish finish. For a “entry level” bottling of chardonnay, this is really fine. 2016-2020+. **90+.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Albutom Vineyard” Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 chardonnay from the Albutom Vineyard is a very classy young bottle, with a fine bouquet that wafts from the glass in a pure constellation of apple, pear, a touch of hazelnut, a complex base of soil tones, gently musky floral notes and a gentle framing of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and vibrant, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and still quite youthful finish. The finish has excellent backend energy. I would opt to give this fine chardonnay at least a year or two in the cellar to unwind fully, as it will be stellar once it blossoms. 2017-2030+. **92+.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Damiana Vineyard” Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 Damiana Vineyard bottling of chardonnay from Thomas Fogarty is a full degree cooler in this vintage from the 2012, coming in at a cool 13.5 percent octane. The wine is quite lovely on both the nose and palate, with a fine sense of reserve that augurs well for potential evolution in the bottle. The refined and complex bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of pear, a touch of passion fruit, salty soil tones, a nice touch of fresh almond, incipient notes of *crème patissière* and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with lovely mid-palate intensity, bright, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and very well-balanced finish. Lovely juice that will age very well indeed. 2016-2026+. **92+.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Langley Hill Vineyard” Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 Langley Hill Vineyard chardonnay from Thomas Fogarty falls right in that sweet spot of octane for the varietal, tipping the scales at a cool 13.1 percent and offering up a superb bouquet of peach, pear, almond, a fine base of soil tones, a bit of iodine, crushed white flowers and a touch of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still tightly-knit, with a fine core, excellent focus and grip and a long, zesty and youthful finish. This could use a year to really blossom and will make fans of Meursault very, very happy! 2017-2030. **93.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Portola Springs Vineyard” Chardonnay (Santa Cruz Mountains)

I really love the dramatic differences of *terroir* that can be seen between all of the 2013 Thomas Fogarty bottlings of chardonnay this year at their lower octane levels. The Portola Springs Vineyard bottling is 12.8 percent and really a very floral and refined young bottle of chard, wafting from the glass in a beautiful blend of pear, apple, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, a lovely base of almost salty soil tones, white lilies and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and zesty, with a superb core of fruit, great focus and grip and a long, nascently complex and very, very promising finish. Low fat never tasted so good! 2016-2030. **93.**

2013 Sandhi “Santa Barbara County” Chardonnay

The 2013 Santa Barbara County chardonnay from Sandhi comes in at a very civilized 12.5 percent alcohol and offers up lovely complexity on both the nose and palate. The very classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of pear, almond paste, a touch of acacia blossom, salty soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with good, but not great depth at the core, fine focus and grip, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the focused finish. This is light on its feet, but has plenty of intensity of flavor. A lovely wine. 2015-2023+. **90.**

2013 Sandhi “Santa Rita Hills” Chardonnay

The 2013 Sandhi “Santa Rita Hills” Chardonnay is certainly low octane juice, tipping the scales at a cool and unusual twelve percent alcohol, but the wine is certainly not short on either depth or personality at this octane. The fine nose offers up a vibrant blend of pear, sweet grapefruit, a nice base of sandy soil tones, a bit of citrus peel, dried flowers and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and intensely flavored, with lovely focus and grip, a good core, fine complexity and a long, bouncy and complex finish. This is a tad leaner than the Santa Barbara bottling, but also longer, racier and a tad more complex. A lovely bottle. 2015-2030+. **92.**

2013 Sandhi “Bent Rock” Chardonnay (Santa Rita Hills)

The 2013 Bent Rock chardonnay from Sandhi is a very pretty young middleweight in the making, with a nicely reserved personality on both the nose and palate that suggests it will age very gracefully. The vines here are only six years of age, so we are only seeing a percentage of its potential when the vines reach more maturity. The wine is only twelve percent alcohol in 2013 and will not be full-bodied over the course of its lifetime, but offers up fine intensity of flavor and lovely persistence on the backend. The bouquet is still quite tightly-knit, but shows lovely complexity as it offers up scents of lemon, tart pear, very pretty soil tones, spring flowers, a touch of anise, a very discreet framing of vanillin oak and an exotic, savory topnote that is gently reminiscent of celery salts. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and focused, with a fine core, bright, zesty acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, nascently complex finish. This is certainly tasty today, but it is still a puppy and a year or two in the cellar will really allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Fine juice. 2017-2030. **91+.**

2013 Sandhi “Mount Carmel” Chardonnay (Santa Rita Hills)

The Mount Carmel bottling of chardonnay from Sandhi is also cool and collected in 2013, tipping the scales again at an even twelve percent octane. The wine is really classy on the nose, offering up a bright and complex bouquet of pear, lemon, a hint of the butter to come, salty soil tones, gentle notes of acacia blossom and a very judicious framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with a good core, fine intensity of flavor, tangy acids and very good length and grip on the pure and classy finish. This wine was very

interesting in how it reflected its temperature, for when it was a bit cooler than ideal for service, it seemed a tad short and malnourished in the mid-palate at twelve percent alcohol, but once it came up to proper serving temperature, the wine deepened and seemingly lengthened on the palate. Like all of the Sandhi chardonnays I tasted for this report, this really excels at the table! 2015-2025+. **92+**.

2013 Sandhi “Sanford and Benedict” Chardonnay (Santa Rita Hills)

The 2013 Sandhi “Sanford and Benedict” Chardonnay from this famous Central Coast vineyard is once again twelve percent and alcohol (like almost all of the 2013 chardonnays from this excellent producer) and offers up lovely complexity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a pretty and primary blend of pear, delicious apple, acacia blossoms, a fine base of soil, lemon chiffon and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and focused, with a fine core, bright acids excellent focus and grip and a long, beautifully balanced and youthful finish. This is delicious right now, but it is still early days for this superbly structured wine, and I would not hesitate to tuck bottles of this away in the cellar for four or five years and really let the wine develop its secondary layers of complexity. Another excellent Sandhi 2013 chardonnay! 2016-2030. **93+**.



Viognier and Other White Blends

2014 Fausse Piste “le Communard” Blanc

The 2014 Fausse Piste “le Communard” Blanc is comprised of seventy percent Washington state grapes and thirty percent from Oregon. The blend of grapes is very unique, as it is seventy percent Gewurztraminer, twenty percent Grüner Veltliner and ten percent Riesling, with the latter two grapes having been sourced from vineyards in Oregon. The wine is fermented quite dry and tips the scales at thirteen percent octane, offering up a complex and fairly exotic nose of pear, a touch of rosewater, lovely spice tones, gentle smokiness, a bit of lemongrass and a nice base of minerality. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and wide open, with a good core, nice complexity and very good length on the bouncy and well-balanced finish. This has solid framing acids, but is already drinking very well and seems likely to be at its best over the next couple of years. Good juice and utterly unique in aromatic and flavor complexion. 2016-2018. **88.**

2013 Fausse Piste “The Alpine Selection” Viognier

The 2013 Fausse Piste “The Alpine Selection” Viognier is produced from higher elevation parcels in the Columbia River Gorge in Washington and the Applegate Valley in Oregon. The wine was raised in a mix of cement egg, stainless steel, older oak casks and a bit of acacia puncheons and is quite cool and classic in profile, coming in at thirteen percent alcohol. The bouquet is complex enough, but seems just a bit muddled from all of the different containers it was fermented in, with a bit of dustiness from the cement eggs in evidence in its mélange of pear, dried flowers, just a whisper of butter and a bit of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fairly low acid and lacking a bit of shape and cut (probably from the same hodge-podge of different fermentation and aging vessels), with a good core, moderate structure and decent length on the finish. This is fresh and light on its feet, but it lacks the customary focus and buoyant personality of all the other Fausse Piste wines that I have tried. I hope the 2014 settles on a single aging vessel and the wine can be a bit more harmonious as a result. 2016-2018. **84.**

2013 Volker Eisele “Gemini” (Napa Valley)

The 2013 Volker Eisele “Gemini” is a white Bordeaux-inspired blend of eighty percent *sémillon* and twenty percent *sauvignon blanc*. The wine is fermented entirely in stainless steel and sees twenty percent new oak during its *élevage*. The wine offers up a still quite youthful nose of grapefruit, lemon, a touch of beeswax, gentle grassiness, petrol and a touch of vanillin oak in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, tightly-knit and a bit four-square today, with sound acids and a good core, but not the focus and bounce I would like on the fairly long finish. Perhaps bottle age will help this wine show more detail? 2016-2023. **85-88+?**

Syrah and Grenache

2014 Fausse Piste “Garde Manger” Syrah (Columbia Valley)

The 2014 Fausse Piste “Garde Manger” bottling of syrah is a tad less ripe than the fine 2012 Vignes de Marcoux syrah cuvée from the winery (13.5 percent versus 14.1 percent) and it is a bit tighter on the palate (not too surprising, given it is two years younger), but equally promising. The fine nose offers up a nascently complex constellation of cassis, dark chocolate, black pepper, a nice touch of grilled meat, fine minerality, a touch of cedar and a nice smoky topnote redolent of bonfires. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and solid at the core, with excellent mineral drive, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and palate-staining finish. This reminds me stylistically quite a bit of Raymond Trolat’s bottlings of St. Joseph back in the day.

Fine, fine juice, which is approachable now, but will really start to sing with three or four years in the cellar. 2016-2035+. **92+**.

2014 Franchere “Havlin Vineyard” Syrah (Willamette Valley)

Franchere Wines is the brainchild of Mike Hinds, who has only started up his own small project with the 2013 vintage. All of his vineyards are farmed organically (though not yet certified) and he is doing good work already. The 2014 Havlin Vineyard Syrah from Franchere is fermented with native yeasts, raised in old casks and bottled unfinned and unfiltered. The wine tips the scales at a very civilized 12.9 percent octane and offers up an excellent youthful bouquet of cassis, black raspberries, black pepper, a touch of meatiness, woodsmoke, dark soil and a nice topnote of spiciness. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with ripe, chewy tannins, fine grip and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. This is a proper young bottle of syrah and will need four to six years in the cellar to blossom, but it will be an excellent example with a bit of bottle age. 2020-2045+. **92**.

2012 Fausse Piste “les Vignes de Marcoux” Syrah (Columbia Valley)

The 2012 Fausse Piste “les Vignes de Marcoux” Syrah hails from the Red Willow Vineyard in Yakima Valley, with the vines having been planted in 1997 and the wine includes eighty percent whole clusters in this vintage. The wine is nicely ripe at 14.1 percent, but shows no signs of *sur maturité* on either the nose and palate, offering up a deep, open and very classic bouquet of cassis, black raspberry, pepper, a touch of dark chocolate and a bit of roasted meats. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and very pure on the attack, with lovely mid-palate depth, a bit of moderate, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex, focused and well-balanced finish. This is quite approachable at age four, but I would opt for leaving it alone in the cellar for a few more years and let the tannins more fully fall away and the wine’s secondary layers of complexity begin to emerge. Good juice. 2020-2045+. **91+**.

2011 Fausse Piste “les Garçons” Grenache (Columbia Valley)

The 2011 Fausse Piste “les Garçons” Grenache is not overly ripe for this varietal in this day and age, tipping the scales at 14.5 percent, but it is riper than a wine I would routinely reach for on most evenings. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up notes of baked red and black raspberries, hung game, a bit of chocolate, *garrigue* and a good base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly youthfully chewy, with a good core, ripe tannins and good length and grip on the very gently warm vintage. This is very true to the style of Châteauneuf du Pape today, but it might be a more interesting mold to follow to make a wine true to the style of Châteauneuf du Pape in 1985! A very well-made wine in its idiom and I am sure that will be lots of fans for this grenache, but it does not quite possess the focus and detail one would find in it at a bit lower octane. 2018-2035+. **89**.

Italian Varietals

2014 Vermentino- Giornata (Paso Robles)

The 2014 Vermentino from Brian and Stefanie Terrizzi is excellent and very classically made (like all of their wines), fermented and raised in stainless steel and bottled fairly early to preserve freshness and bounce on the palate. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a vibrant blend of apple, green olive, salty soil tones, citrus peel and a nice topnote of freshly-culled herbs. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, crisp and complex, with lovely minerality and a long, complex and zesty finish. A lovely Vermentino. 2016-2020. **91**.

2014 Barbera- Giornata (Paso Robles)

The 2014 Barbera from Giornata is fermented with indigenous yeasts and raised primarily in a thousand liter *foudre*, with the overflow finding its way into old casks for its relatively short *elevage*. The 2014 is a bright and zesty wine, wafting from the glass in mix of cherries, pomegranate, charred wood, a touch of tariness, nutskin and a whisper of fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, tangy and rock solid at the core, with impressive complexity, just a touch of tannin and fine length and grip. This is really a lovely example of this underrated varietal and will have no trouble aging five to seven years. 2016-2023. **91.**

2013 Aglianico “French Camp Vineyard”- Giornata (Paso Robles)

The 2013 Aglianico from the French Camp Vineyard in Paso Robles is one of two bottlings of this fine varietal that Giornata produces. This is their cooler site, as the vines sit at 1600 feet of elevation and the sugars mount slowly through the summers here. The grapes were originally planted for one of Bonny Doon’s bottlings and only four-tenths of a hectare remains of Aglianico in this vineyard. The 2013 vintage was raised in ten percent new casks and is nicely cool in profile, coming in at 13.2 percent octane and offering up a very fine, youthful nose of sweet dark berries, roasted meats, a touch of tree bark, gentle notes of *garrigue*, a bit of cigar wrapper and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core and nascent complexity, ripe, chewy tannins and excellent length and grip on the still fairly primary, bright and very promising finish. This needs some bottle age to really blossom, but it is a beautifully made wine and will be dynamite in the fullness of time. 2021-2050. **93+.**

2012 Il Campo- Giornata (Central Coast)

The 2012 Il Campo from Giornata is comprised of a blend of seventy percent Sangiovese, twenty percent Barbera and ten percent Aglianico, with the wine aged for ten months in older casks prior to bottling. The 2012 vintage of Il Campo comes in at 14.2 percent alcohol and offers up a fairly ripe nose of red and black cherries, spit-roasted meats, a dash of sangiovese herb tones, a touch of coffee grounds and a bit of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and packed at the core, with moderate tannins and just a bit of backend heat poking out on the long finish. This wine has plenty of stuffing (particularly for the price, which is south of twenty dollars here in the states), but at its ripeness level, it does not possess quite the focus that it might deliver at sub-fourteen percent. A good solid wine, but there is more potential here if the ripeness could be tamed just a bit. 2016-2025. **87+.**

2012 Nebbiolo “Luna Matta Vineyard”- Giornata (Paso Robles)

The 2012 Nebbiolo from Giornata’s Luna Matta Vineyard is an excellent wine that really recalls a fine, classically-styled Barbaresco in its complexity and impressive transparency down to its underlying soil. The wine is made in a classic *Piemontese* manner, with indigenous yeasts, long macerations and fully twenty-four months aging in older casks prior to bottling. The bouquet is excellent, offering up a youthfully complex blend of red and black cherries, licorice, tar, a bit of gamebird, lovely herb tones, a superb base of soil and a topnote of camphor. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, chewy and beautifully focused, with a fine core, excellent balance and nascent complexity, ripe tannins and a very long, soil-driven and properly structured finish. This is still a puppy and needs at least another five or six years to really start to blossom, but it is beautifully detailed already and its ultimate quality is very easy to read. Clearly the finest nebbiolo I have tasted outside of Barolo or Barbaresco! 2021-2050+. **94.**



Merlot and Cabernet Franc

2013 Calluna Vineyards “aux Raynauds” Merlot (Chalk Hill)

David Jeffrey makes one of my absolute favorite merlot bottlings in California and his 2013 is excellent. The wine includes fully seventeen percent cabernet franc in the blend this year and was raised entirely in “one wine barrels” for the first time. The nose offers up a youthful blend of black cherries, tobacco leaf, espresso, a touch of fresh herbs, cigar ash, a fine base of soil and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, focused and full-bodied, with a tightly-knit and youthful personality, a good core and fine length and grip on the well-balanced and moderately tannic finish. This is built for the cellar and will be very good with sufficient time in the bottle. Serious merlot for grownups. 2021-2050+. 92+.

2013 Lexington “Gist Ranch Estate” Merlot (Santa Cruz Mountains)

As I noted last August, Lexington is a new project of Thomas Fogarty and his Cellar Master, Nathan Kandler, which had been a decade in the making. The fine Fogarty winery specializes in chardonnay and pinot noir, and for many years, the team here has been looking for a possible vineyard to develop to produce Bordeaux varietals. The remote Gist Ranch was identified close to a decade ago and cleared and planted, with the first wines from the project having been the excellent 2011s. The 2013 merlot is a fine follow-up to the inaugural release. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a classy blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, gentle balsamic tones, a touch of tobacco leaf, dark soil and lead pencil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully structured, with ripe tannins, fine focus and grip, tangy acids and

good length and grip on the ever so slightly warm, primary finish. This wine is listed at 14.4 percent octane, which is a tenth below the 2011, but seems slightly riper than this to my palate. It will need a couple of years in the cellar to really blossom. 2020-2045. **89+**.

2013 Lexington “Gist Ranch Estate” Cabernet Franc (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 cabernet franc from Lexington is excellent and a very fine follow-up to their first release from the 2011 vintage, which I absolutely loved. The 2013 shares the same refined sensibilities as that wine, wafting from the glass in a pure and complex constellation of cassis, a touch of black plum, tobacco leaf, coffee bean, a fine base of soil and a deft touch of nutty oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off lovely mid-palate depth, with a fine sense of transparency, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, complex finish. This wine has lovely focus and a lightness of step that is most impressive, but at 14.4 percent octane, there is just a whisper of heat on the backend which keeps its score down a tad. At 13.5 percent alcohol, this wine would be a 94 or 95 point wine! 2019-2040. **91+**.

Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux-Inspired Blends

2013 Calluna Vineyards “CVC” (Calluna Vineyards Cuvée) Chalk Hill

The 2013 Calluna Vineyards Cuvée is comprised this year of a blend of forty percent merlot, twenty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon, fifteen percent cabernet franc, ten percent malbec and seven percent petit verdot. The wine offers up a superb and youthful bouquet of cassis, sweet dark berries, a touch of cigar wrapper, lovely, dark soil tones, a bit of espresso and a very discreet framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still fairly primary, with a very elegant profile, a fine core and a long, beautifully balanced and ripely tannic finish. This will need a good six or seven years to blossom fully and should drink very well indeed for at least the following two or three decades. Fine, fine juice. 2022-2050+. **91+**.

2013 Calluna Vineyards “Calluna Estate” (Chalk Hill)

The Calluna Estate bottling from David Jeffrey is always one of his top wines, and this year’s version is comprised of a blend of forty-nine percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty-seven percent merlot, fourteen percent cabernet franc, eight percent malbec and two percent petit verdot. The 2013 was raised in fifty percent new casks and came in at 14.1 percent alcohol. The wine delivers an excellent and very refined bouquet of black cherries, sweet cassis, Cuban cigars, a fine base of soil, French roast, just a touch of fresh herbs and a suave base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, focused and full-bodied, with a fine core of fruit, impeccable focus and balance, ripe tannins and great backend grip and energy on the long and still youthful finish. This will be beautifully complex and supremely elegant with sufficient bottle age and reminds me more than a bit of the 1985 Mouton when it was young. Great juice. 2025-2075. **95**.

2013 Calluna Vineyard “The Colonel’s Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon (Chalk Hill)

The Colonel’s Vineyard 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon from Calluna Vineyard is a fine bottle in the making, but it is more marked by its new oak than any of these other 2013s. This is the only wine that is barrel-fermented by David Jeffrey, with all of the casks new for the fermentation and then half of the wine racked off into older casks for its *elevage*, so that the final proportion of new wood is fifty percent for the wine. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a deep and pure blend of cassis, espresso, cigar smoke, a touch of tariness and smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite a bit denser in style than the other 2013s from this fine estate, with firm, chewy tannins, good focus and grip and a long, youthful and still very primary finish. Like all of David’s wines, this is very well-made, but after the supreme elegance of the Calluna Estate 2013, this wine comes off as a bit blunt in style from its barrel

fermentation. It is well balanced and I am sure that it will age well, but will it ever attain the same breed and complexity as the rest of these stellar 2013s from Calluna Vineyards? 2025-2075. **90+**.

2013 Lexington “Gist Ranch Estate” Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 Lexington cabernet sauvignon is excellent and every bit as impressive as the 2011 was last year. The classy bouquet is deep, youthfully complex and really shows its signature soil tones in its blend of black cherries, cassis, cigar ash, espresso, dark soil tones and a very discreet framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and rock solid at the core, with outstanding balance and grip, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a very, very long, nascently complex finish. This wine will need a good seven or eight years of further bottle age to really start to drink with generosity, but it will be very long-lived and utterly superb once it blossoms. It is so nice to taste classically proportioned cabernets that are not all glossy fruit up front, but which hold their depth in reserve for bottle age, as always used to be the case back in the golden age. 2023-2060. **94**.

2013 Lexington “Gist Ranch Estate” Apex (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 vintage of Apex from Lexington is another outstanding bottle. The wine is a touch riper than the inaugural vintage of 2011 (14.3 percent versus 14.1 percent), but shares the same refined sensibilities of its older sibling. The nose jumps from the glass in a fine youthful mélange of sweet cassis, black cherries, a touch of coffee bean, cigar smoke, a superb base of soil tones and a lovely, refined framing of smoky new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and properly structured out of the blocks for the long haul, with a great core of pure fruit, superb mineral drive, chewy tannins and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced, youthful finish. This will need some extended cellaring to reach its apogee, but it is going to be a dynamite bottle when it is ready to drink. 2025-2075. **94+**.

2012 Volker Eisele “Napa Valley” Cabernet Sauvignon

The 2012 “Napa Valley” Cabernet Sauvignon from the Volker Eisele Family Estate includes thirteen percent merlot in the blend and was raised in fifty percent new oak casks. The wine is fairly ripe at 14.5 percent, but impressively pure on the nose, offering up scents of sweet cassis, black cherries, a touch of eucalyptus, cigar smoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with ripe tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, youthful and well-balanced finish. This is properly built for aging and should blossom nicely with another five or six years in the cellar. It carries its octane fairly well, with just a touch of backend heat, and should age nicely in the bottle. I would love to see it a bit lower in alcohol for the long haul, but there is a lot to like here. 2022-2045. **89+**.

2011 Fausse Piste “Le Boucher” Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley)

The 2011 Fausse Piste “Le Boucher” is comprised of a blend of eighty-five percent cabernet sauvignon and fifteen percent cabernet franc and tips the scales at 14.3 percent alcohol. This is Jesse Skiles very first cabernet sauvignon and he included eighty-five percent whole clusters in the wine and aged it for fully three and a half years in older casks, allowing the wine to round out prior to bottling. The nose is fairly ripe in its complex aromatic mélange of baked cherries, a touch of prune, hints of fruitcake, cigar wrapper, lovely spice tones (from the whole clusters?), a fine base of soil and just a whisper of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely balanced and open now on the attack, with a good core, fairly moderate tannins and lovely length and grip on the very discreetly warm finish. I really

like the decisions to use plenty of whole clusters and older barrels for the *elevage*, but the wine is just a touch riper than it needs to be and this takes a bit away from the overall package. But, that said, this is a very fine first step on the cabernet trail and I do hope that this will be followed up by many more vintages. I should also note that it is really nice to see a serious bottle of cabernet sauvignon with a price tag under thirty dollars! 2016-2035. **88.**

2010 Volker Eisele “Terzetto” (Napa Valley)

The Terzetto bottling from Volker Eisele is a blend of cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc, with each varietal comprising a third of the *cépages*. The wine is raised in seventy percent new oak and the 2010 vintage tips the scales at 13.9 percent alcohol. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a ripe and fairly complex blend of black cherries, black raspberries, cigar ash, a bit of coffee grounds, gentle tariness and new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and still very primary, with fine mid-palate depth, plenty of tannin and a long, tangy and chewy finish. This needs time, but all of the constituent components seem to be in place to evolve nicely with some extended bottle age. 2022-2050+. **91.**

2001 Paul Hobbs “Beckstoffer-Tokalon” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa)

The 2001 Paul Hobbs “Beckstoffer-Tokalon” Cabernet Sauvignon weighs in officially at 14.7 percent octane and could even be a bit higher than that, based on how overripe and buxom it shows. The bouquet is an over the top confusion of boysenberry jam, chocolate, mint, resinous tones and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fat, with a jammy core, little focus or grip and still some oak tannins coarsening up the moderately hot finish at age fifteen. This embodies everything I dislike about the modern school in California winemaking. It does not look like dying anytime soon, but is a far cry from an enjoyable or serious glass of cabernet. 2016-2025+. **73.**

1978 Robert Keenan Cabernet Sauvignon (Spring Mountain)

The 1978 Robert Keenan cabernet is a lovely old bottle that has begun to slowly slide down the far side of its plateau of maturity and has lost a bit of structural integrity on the palate, but still retains a lovely nose and delivers a fair bit of pleasure on the palate. The bouquet remains captivating in its blend of black cherries, chocolate, eucalyptus, a nice base of mountain soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still reasonably complex, with a velvety core of fruit, melted tannins and good length and grip on the now gently deconstructing finish. The wine is surprisingly showing just a touch of uncovered alcohol on the backend today, which I assume is a reflection of the wine starting to disintegrate a bit structurally, as I have a hard time imagining this was much fourteen percent back in this era! It still has life in it, but it is starting to lose a bit of its attraction now. 2015-2030. **87.**

Pinot Noir

2014 Franchere “Zena Springs Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills)

The 2014 Zena Springs Vineyard bottling of pinot from Mike Hinds hails from a cool, southeast-facing site, so that even in the warmer vintage of 2014, this wine has turned out as a cool and classy middleweight, tipping the scales at only 12.6 percent alcohol. The wine offers up a lovely, primary nose of red and black cherries, fresh herb tones redolent of rosemary and sage, a very good signature of soil, woodsmoke and espresso. On the palate the wine is medium-full, black fruity and nicely structured, with a good core, fine base of soil, moderate tannins and a long, youthful and nascently complex finish. This and the Zenith Vineyard bottling are not the

most transparent styles of pinot noir, but I really like their balance and early promise and I feel both wines will blossom very nicely with some bottle age. Mike is starting out very well at Franchere, with his syrah my favorite of his 2014 releases, but with all three bottlings showing good potential for the cellar and auguring very well for the future! 2020-2040. **89+**.

2014 Franchere “Zenith Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills)

The 2014 pinot noir from the Zenith Vineyard from is quite a bit riper than the Zena Springs bottling, coming in at 13.9 percent octane, but this vineyard has a due south exposition. Like all of the Franchere wines, it is fermented with natural yeasts and sees no new oak during its *elevage*. The wine is ripe and quite black fruity on the nose, offering up a fine, youthful blend of black cherries, espresso, dark soil tones, a touch of balsamic tones, a touch of mustard seed and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and primary, with a nice touch of sappiness at the core, firm, ripe tannins and very good length and grip on the tangy and chewy finish. This is a good, structured young pinot noir that shows fine balance, but is in need of some extended time in the cellar to blossom. It is done in a slightly more extracted style, but it should open up nicely with five or six years in the cellar. 2021-2040+. **89**.

2014 Kutch Wines “Sonoma Coast” Pinot Noir

For a “basic bottling” of pinot noir, the 2014 Sonoma Coast cuvée from Jamie Kutch is very good, but this is a more fruit-driven example of this varietal than the single vineyard bottlings from the estate. The bouquet is bright and very expressive, offering up a youthfully sappy blend of cherries, beetroot, cola, Sonoma herb tones and a nice touch of smoky new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and still quite primary in personality, with a good core of fruit, modest tannins and fine length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is certainly approachable already, but I would strongly urge at least a few years in the cellar for this bottle, so that some of its secondary layers of complexity can start to stir. 2018-2035. **90+**.

2014 Kutch Wines “Bohan Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

To my knowledge, the 2013 vintage was the first vintage produced here from the Bohan Vineyard by Jamie Kutch. The 2014 Bohan Vineyard bottling came in at 13.5 percent octane and offers up a superb, youthful bouquet of red plums, cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of gamebird, an excellent base of soil, hints of the cola to come, a touch of cedary new wood and a fine topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and light on its feet, with a nice sense of sappiness at the core, suave tannins and a long, focused and tangy finish. This will be terrific and is already approachable, but it is still a puppy and I would try very hard to not touch a bottle until it has spent at least four or five years in the cellar, as there is plenty more to come here with bottle age! 2021-2050+. **93+**.

2014 Kutch Wines “Falstaff Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

The 2014 Falstaff Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Jamie Kutch is a lovely, young and high-toned example of the vintage. The wine comes in at a cool 12.9 percent and offers up a bright and still fairly primary bouquet of red berries, pomegranate, fresh herb tones, a fine base of soil, incipient notes of cola, woodsmoke and a touch of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, tangy and still quite youthful, with a fine core, excellent intensity of flavor and focus and a long, moderately tannic, soil-driven and tangy finish. This has a bit of youthful *herbacité* to shake on the backend of the palate today, but it will be really a superb middleweight in the fullness of time. 2022-2050+. **92**.

2014 Kutch Wines “McDougall Ranch” Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

The 2014 McDougall Ranch is the lowest octane of these 2014s from Kutch Wines, coming in at a very cool 12.4 percent octane. The wine is quite black fruity in personality this

year, but pure, focused and intensely flavored and will be outstanding with a bit of bottle age. The refined nose wafts from the glass in a mix of sweet dark berries, bitter chocolate, a hint of cola, lovely soil tones, fresh herbs and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tangy, with fine transparency, a good core of black fruit, suave, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the tangy and nascently complex finish.; At 12.4 percent alcohol, I wondered how this would be balanced on the palate, but the wine is impeccable in shape and detail and will be a terrific bottle with a handful of years in the cellar. Stylistically this wine is so far removed from the absurd world of Martinelli and Marcassin pinot noir as to seemingly have come from another planet! 2020-2045+. **93+**.

2014 Masút Vineyards Pinot Noir “Estate Vineyard” (Mendocino County)

I really like the style of wines that Jake and Ben Fetzer are making at Masút Vineyards, which are absolutely loaded with personality, but the last couple of vintages here have been a tad riper than I would like. The 2014 Estate Vineyard bottling tips the scales at fully 14.7 percent alcohol, and though it carries its octane very well, it seems to me the wine has sacrificed a bit of balance and potential complexity as a result of its ripeness level. The bouquet is deep and classy, offering up notes of black cherries, cola, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a discreet framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush at the core, with fine focus and grip, moderate tannins and just a whisper of heat poking out on the long and youthful finish. Good juice, but I keep thinking that half a point lower in octane would take this bottling to the next level. 2018-2035+. **90**.

2013 Chapter 24 “The Flood” Pinot Noir (Oregon)

Unbeknownst to me, Louis-Michel Liger-Belair of Vosne-Romanée fame began working on a project producing Oregon pinot noir in the 2012 vintage, so I was very happy to have a chance to taste his 2013 releases, from his project called Chapter 24. There are currently three bottlings produced from grapes purchased from a variety of vineyard sources around the state, as Louis-Michel wants to get to familiarize himself with the various *terroirs* in the state a bit before deciding where Chapter 24 will plant vines. The Flood bottling is made from several vineyards that share sedimentary soil types and the 2013 is very tasty, offering up the most fruit-forward personality of the three cuvées. The nose is a blend of black cherries, pomegranate, cocoa, woodsmoke, a bit of spicy oak and a topnote of fresh nutmeg. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely light on its feet, with a gently sappy core, fine-grained tannins and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This is certainly approachable today, but will be even better with a few years in the cellar. 2016-2035. **90**.

2013 Chapter 24 “The Fire” Pinot Noir (Oregon)

The 2013 bottling of “The Fire” from Chapter 24 is comprised of parcels planted on volcanic soils, which gives the wine a racier spine of acidity and not quite the same early, mid-palate generosity as is found in the 2013 example of “The Flood”. Tasted side by side, I had a slight preference for The Flood, but when the duck arrived to go with this flight, “The Fire” really showed better and is probably the finer dining companion for the foreseeable future. The bright and high-toned nose offers up scents of strawberries, spice tones, woodsmoke, a dollop of mustard seed, a lovely signature of soil and a deft touch of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, transparent and intensely flavored, with a respectable core, modesty tannins and a fairly long, tangy and focused finish. Good juice that will probably put on a bit of weight with bottle age, but essentially will always be a complex and red fruity

middleweight. Like its stable-mate, the wine is very tasty today, but will be even better with a couple of years in the cellar. 2016-2035. **90+**.

2013 Chapter 24 “The Last Chapter” Pinot Noir (Oregon)

The “Last Chapter” bottling is a selection made of the best five or six lots of wine from the various casks that Louis-Michel Liger-Belair produces each year to make up his blends of the two wines above. The 2013 is a tad lower in octane than The Fire or The Flood (both of which came in at 12.9 percent), as it is 12.6 percent octane and really a very promising middleweight in the making. This is the most complex cuvée from Chapter 24 in the 2013 vintage, but also the most structured and it would be a waste of bottles to drink it before it has spent at least another three or four years in the cellar. The bouquet shows a lovely, refined constellation of cherries, raspberries, woodsmoke, a nice base of dark soil tones, cloves, duck and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and complex, with a good core of red fruit, a fine base of soil and a long, modestly tannic and nascently complex finish. This has the bounce and verve of young red Burgundy and will be a lovely wine with some bottle age. 2020-2040+. **92+**.

2013 Crowley Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

The 2013 entry level bottling of pinot noir from Crowley is excellent and one of the best values I tasted for this report. The bouquet is youthfully complex, offering up scents of cherry, beetroot, a touch of cola, gentle smokiness, fresh herb tones and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tangy, with a good core, fine soil signature and a bit of backend tannin to resolve. The finish is long, balanced and nicely focused and this will be a lovely bottle with a couple of years’ worth of bottle age. 2018-2035+. **90**.

2013 Domaine de la Côte “Santa Rita Hills” Pinot Noir

This was the first wine I have tasted from Rajat Parr, the fine San Francisco-based sommelier turned wine producer, and I was very impressed by the transparency and quality of this elegant pinot noir. The wine comes in at a cool 12.5 percent alcohol and is impressively light ruby in color. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex and soil-driven blend of cherries, beetroot, fresh herb tones, a really fine base of *terroir*, a dollop of coffee and a very discreet framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, medium-full and tangy, with fine intensity of flavor, modest tannins, lovely focus and grip and a long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. This wine is beautifully light on its feet, but still loaded with personality and promise. It is eminently drinkable today, but still fairly primary, and a handful of years in the cellar will result in far more complexity once the wine blossoms. Lovely juice. 2016-2040. **92**.

2013 Domaine de la Côte “Memorious” Pinot Noir (Santa Rita Hills)

The 2013 Domaine de la Côte “Memorious” Pinot Noir is a tad riper and bigger-bodied than the lovely Santa Rita Hills bottling, but still eminently civilized at an even thirteen percent octane. The bouquet is first rate, offering up a complex blend of red plum, beetroot, a touch of sinsimilla, vinesmoke and the first signs of the forest floor to come with extended bottle age. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and a bit more tightly-knit than the Santa Rita Hills, with a good core, fine focus and a long, tangy and moderately tannic finish. This is still quite primary in personality and needs a bit of time in the cellar to allow its secondary layers to start to emerge. This too is a good bottle from Domaine de la Côte, but I have a slight preference to the wide open and impeccably balanced Santa Rita Hills bottling at the present time. 2019-2035+? **89+?**

2013 Domaine de la Côte “la Côte” Pinot Noir (Santa Rita Hills)

The 2013 la Côte bottling of pinot noir from Domaine de la Côte is another really outstanding low octane single vineyard wine from this fine estate. The wine comes in at a cool twelve percent alcohol and jumps from the glass in a vibrant aromatic constellation of black

cherries, beetroot, mustard seed, cola, woodsmoke, a touch of fresh nutmeg and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and focused, with a sappy core of fruit, lovely balance, just a bit of backend tannin and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is still a young wine, but eminently drinkable today. That said, it is clearly going to age very well and I would be inclined to give it a few years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Lovely juice. 2016-2040. **93+**.

2013 Domaine de la Côte “Bloom’s Field” Pinot Noir (Santa Rita Hills)

I really like the 2013 Bloom’s Field pinot noir from Domaine de la Côte. This is a touch riper than the beautiful “la Côte” bottling, coming in at 12.5 percent, but equally well-balanced and classy on both the nose and palate. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a complex blend of beetroot, Bing cherry, fresh herb tones, a lovely signature of soil, cola and just a bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, focused and intensely flavored, with modest tannins, a good core and fine transparency on the long, tangy and very refined finish. Fine, fine wine. 2016-2040. **92+**.



2013 Thomas Fogarty Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 “regular” bottling of pinot from Thomas Fogarty is excellent. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a stylish blend of cherries, lovely spice tones, a fine base of soil, coffee, a bit of beetroot and a discreet touch of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and tangy, with a fine core of red fruit, nice soil signature and a touch of youthful

herbacité perking up the modestly tannic and well-balanced finish. This is accessible out of the blocks, but will develop nice secondary layers of complexity with a bit of bottle age. 13.1 percent octane this year. Fine juice. 2016-2035+. **90.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Rapley Trail Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 Rapley Trail Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from Thomas Fogarty is a lovely, low fat and classy bottle that is a few years away from really blossoming, but is certainly approachable in its youthful phase. As readers may recall, this is a very windy peak and typically the pinot ripens slowly here. The 2013 comes in at 13.1 percent. The bouquet shows a nice mix of spice tones and fresh herbs, along with scents of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, dark soil tones, a touch of gamebird and cedar. On the palate the wine is tightly-knit, fullish and tangy, with a good core, fine transparency and a long, moderately tannic and bouncy young finish. This needs some time in the cellar to blossom, but should prove to be a good middleweight with some bottle age. It may well prove that my score is on the conservative side, once this wine has opened up a bit with cellaring. 2021-2050. **90+.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Razorback Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 Razorback Vineyard bottling from Thomas Fogarty is a tad lower in octane than the Rapley Trail Vineyard (12.7 versus 13.1 percent),¹ but the wine shows a bit less youthful *herbacité* on the nose and palate. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a blend of sweet dark berries, black cherries, a touch of bitter chocolate, fine minerality, woodsmoke, a hint of the meatiness to come and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and intensely flavored, with a good core, tangy acids and fine focus and grip on the moderately tannic and well-balanced finish. I know it makes no sense, but even at its lower octane, the ripeness here seems more complete than the above wine. This is going to be a stellar bottle with a few years’ worth of bottle age. 2020-2050. **92+.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Will’s Cabin Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 Thomas Fogarty Will’s Cabin Vineyard bottling of pinot is excellent. This is a low octane example, tipping the scales at a very measured 12.8 percent, but with plenty of depth and complexity already in evidence on both the nose and palate. The refined bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, cinnamon-like spice tones (from a touch of whole clusters?), a superb base of soil, incipient notes of cola, balsam boughs, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and intensely flavored, with a fine core of fruit, moderate tannins, tangy acids and a long, tightly-knit and beautifully soil-driven finish. This needs time to blossom on the palate, but all of the constituent components are here for a long and exceptional life in bottle. A superb wine! 2021-2050. **93.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “Henry Ayrton’s Block” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)

Both the Henry Ayrton’s Block and the James Thomas’s Block bottlings hail from specific sections of the Rapley Trail Vineyard owned by Thomas Fogarty. These two are their top pinot noir bottlings and the 2013 Henry Ayrton’s Block pinot is outstanding. The youthful bouquet offers up scents of plums, black cherries, spices meats, a touch of cocoa, fresh nutmeg, cloves, a fine base of soil and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is focused, fullish and tightly-knit, with a fine core in reserve, ripe tannins, tangy acids, excellent backend minerality and a very long, primary and promising finish. This is more reserved in personality than any of the other single vineyard bottlings, but it will be outstanding once it has a chance to come out from behind its structural chassis and really drink with generosity. The octane here is 12.9 percent—civilization *est ici!* 2023-2065. **94+.**

2013 Thomas Fogarty “James Thomas’s Block” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)

The 2013 James Thomas Block pinot noir is exactly the same 12.9 percent alcohol as the Henry Ayrton Block bottling. The wine delivers a superb, youthful bouquet of raspberries, black cherries, lovely soil tones, a touch of red curry, woodsmoke, mustard seed, fresh thyme and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still marked by its whole clusters, with impressive depth at the core, serious soil signature, ripe, firm tannins and a long, tangy and still very primary finish. This too is going to be excellent, but it will need to be tucked away for eight years or so before broaching bottles with the expectation of generosity on the palate. Serious juice. 2023-2065. **94.**

2013 Kendric Vineyards Pinot Noir (Marin County)

Stewart Johnson’s beloved Kendric Vineyards is quickly becoming one of my absolute favorite pinot noir producers in California, as this Marin County pinot specialist continues to turn out beautiful examples of this varietal that are very long on complexity and transparency, while staying light on their feet. His 2013 regular bottling of pinot noir is another fine bottle in the making, offering up a youthful bouquet of cherries, pomegranate, fresh herbs, incipient notes of cola, a beautiful base of soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and typically transparent in the Kendric style, with a nice core, lovely, fine-grained tannins and a very long, tangy finish. This is still a puppy and needs time in the cellar to blossom, but it will be a fine and long-lived middleweight once it has had a few years. 2020-2045+. **92.**

2012 Crowley “Entre Nous” Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

The 2012 Crowley “Entre Nous” pinot noir is made from a blend of eighty percent fruit from the Four Winds Vineyard and twenty percent from the Laurel Hood Vineyard. The wine is 13.6 percent octane, was fermented with native yeasts, included about ten percent whole clusters and was raised in twenty-five percent new wood. The bouquet offers up a fine, youthful blend of cherries, beetroot, fresh herb tones, a good base of soil and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a good core, fine soil signature and a long, moderately tannic and slightly weedy finish. This is certainly approachable today, but I would be inclined to tuck it in the cellar for a few years and let a bit of its ripe tannin fall away. Good juice. 2018-2035+. **89.**

2012 Crowley “Dundee Hills” Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley)

The 2012 Crowley “Dundee Hills” pinot noir is also a blend of two different vineyards in the AVA (sixty percent of the blend hailing from Gehrts Vineyard and forty percent from La Colina Vineyard) and included five percent whole clusters in this vintage. The wine was raised entirely in older barrels and tips the scales at 13.5 percent alcohol. The bouquet is deep, pure and promising, wafting from the glass in a blend of sappy red cherries, a touch of pomegranate, cocoa, mustard seed, lovely soil tones and exotic spice tones redolent of turmeric, cloves and cardamom. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a good sappy core, ripe, fine-grained tannins and impressive nascent complexity on the long and still fairly tightly-knit finish. This needs some bottle age to really blossom, but it has all of the constituent components for a long and classy life in bottle. Fine juice. 2020-2045+. **91+.**

2012 Kendric Vineyards “Reserve” Pinot Noir (Marin County)

The previous two times I have tasted the 2012 Kendric Vineyards “Reserve” Pinot Noir, it was still a barrel sample, so I am happy to see the final bottling (not because I was worried about the quality, but because I love drinking this wine). As it eases into age four, the wine is really starting to show signs of blossoming and giving up some of its secondary layers of complexity, as it offers up a beautiful bouquet of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, fresh

thyme, a fine base of dark soil tones, a touch of cola and a bit of cedary oak in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a sappy core, fine soil signature, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and still fairly youthful finish. The finish still shows a touch of whole clusters, which will morph into another layer of complexity with further bottle age. Lovely wine. 2020-2045+. **93+**.

2011 Fausse Piste “Willamette Valley” Pinot Noir

The 2011 Fausse Piste “Willamette Valley” Pinot Noir is really a very pretty wine that is already drinking quite well at age five, but which will be even better with a bit more bottle age and time to blossom with some secondary layers of complexity. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a fine blend of cherries, a touch of blood orange, fresh nutmeg, lovely soil tones, raw cocoa and a topnote of violets. There really is a certain Chambolle-Musigny feel to the wine here, with a different base of soil, if this makes any sense. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and sappy at the core, with lovely focus and grip, moderate tannins and lovely length and grip on the tangy and nascently complex finish. This is a fine, fine bottle of pinot. 2019-2045. **92**.

2011 Kutch Wines “Sonoma Coast” Pinot Noir

The 2011 Sonoma Coast bottling of pinot from Jamie Kutch is a very pretty middleweight that is beginning to drink very nicely as it enters its fifth year. It is a cool and classy customer, coming in at 12.8 octane and offering up a very classical nose of musky cherries, beetroot, Sonoma herbs (with a dollop of Morey St. Denis mustard seed tossed in), vinesmoke and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with fine mid-palate depth, modest tannins, tangy acids and fine length and grip on the nascently complex and intensely flavored finish. A fine, fine bottle that is just starting to drink really well, but will have no difficulty aging for several decades. 2016-2035. **91**.

2011 Kutch Wines “Falstaff Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

I really like the influence of the cooler 2011 vintage on the Falstaff Vineyard bottling from Kutch Wines this year, as it has given this wine a nice black fruity veneer, an exotic touch of botanicals on the nose and really good inner mouth tension on the palate. The bouquet is deep, complex and vibrant, offering up notes of black cherries, sweet dark berries, cola, a touch of fern, fresh thyme, dark soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and intensely flavored, with a fine touch of sappiness at the core, bright acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, fine-grained and complex finish. This is already a lovely glass of pinot noir, but a handful of years in the cellar will really let its secondary layers of complexity come to the fore. *Chapeau!* 2016-2040. **93+**.

2011 Kutch Wines “McDougall Ranch” Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

The 2011 McDougall Ranch pinot noir from Jamie Kutch is his ripest wine in this vintage, coming in at 13.6 percent octane and offering up impressive ripeness for this cooler vintage. The bouquet is quite black fruity in its constellation of dark berries, cola, Sonoma herb tones, a bit of gamebird, dark soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary, with a sappy core, good focus and grip, tangy acids and a long, ripely tannic and still quite youthful finish. This will be a lovely wine with some bottle age, but it is not as expressive today as the classy 2011 Falstaff bottling and really still needs some time in the cellar to start to hit on all cylinders. 2020-2045. **92**.

2011 Kutch Wines “Savoy Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)

The 2011 Savoy Vineyard pinot noir from Jamie Kutch is a young wine that is still quite bound up in its structural elements, but shows lovely depth and mid-palate intensity for this

cooler vintage. The wine tips the scales at 12.9 percent and offers up a primary bouquet of cherries, beetroot, fresh herb tones, cola and a bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely fleshy at the core, with tangy acids fine focus and grip, moderate tannins and a long, youthful finish. This is approachable today, but it is still several years away from starting to develop any secondary layers of complexity and it is silly to be opening bottles now. There are lovely constituent components here and four to six years of bottle age should really allow this wine to blossom. Today, it is hard to tell just how much complexity it will develop as it ages, but if more complexity emerges, this will be a terrific wine and worthy of the score at the top of the range. If it just blossoms structurally, but stays at its present level of complexity, it will still be quite delightful, but the lower number in the range will be more appropriate. It will be very interesting to follow its evolution. 2021-2050+. **90-93.**

2004 Kistler “Cuvée Elizabeth” Headlands Vineyard Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)

The 2004 Kistler “Cuvée Elizabeth” Pinot Noir from the Headlands Vineyard purports to be 14.1 percent octane on the back label, but tastes well north of this number to my palate and I would guess it is significantly higher than fifteen percent alcohol in reality. I had this wine served double blind to me and I could not even identify it as pinot noir, as it is very overripe and crafted in style. The exotic bouquet offers up scents of black raspberries, prunes, dill, chocolate, a bit of black pepper, toasted coconut and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pruney and flabby, with a plump core, moderate tannins and some backend heat poking out on the finish. The wine is impressively long on the palate, for what it is worth. This is okay as an anonymous, overripe red wine, but pretty seriously disappointing as an example of pinot noir. I have not had a Kistler pinot noir in several years, and now I remember why. 2015-2025+. **80.**

CHÂTEAU LATOUR À POMEROL
ONE OF THE COMMUNE'S MOST COMPLETE AND CLASSIC WINES



Château Latour à Pomerol is one of the top wines of the commune. It is very well-situated, lying on the northern end of the plateau of Pomerol, due north of Château Trotanoy and Le Pin and just a bit west of Châteaux Clinet and L'Elgise-Clinet. The estate's eight hectares of vines are split into two distinct parcels, with the larger tract, which encompasses two-thirds of the vineyards, located in the heart of the appellation's plateau, to the east of the winery and near the church in the village and situated on an excellent base of gravel and clay. The smaller parcel (about one-third of the vines) is found north of the château and its *chais*, on the sandier slopes just off of the Pomerol plateau, where the *terroir* is not quite of the same quality as the vines located near the church. The vineyards in both sections are planted to a blend of ninety percent merlot and ten percent cabernet franc. One of the key moments in the history of Latour à Pomerol, as was the case with virtually all of its neighbors in the commune, occurred in 1956, when brutal frosts destroyed a very large percentage of the vines in the estate's vineyards. More than ninety percent of the vines had to be replanted in the wake of the frost-damage of 1956, and the first wine produced here from the replanted vineyards was the 1959 (there were tiny quantities produced at the estate of both the '57 and '58 vintages from vines that survived the frosts), which was produced primarily from three year-old vines. As *vignerons* will often tell you

when discussing the characteristics of young vines, the wine produced from the “third leaf” is always of outstanding quality, as the young vines have not yet developed sufficient vigor to start producing the quantity of bunches that begins the following year, so that three year-old vines often produce wines with the concentration that one will not find again until the vineyards have celebrated their twentieth birthday. Consequently, it is not surprising that one of the legendary vintages of this era at Château Latour à Pomerol is the 1959.

The property has been relatively well-known since the latter half of the nineteenth century (in the context of those far less heralded days in Pomerol), but it was the ownership of this property by Madame Loubat (who also came to own Château Pétrus for many, many years) that really brought the wine to prominence after her purchase of this estate in 1917. Keep in mind that the Pomerol of 1917 was hardly the same as it is today, as the region was not even officially recognized on its own until 1923, and prior to this, Pomerol was considered one of the sub-districts of St. Émilion! Madame Loubat’s acquisition of Latour à Pomerol in 1917 came from the Garitey family, who had owned the property prior to her, and predated her investing in Château Pétrus, which she purchased a piece of in 1924 from the Arnaud family (she would eventually come to purchase the remaining shares of Pétrus in 1945.) The wines that I have been fortunate enough to taste through the years from the era of Madame Loubat’s ownership of Latour à Pomerol have been truly outstanding, and there is little doubt that she brought the same commitment to excellence to this property that she brought to her more famous estate of Pétrus during her long career. Madame Loubat was certainly far ahead of her time during her custodianship of two of Pomerol’s finest properties, as she was the winemaker for both Latour à Pomerol and Pétrus during her ownership of the two estates. She passed away in November of 1961 and left Château Latour à Pomerol to her niece, Madame Lily Lacoste, and the Lacoste family continued to own the estate up until 2002, when it was donated to the charitable organization of the Foundation de Foyers de Charité de Chetauneuf de Galaure. Following the passing of Madame Loubat at the end of 1961, the property has been expertly managed by Ets. Jean-Pierre Moueix for the Lacoste family since 1962 and it has quite correctly been considered one of the gems in their outstanding lineup of wines from the commune of Pomerol since that time.

Château Latour à Pomerol has always been a very classically-styled Pomerol, with the wine fermented in temperature controlled cement tanks and aged in a relatively small percentage of new casks during its *elevage*. Since the start of its stewardship of the estate in the 1962 vintage, the team at Jean-Pierre Moueix has raised the wine here in around one-third new oak each year, laudably resisting the changes of fashion in the 1980s that saw many of the châteaux in Pomerol increase their use of new wood in the decades of the 1980s and 1990s. As is the case at many of the fine properties owned or managed by the Moueix team in Pomerol and St. Émilion, the wine has always had its malolactic fermentation completed in tanks prior to racking the wine into casks to complete its *elevage*, or this was at least the case until the last few years, when a very small percentage of the wine has undergone malo in barrel just to increase a bit of the early feel of plushness in the wines for visiting tasters. I have gone back through my notes from spring *En Primeur* visits and cannot find whether this began in either 2011 or the 2012 vintage for the properties in the Moueix portfolio, but it was in one of these two vintages that a small percentage of the wines’ malos being done in cask was implemented for their fine lineup of Right Bank wines. To my palate, I cannot detect any notable difference between these wines and

earlier vintages where the malo was all done in tank here, as I have always found that the wines of Latour à Pomerol are exemplary of their underlying *terroir* right out of the blocks and continue to show beautiful soil signatures throughout their very long lives in bottle.

I have read elsewhere commentary to the effect that Château Latour à Pomerol has been rather inconsistent since the release of the legendary wines here in 1959 and 1961, with some writers actually going so far as to say that there was a notable slump here between the 1982 and 2009 vintages. Having now tasted almost all of the major vintages from 1982 to 2009, I have to honestly say that I cannot imagine what on earth these other journalists were talking about, as one of the hallmarks of my tastings of Latour à Pomerol in preparation for this article was the remarkably consistent excellence of this wine, vintage after vintage. Of course, I would expect nothing less, with the talented team of J. P. Moueix in charge of the estate since the 1962 vintage, and I have spent much of the last couple of months pondering why other writers have alluded to a down period at the property. Of course, there are those who really believe that the concocted modern behemoths at places like Pavie and Troplong-Mondot are actually quality wines, and for them, I can understand that the classic claret proportions and gorgeous balance and purity routinely found at Latour à Pomerol do not show enough strident volume out of the blocks to register on their less than sensitive instrument panels, but there are others who could and should know better and yet still seem unconvinced of many of the recent vintages at this property since the 1982. All I can say that reports of a slump or down period at Château Latour à Pomerol are pure fantasy and this is one of the most consistently excellent estates to be found in the firmament of Pomerol today, and this has been the case since at least the 1940s and probably earlier.

Since 1962, the wines at Latour à Pomerol have been utterly classic examples of the commune, with pure, succulent and plummy fruit, coupled to lovely soil tones, often a nice dollop of chocolate, plenty of cigar-oriented nuances, and with enough bottle age, loads of black truffles in the personality of the wines. Like many of the wines in the Moueix stables, Latour à Pomerol is a wine that has always started out life properly structured and fairly reserved in most vintages, with only very ripe years like 1982, 1989, 1990 or 2009 showing a lot of sumptuous fruit out of the blocks. Most other vintages, the succulence to come here is nicely reined in behind a fine structural chassis of ripe tannin, and in vintages such as 2005, this is also coupled to the good tangy acids of the year, which has also added a bit of structural reticence to the wine out of the block. What I find surprising is that the team at J. P. Moueix has routinely priced the wines of Latour à Pomerol below those of some of their other Pomerol estates, most notably Château Lafleur-Pétrus, despite my impression that Latour à Pomerol is often the slightly superior wine. This may have to do with the quantity of wine that the two produce each year, or the fact that the former is owned outright by the Moueix family and Latour à Pomerol is simply managed by the team, so that final say on pricing is also weighed in upon by the owners of the property. Whatever the reason, Latour à Pomerol remains one of the finest values to be found in the commune. Of course, this is Pomerol, so this is not an inexpensive wine by any means, but in a world where so many of the great wines of a given region are now very costly, the prices of Latour à Pomerol remain some of the best values to be found in all of Bordeaux.

Where would I place Latour à Pomerol in the context of the other top properties on the Right Bank? It is probably right up there with estates such as Château l'Évangile, Château La

Conseillante and Château Certan de May, to place it in its proper context of top domaines in the commune. I do not think it can be ranked ahead of properties such as Canon or Figeac and Magdelaine (back in the day) in the neighboring appellation of St. Émilion, but it is very close behind these estates and certainly amongst the finest eight or ten properties in Pomerol. If one thinks of Châteaux Pétrus, Lafleur and Trotanoy as the First Growths of Pomerol, then Latour à Pomerol would rank as a Second Growth in the commune, on the same tier as Vieux Château Certan, La Conseillante, l'Évangile and Certan de May and perhaps just a touch ahead of estates such as Hosanna (the former Certan-Guiraud) and Lafleur-Pétrus. Amongst these hypothetical Pomerol Second Growths, I would certainly place Vieux Château Certan at the head of the class (the Super Second if you will, or like Mouton was prior to 1973, somewhere between First and Second Growth in absolute quality) and the others on a relatively equal footing, with some a small step ahead of the others in certain vintages, but all in all, their complete bodies of work pretty comparable (and all exceptional). Latour à Pomerol does not produce the most seemingly complex wine of this group in its early days, and over the first twenty-five or thirty years in bottle, I would certainly find wines such as La Conseillante and l'Évangile more complex than Latour à Pomerol. However, as our recent vertical tasting of Latour à Pomerol (or the 1981 horizontal tasting of the vintage I attended just ahead of the publication of this article) so eloquently demonstrated, if one gives the wines here sufficient bottle age, they lack for nothing and are every bit as complex as all but the most exalted handful of properties in the commune of Pomerol. And the wines last and last and last, which of course is the hallmark of the wines made under the watchful gaze of the Moueix family, who has long taken seriously their caretaker position in safeguarding the traditional aging potential of classic claret.

During the era when Madame Loubat owned the property, Latour à Pomerol was certainly one of the finest wines in the commune, and the legacy she has left behind at this estate is as impressive as the wines she made at Château Pétrus. Of the sounds bottles we had from the 1950s at our vertical tasting in January, as well as bottles I have tasted in the past from earlier decades at Latour à Pomerol, Madame Loubat was clearly one of the finest winemakers of her generation on the Right Bank and many of these old vintages from the estate continue to drink beautifully and cruise along as if the passage of time will be denied for many more years to come. It seems almost fitting that the very last vintage of Madame Loubat's career would be the legendary 1961 Latour à Pomerol, which has long been heralded as one of the greatest vintages ever at this fine estate. As readers may recall, the yields were very, very small in 1961, which no doubt led to the young vines here (and in so many other Pomerol estates) having their natural vigor reined in by the difficulties at flowering, so that the 1961 vintage produced some of the most beautifully concentrated and elegant wines in the commune since the great run of vintages from 1945 to 1950. One of the most impressive epochs in the history of Latour à Pomerol followed immediately on the heels of the great '61 vintage, as the first decade of wines produced here at the property after the team of Jean-Pierre Moueix took over management with the 1962 vintage are truly stunning. When one considers that such a large percentage of the vineyard had required replanting in the wake of the brutal frosts of 1956, the beauty and longevity of wines such as the 1962, 1964, 1966, 1970 and 1971 at Latour à Pomerol are truly remarkable, as these are some of the finest wines in the history of the property and they continue to drink with beautiful complexity and vitality forty years and more out from the vintage. No doubt the vineyard management in these early days, when most of the vines here would have been in their

first decade or two of life, was exemplary and one imagines that this legacy of superb work in the vineyards at Latour à Pomerol has continued on down to the present day.

According to the team at Jean-Pierre Moueix, the vineyards were in fine shape (albeit planted with young vines) when they took over management of Latour à Pomerol in 1962, and no major changes have ever had to be done here over the ensuing years. The team did install a fine drainage system for the vineyards here, completed in time for the 2009 vintage, but that is the only major change that has occurred in the vineyards at Latour à Pomerol. I had asked the Moueix family if they had any *viticultural* records from Madame Loubat's time at the helm of Latour à Pomerol, as I was curious if the replanting in the wake of the frosts of 1956 had been patterned on the previous breakdown of grape varieties in the vineyard, or if the ninety percent merlot and ten percent cabernet franc that is now planted here was a new proportion after so much of the *vignobles* had to be replanted. At many Pomerol estates, there was certainly a greater proportion of cabernet franc planted back in the 1930s and 1940s than is the case today, so perhaps this was also true of Latour à Pomerol in Madame Loubat's era, but no one in the Moueix offices could lay their hands on any information in this regard. As most of those vintages are now well into their fifth or sixth decades of life in bottle, it is now hard to say that there is more or less influence of cabernet franc in the blend than is the case with wines produced after the frosts of 1956, but what is certainly evident is that the wines today at Latour à Pomerol are likely to prove to be every bit as long-lived as the vintages from the forties and fifties here and every bit as beautiful at their apogees.

The genesis for this article was a stunningly deep vertical tasting of Château Latour à Pomerol that was organized by one of New York's finest collectors and passionate gourmets, Omar Khan. I have the pleasure to taste with Omar with some frequency here in New York and was absolutely delighted when he invited me to participate in his Latour à Pomerol tasting, that was held in February of this year. As with all tastings that stretch back far into the past, we had our share of a few "off" or unrepresentative bottles, but the sheer breadth of vintages assembled in the first place ensured that we would have one of the most memorable tastings of Latour à Pomerol that has ever been put together, even if a few of the wines were not in pristine condition. This is an estate that flies far below the radar of its true quality and today, the estate offers up really pretty remarkable value for its consistently excellent quality level. It deserves to be far better represented in Pomerol lovers' cellars and given a bit more respect in the marketplace in general. However, while its reputation starts its climb up to proper respect, it will continue to offer up a very fine opportunity for those savvy enough to track down a few vintages. And as the notes below will attest, there are some absolutely magical bottles of Latour à Pomerol out there today from both well-regarded years and those slightly less well-known vintages, and given the remarkably consistent track record of excellence of Latour à Pomerol in the last fifty years, there are some great, great bottles out there waiting to be discovered.

As was the case with the beautiful wines of Château Magdelaine when I first began writing about the estate nearly a decade ago, there remains in the market's pipeline today a very wide array of vintages of Château Latour à Pomerol that are still available. As I mentioned above, we had a handful of less than perfect bottles at our vertical tasting, and I was able to go out in the market and quite easily replace several of these with new purchases to include in this article, so many of the wines of Château Latour à Pomerol are out there and still looking for a

good home. I am not sure why this estate's wines seem to lag a bit in the marketplace in recent times, but perhaps it is the incorrect allusions from some commentators that Château Latour à Pomerol has had "down periods" in the not too distant past. As I said above, this is most emphatically not the reality, and the estate has been and continues to be one of the great stars in the firmament of Pomerol and the plethora of vintages that remain available in the pipeline represent an opportunity for lovers of classic Right Bank wines to build up their cellars with some of the finest wines that Pomerol has to offer outside of the "big three" that I would rank as First Growths in the commune. As the notes below will attest, Château Latour à Pomerol is one of the most consistent estates in all of Bordeaux, not to mention home of one of Pomerol's most elegantly beautiful wines, and its track record in allegedly less high-quality vintages, such as 1981 or 2012 (to cite but a couple of examples), is truly impressive and there are a lot of absolutely stunning wines from this property that remain available out in the market and ripe for the picking.



Looking across the vines at Château Latour à Pomerol on a warm spring day in Pomerol.

I should also include here a word of thanks to Château Latour à Pomerol's American importer, Dreyfus-Ashby, for sending me samples of four of the most recent vintages of the estate that they currently have available in the New York market. Most of these wines I had tasted out of cask during my *En Primeur* trips, but I had not revisited the wines out of bottle and it was a great pleasure to taste the wines today and compare my earliest impressions of the wines

with how they are showing today in bottle. I should also make a quick mention of one recent vintage of the estate that I did not manage to taste in preparation for this article, which is the 2008. Back in 2011, when I was in Bordeaux for the *En Primeur* unveiling of the 2010 vintage, Christian Moueix had been kind enough to prepare an assortment of samples of his wines from the 2008 vintage for an article I was writing on this great vintage. Château Latour à Pomerol was not one of the wines included in that range, so I do not have a note on that wine, but would strongly expect that it is a magnificent vintage for the estate and perhaps, along with the 2005, the finest recent vintage at Château Latour à Pomerol. So do keep an eye out for the 2008, despite the fact that there is no tasting note on the wine below!

2012 Château Latour à Pomerol

I had not tasted the 2012 Château Latour à Pomerol since the *En Primeur* week in 2013 when the new vintage was first shown. The wine is evolving at a proper, leisurely fashion and is still several years away from generously drinking, but the beautiful potential that it showed during *En Primeur* remains very much in evidence. As readers may recall, the 2012 vintage is particularly strong in Pomerol. The classically superb bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of red and black plums, tobacco leaf, bitter chocolate, gravelly soil tones, just a whisper of Pomerol herb tones and a deft framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, nicely structured and utterly classic in proportion, with a fine core, ripe tannins and lovely focus and bounce on the long, nascently complex finish. All this beautiful wine needs is some time in the bottle to blossom. One of the great sleepers of the last ten years in Bordeaux! 2022-2065+. **93.**

2011 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 2011 Latour à Pomerol was a wine I liked very much out of cask during my *En Primeur* visit in the spring of 2012. As readers may recall, 2011 was the second straight drought vintage in Pomerol and it was difficult to make a well-balanced wine. This vintage is one of the higher octane recent years at the property, coming in at fully fourteen percent, but it is aging more gracefully than the 2010 and is still quite a fine example of the vintage. The wine offers up a ripe, but still fairly classy nose of baked black cherries and plums, chocolate, gentle herb tones, dark chocolate, a bit of roasted gamebird, soil, cigar wrapper and a bit of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush on the attack, with a good core, ripe tannins and very good focus and balance on the fairly tannic and still quite primary finish. This is obviously still a very young wine at age five, but it is holding its shape better than the 2010 and looks very likely to eclipse that more vaunted vintage. It is still not my favorite style of vintage at this fine estate, and for example, I greatly prefer the 2012 vintage here, but this is aging quite well and will be a good, but not great, riper-styled example of this fine property. 2022-2050. **89.**

2010 Château Latour à Pomerol

As readers will recall, I am most emphatically not a fan of the drought vintage of 2010 in Bordeaux, as I find most of the wines inherently out of balance. Latour à Pomerol was one of the few wines that I really liked out of cask from the vintage all the way back in the spring of 2011, though at 14.5 percent stated octane, this is far riper than most of the great vintages at this estate in the last hundred years. Today, at age six, the wine is still quite fine on the nose, but the alcohol of the vintage seems to currently be having its way on the palate and the wine is not showing quite the same potential now as was the case when it was presented during *En Primeur* (which was the last time I tasted the wine). The wine offers up a deep and smoky nose of roasted plums and black raspberries, woodsmoke, a bit of gamebird, dark chocolate and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and impressively light on its feet for its octane, with a

good, but not a great core, moderate tannins and a long, slightly hot finish. The detail that one finds in a vintage such as 2012 is certainly not in evidence here, but the wine is still a pretty good bottle and one of the better 2010s that I have tasted in recent times. That said, I clearly overrated this wine during the week of *En Primeur*, where its relative elegance must have stood out more dramatically amongst the more boringly corpulent style of so many Right Bank wines. However, viewed in the more important context of vintages of Latour à Pomerol, this is clearly a good, solid effort in a difficult vintage, but hardly a special wine. Sorry to have missed this so badly the first time around. 2022-2045. **87.**

2007 Château Latour à Pomerol

Though I have had a good sampling of the 2007 clarets, this was the first time I had tasted the '07 Château Latour à Pomerol. This is generally a vintage of moderate ripeness, but there are many very good middleweights to be found here and the Latour à Pomerol will certainly be a strong example of the vintage. The wine offers up an adolescent, but promising nose of plums, black cherries, cigar smoke, a nice dollop of soil, tobacco leaf and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and complex, with a good core, fine focus and grip and a long, youthful and chewy finish that promises good things down the road. This is properly youthful at age nine and still needs a bit more time to completely integrate its new wood on the backend, but it is going to be a very good wine with a bit of bottle age. Surprisingly, this is a touch more backward than the 2006 today. 2022-2045. **89+.**

2006 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 2006 Château Latour à Pomerol is a beautiful example of this underrated vintage and it is just beginning to drink with some serious generosity at age ten. The bouquet is pure and very lovely in its classic complexity, wafting from the glass in a blend of black cherries, red plums, a touch of nutskin, raw cocoa, a nice dollop of gravelly soil tones, cigar smoke and a discreet framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and focused, with a fine core, lovely complexity, moderate tannins and a very long, poised and nicely soil-driven finish. This is not a blockbuster vintage of Latour à Pomerol, but it is elegant, intensely flavored and beautifully balanced and lacks for absolutely nothing. While it is quite approachable today, I would be inclined to give it just a few more years in the cellar to really blossom completely. A great sleeper. 2020-2060. **92.**

2005 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 2005 vintage at Latour à Pomerol has produced an absolute classic in the making, but like all of the top examples from this superb vintage, the wine is still very, very young and in need of extended cellaring to really start to stir and drink at its true potential. The bouquet is very deep, very pure and still quite primary, offering up scents of sappy red plums and cherries, a touch of woodsmoke, beautiful soil tones, just a whisper of spiced meats, cigar wrapper and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a very elegant profile, the tangy acids of the vintage very much in evidence, a fine core that will turn sappy in due course, ripe, perfectly-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. This seems very likely to vie with the 1998, 1982, 1970 and 1964 as the greatest vintage at Château Latour à Pomerol since the legendary wines produced here in 1961 and 1959. But, it is still a very young wine and I would not consider opening a bottle for at least another decade, as though the wine is accessible with such lovely balance, it is still very much at the start of its journey and has a long way to go before it starts to truly blossom. 2025-2100. **94+.**

2000 Château Latour à Pomerol

As readers know, I am not generally a fan of the 2000 vintage in Bordeaux, which I find good and solid, but rather dense in personality and rather overrated. In general, I tend to prefer the 2001 vintage across the board in the region, not to mention 2005 and 2008. That said, the 2000 Latour à Pomerol is an excellent wine and one fully worthy of the praise the vintage has received in general, but so often really does not merit. The bouquet of the 2000 Latour à Pomerol is deep, youthful and impressively pure, wafting from the glass in a blend of black plums, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones, cocoa, cigar smoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and elegant, with a superb core of fruit, excellent focus and grip and a very long, poised and suavely tannic finish. This is still a young wine and needs quite a bit more time in the cellar, but it is going to be outstanding in the fullness of time. 2023-2075. **92+**.

1998 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1998 Latour à Pomerol is everything one would hope for from this fine property in a truly great Right Bank vintage. The wine is deeper, more voluptuous and a tad less developed than the lovely 2000 version, offering up a pure and almost primary nose of black cherries, black plums, cigar ash, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones and smoky new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a rock solid core, great focus and grip and a very, very long, ripely tannic and potentially velvety finish. This is destined to be a legendary vintage of Latour à Pomerol and will one day vie with wines such as the 1970 and 1964 as amongst the greatest vintages produced here over the last fifty years. 2025-2085. **94+**.

1996 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1996 vintage is not a particularly strong one in the commune of Pomerol, but there is a “cool fruit” aspect to this wine that is quite enjoyable in its own right, if not archetypical Latour à Pomerol. The bouquet is already starting to show nice secondary development in its mix of dark berries, black cherries, cigar ash, tobacco leaf, gravelly soil tones, a bit of high-toned herbs and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit reserved in personality, with a good core, fine soil signature and a long, moderately tannic finish. This is just a touch sinewy in profile, but this is the vintage character here, and the wine still has plenty of merit in this leaner interpretation of Latour à Pomerol. It is certainly approachable today, but I would be inclined to let it age a bit longer and really blossom fully. 2023-2060. **90+**.

1995 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1995 Latour à Pomerol was one of the wines where we had an off bottle at our vertical, but happily, the wine is still in the marketplace and I was able to obtain a replacement. This is a very strong vintage in the commune and the wine offers up a superb bouquet of black cherries, plums, Cuban cigars, gravelly soil tones, a nice touch of spice, hints of the black truffles to come, a dollop of Pomerol herb tones and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and supremely elegant, with a fine core, excellent soil signature, well-integrated, moderate tannins and outstanding length and grip on the complex and focused finish. This is not too far away from its plateau of maturity and is a superb vintage at this estate. Along with the 1998, this is probably the finest Latour à Pomerol of the decade. 2020-2060+. **93+**.

1990 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1990 Latour à Pomerol is a very strong success for this ripe and roasted vintage, and though the vintage’s signature can be felt here a bit, the ripeness of the year is handled very well indeed and this wine is quite a pleasure to drink. The bouquet offers up a deep and meaty mélange of plums, black cherries, chocolate, nutskin, a bit of roasted meat, cigar ash and discreet notes of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plump, with a good core,

fine length and grip and still a bit of backend tannin perking up the fairly complex finish. This is just a touch coarse stylistically, but this is the vintage. 2016-2035+. **91.**

1989 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1989 vintage of Latour à Pomerol is very good, but I left our vertical wondering if there might be even more precise bottles of this wine out there than the one we enjoyed at our tasting. The wine is notably more precise and pure on both the nose and palate than the 1990 paired up with it, but it could not quite match the mid-palate stuffing of the '90. The bouquet is a fine and still fairly youthful blend of black cherries, black plums, dark soil tones, bitter chocolate, a bit of tariness, cigar ash and gentle Pomerol herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and less overtly powerful in personality than the 1990, with good, but not great depth at the core, melting tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex finish. This was a very tasty bottle, but my gut instinct is that there are even more pristine examples out there. 2016-2050. **92+?**

1985 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1985 Latour à Pomerol is a lovely example of this fine vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex constellation of black cherries, plums, cigar smoke, gentle herb tones, dark soil nuances, espresso and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and still has a nice touch of reserve on the attack, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, meltingly tannic and beautifully balanced finish. This does not have the amplitude of the 1982, but it is a tad more complex today and is very close in quality. 2016-2050. **93.**

1983 Château Latour à Pomerol

I had never previously tasted the 1983 Château Latour à Pomerol, but its description in another claret commentator's book as "among the richest, most powerfully constructed, broodingly opaque, and enormous Pomerols of the 1983 vintage" certainly did not augur well for the wine's breed or elegance. In fact, this is one of the most over-extracted and least interesting vintages of Latour à Pomerol that I have tasted. The rather ham-fisted nose offers up scents of plums, black cherries, leather, singed tobacco and mocha. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, chunky and four-square, with chewy tannins and good length and grip on the still quite monolithic finish. I suppose the possibility still exists that this wine will blossom into something more interesting with further bottle age, but at this point in its evolution, it is much easier to imagine that it will simply stay the course and remain a rather forced example of Latour à Pomerol where the technical team here did not embrace the style of the vintage, but tried to overwrite it with excessive cellar technique. It is still a perfectly solid wine, but Latour à Pomerol can be so much better than this 1983! 2013-2035. **87+.**

1982 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1982 Latour à Pomerol is a beautiful example of the vintage, with the plushness and gently baked fruit of the vintage front and center at age thirty-four. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a deep and exotic blend of black cherries, plums, a hint of raspberry, mocha, Christmas tree spice, new leather, touches of both menthol and nutskin and a suave framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and voluptuous on the attack, with a fine core, melting tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This is not the most complex of vintages of Latour à Pomerol for drinking today, but it is absolutely delicious and may well develop further layers of complexity with more bottle age. 2016-2045+. **94.**

1981 Château Latour à Pomerol

I cannot recall ever having tasted the 1981 Château Latour à Pomerol prior to a horizontal tasting of the vintage at the end of April this year (and which will be reported on in the next issue), but I have had several other 1981 Pomerols in the past that I have very much enjoyed, including Trotanoy and La Conseillante. It turns out Latour à Pomerol is also an excellent example of this underrated vintage. The bouquet is deep, pure and beautifully red fruity in profile, offering up scents of cherries, red plums, nutskin, violets, a touch of cocoa and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and very soil-driven in personality, with fine focus and complexity, melting tannins and a long, vibrant and beautifully pure finish. This is a lovely middleweight with years and years of life still in it. 2016-2035. **91.**

1978 Château Latour à Pomerol

This was another vintage at our vertical where the bottle was off, but I found this at auction in early March and was able to let it settle in for a month or more before tasting it for the article. The 1978 Latour à Pomerol is now fully mature and really drinking well, wafting from the glass in a lovely blend of cherries, blood orange, nutskin, summer truffles, cigar wrapper, a lovely base of soil and just a touch of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and nicely transparent, with a good core, fine complexity and focus, melted tannins and a long, bright and beautifully balanced finish. This is not a blockbuster, but a complete and classy middleweight that is now at its apogee and delivers plenty of pleasure. 2016-2035. **90.**

1975 Château Latour à Pomerol (served from magnum)

1975 is one of my favorite Pomerol vintages and the Latour à Pomerol is really just starting to drink well from magnum. The bouquet jumps from the glass in an old school blend of black plums, black cherries roasted gamebird, a touch of menthol, cigar ash, black truffles, gravelly soil tones, saddle leather and a topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with still a touch of backend tannin perking up the finish, lovely focus and grip and a long, broad-shouldered and complex finish. An excellent wine that should continue to improve as it evolves with further bottle age. 2015-2040+. **93+.**

1971 Château Latour à Pomerol

Sadly, our bottle at the vertical was very, very slightly corked, but I have been fortunate to taste the wine previously without any issues and this is one of my favorite vintages of Latour à Pomerol for current drinking. It does not possess the same depth and grandeur as the 1970, but this is no weak-kneed vintage at this fine property and the wine is now fully mature and at its apogee of peak drinkability. The beautifully complex nose offers up scents of plums, cherries, chocolate, black truffles, dark soil tones, a touch of nutskin and a topnote of cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, focused and beautifully refined, with a fine core, lovely transparency, melting tannins and superb balance on the long, seamless and very complex finish. Truly a lovely vintage of Latour à Pomerol. 2016-2035+. **92.**

1970 Château Latour à Pomerol

It had been fully a decade since I last crossed paths with a bottle of the superb 1970 Latour à Pomerol and the passage of time has been kinder to the wine than it has been to me. This is truly a beautiful bottle of wine, with the depth and structural integrity of the 1970 vintage today very much in evidence. As readers may recall from an article on this vintage in Bordeaux a couple of years back, the 1970s today show more depth and backbone than was the case during the previous ten to fifteen years (behaving a bit more like a Burgundy vintage in its evolution than the more linear style of most Bordeaux vintages), and this is very much in evidence in this

outstanding bottle of '70 Latour à Pomerol. The simply stunning nose soars from the glass in a blaze of black plums, black truffles, cigar smoke, a gorgeous base of soil tones, gamebirds and a touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and velvety on the attack, with a sappy core of fruit, marvelous complexity and balance, melting tannins and superb length and grip on the utterly refined finish. This is a great vintage of Latour à Pomerol that has decades of life still ahead of it. 2016-2040. **94+**.

1966 Château Latour à Pomerol

As was the case with the 1970, I had not tasted a bottle of the 1966 vintage of Latour à Pomerol for many a year, and the last bottle that I drank had me wondering if there were better bottles of the wine still out there. Happily, this bottle answered that question resoundingly in the affirmative, despite it arriving at the restaurant where the vertical was held with its cork floating in the wine, and the only thing sealing the bottle the perfectly extant capsule! Intrepidly, Omar Khan had the sommelier decant the wine and pour it through cheesecloth to get out the bits of cork and the wine showed beautifully! The bouquet is superb and fully mature, offering up a complex and still quite vibrant blend of dark berries, black plums, cigar wrapper, a touch of Pomerol herbs, dark chocolate, a lovely soil signature and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and very transparent down to its soil, with a good core, fine focus and grip, melted tannins and nice tangy acids adding lift on the complex and very refined finish. A beautiful wine. 2016-2035. **93**.



1964 Château Latour à Pomerol

Given my love of both Latour à Pomerol and the 1964 vintage in the commune, it was ironic that this was the first time I had ever crossed paths with the wine. It is an absolutely beautiful and still fairly youthful example of this great year on the Right Bank, offering up a very deep nose of black cherries, gamebirds, dried eucalyptus, dark soil tones, cigar ash, a bit of gentle medicinal tones and plenty of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and plush on the attack, with a rock solid core of fruit, melting tannins and outstanding length and grip on the voluptuously powerful, but seamless finish. This is cut from the same stylistic cloth as the 1982 and 1975 vintages of Latour à Pomerol and is a great, great wine that has decades of life still ahead of it. 2016-2040. **95.**

1962 Château Latour à Pomerol

I had only drunk the 1962 Latour à Pomerol on one occasion back in 2007, when I was working on a piece on the vintage, and I was very, very happy to see that this vintage was included in our vertical. This was still produced from younger vines, after the frosts in Pomerol in 1956 and the replanting that had to be done in the spring of 1957, but the wine is stunning. The bouquet offers up a fully mature and complex constellation of sweet dark berries, black cherries, a touch of chipotle pepper, cigar smoke, gravelly soil tones, nutskin and a touch of cigar ash. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and at its peak, with superb mid-palate depth, lovely focus and grip and a very, very long, complex and refined finish. While the entire wine world knows of the magisterial quality of the 1961 and 1959 vintages at Latour à Pomerol, the 1962 is another brilliant wine that is really not far off the quality of those two legends. 2016-2035. **94.**

1961 Château Latour à Pomerol

Our bottle of the '61 at Omar's vertical in February was very badly corked (always a risk with wines as famous as this one!), so I did not take a note on the wine. Given that so much of the rest of the lineup was in brilliant condition, there was remarkably little sting to having an off bottle of the most legendary of vintages at Latour à Pomerol at our dinner. I have included here my most recent note on the wine, which dates back quite a ways to a great magnum Right Bank dinner that I attended, as this is the greatest vintage I have ever tasted from the estate and it should be included in this report, even if the note is from many years ago. Here is the note from that memorable evening back in 2001, where so many legendary old Pomerols were served from magnums (hence the references to a couple of old vintages of Pétrus in the note):

1961 Château Latour à Pomerol (served from magnum)

The 1961 Latour à Pomerol is decidedly bigger and more opulent than the 1961 Pétrus, and now that I have finally tasted this legendary wine, I can well understand its stellar reputation. This is a wine that delivers about as much opulence and sumptuous power as one will ever find in Bordeaux. This is cut from the same cloth as the 1950 Pétrus, but has been at its apogee for decades already, whereas that wine has not yet peaked. But this is a wine of humbling and dizzying dimension, with an incredibly sweet and dramatic bouquet of candied black cherries, plums, chocolate, fresh spearmint, black truffles, earth and violets soaring from the glass. On the palate the wine is big, thick and extremely shapely, with great underlying structure easily supporting the tsunami layers of fruit. The finish is amazingly long and packed with fruit, with the focus and grip found in the greatest wines that this region has ever offered. This is a totally profound wine in every possible way, save one: it is not really a particularly complex wine for all of its depth and voluptuousness. Drunk on its own I can understand the perception of perfection that this wine creates, but in a lineup with big vintages from the forties and fifties of Lafleur,

Cheval Blanc and Pétrus, the '61 Latour à Pomerol's slight lack of complexity has to knock it just a bit down the scale. This is certainly a grandiose wine, but it is not quite perfect. 2001-2025+. **98.**

1959 Château Latour à Pomerol

Our vertical tasting in February was the first time I had ever had a chance to taste the legendary 1959 Latour à Pomerol and the wine is everything it is reputed to be. The utterly brilliant bouquet offers up a bottomless blend of plums, black cherries, nutskin, roasted gamebird, menthol, dark soil tones and lovely top end smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and plush in personality, with a rock solid core of sappy fruit, melted tannins and impeccable focus and grip on the perfectly balanced, velvety and utterly seamless finish. This is a monumental vintage of Latour à Pomerol, which makes sense, as the replanted vines after the frost of 1956 would have been in their "third leaf" and *vignerons* will tell you that young vines produced their finest fruit in this year, after which, they do not attain the same intensity until they cross the twenty year threshold. A brilliant '59! 2016-2040. **96+.**

1955 Château Latour à Pomerol

The 1955 Latour à Pomerol is a beautiful example of this superb, but often overlooked vintage. The wine is now at its zenith and stunningly gorgeous, wafting from the glass in a refined and transparent mix of desiccated black cherries and plums, eucalyptus, nutskin, woodsmoke, a touch of chipotle and an absolutely beautiful expression of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very soil-driven in personality, with a lovely core remaining, outstanding focus and grip and a very, very long, velvety finish. This wine has clearly been fully mature for decades, but remains still on its plateau of peak drinkability and shows every sign of lasting at least another twenty years. Fine, fine juice. 2016-2035. **93.**

1953 Château Latour à Pomerol

The bottle of 1953 Latour à Pomerol at our vertical tasting was a good, but not great example, and I have to believe that there are more pristine examples out there somewhere. The bottle showed fine complexity in its tertiary blend of dark berries, dried black cherries, charred wood, cigar ash, fine soil tones, plenty of smokiness and a touch of chipotle pepper in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and tertiary, with a very gentle structure today, but fine complexity and just a whisper of faded tannin still adding a bit of grip on the fairly long finish. This is a nice old bottle, but it does not show the same energy as the 1955 on this evening and seems far more fragile. 2016-2030. **90.**

1948 Château Latour à Pomerol (served from magnum)

As our bottles of 1952, 1949 and 1947 were off at the tasting in February, I have dug out my note on the 1948 Latour à Pomerol from that magnum dinner back in 2001, so that this great period at the estate is at least represented in this feature on the property. I have never read any accounts of the greatness of the '48 Latour à Pomerol, but based on our magnum, this is indeed a truly monumental wine. It differed from the amazingly opulent 1961 only in terms of breadth and relative depth, but was almost an aromatic and flavor clone of that wine. The bouquet is certainly deep and stunning, offering up sweet, candied scents of plum, blackberry, chocolate, mint, saddle leather and earth. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, very concentrated and profound, without quite the amplitude of the 1961, but with a great core of fruit, tremendous sweetness, stunning focus and great length and grip on the finish. There are still a few well-covered, but old-styled tannins to give the wine structure. This is clearly a great, great Latour à Pomerol that belongs on the very short list of this Château's greatest achievements. Think of it as a 1961 at 95% intensity,

but with the addition of a bit more resolution from bottle age. A great, great wine. 2001-2020. **96.**

1929 Château Latour à Pomerol

Our February bottle of the 1929 Latour à Pomerol was showing a bit of fragility, which I attributed it to it having crossed the Atlantic a short time before the tasting, rather than an indication of the wine starting to fade at its advanced age. Checking with our host, Omar Khan, who has had the privilege to drink this wine previously while in Europe, he confirmed that the 1929 continues to show very well for its age and our bottle was just a bit disoriented from its travels. Nonetheless, the wine was still very complex and tasty at our event in February, offering up a fine nose of desiccated black fruit, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, a touch of chipotle pepper and a nice touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, gentle and refined, with solid depth for its age, melted tannins and a long, complex finish. I would love to taste a bottle of this that had not travelled recently, as I imagine it would rate a good three or four points higher. That said, this was still quite an enjoyable old bottle and shows just how well Latour à Pomerol can age. 2016-2025+? **87.**

A SECOND TRANCHE OF THE FINE 2014 BURGUNDY VINTAGE



Gates in the wall of the Montrachet vineyard in Puligny.

Domaines And Their 2014s Covered In This Feature:

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**ANOTHER ROUND OF THE SUAVE AND
TRULY EXCEPTIONAL 2014 BURGUNDY VINTAGE**



An early spring afternoon in the vineyards in Meursault.

I spent another week in Burgundy in the second half of March visiting more domaines and tasting through their range of 2014s. Some wines were still in cask this spring, but the lion's share have now been bottled, as most *vignerons* have chosen to bottle the wines on the earlier side in 2014 and retain the absolutely beautiful balance that will become the signature of the vintage for decades to come. As I wrote in Issue 60, the 2014 vintage is outstanding for white Burgundies, with the exception of simply being very good in certain parts of Meursault and Corton-Charlemagne, where the hail storm of June 28th affected the crop a bit. Of all the white Burgundy regions, probably Chablis is the very finest in 2014, and given the very severe hail damage that struck along the Montée de Tonnerre corridor right before harvest in 2015, it will make good sense for lovers of Chablis to really stock up on the beautiful and utterly classic 2014s here. Additionally, as I finish up this report on the 2014 vintage in Burgundy, I hear reports of absolutely severe frost damage in much of Burgundy this spring, which will dramatically cut back potential croploads in 2016 and may well adversely impact the vineyards affected for many years to come. The first reports I hear are of the worst frost in more than thirty years in the region. As I write this, the damage has not yet been assessed completely in the

vineyards, as bud break is not uniform from vineyard to vineyard up and down the Côte, but it may well be that some substantial replanting of vines is going to be necessary in the wake of the spring frosts of 2016. Crop loads seem likely to be down at least thirty percent and possibly far more; this is not good news for the Burgundians or the market and will only increase pressure on prices of the 2015s- no matter what their true quality.

As I spoke with *vignerons* during my week in March in the region, more and more expressed a bit of caution about the 2015 vintage, which seems to have caught the imaginations of the market more than that of the producers. Many sort of shrugged their shoulders and said that “the merchants seem very excited about the prospects of the 2015 vintage”, but most intimated that they are a bit more enthusiastic about the style of the 2014s, which everyone describes as utterly classic and a very, very good vintage. While there may be some truly exceptional 2015 red wines produced (and I have only tasted a small handful and certainly not enough to try and make any conclusions about the vintage’s potential- that will come in November), absolutely no honest man or woman in Burgundy will tell you that the 2015 whites will be even close in quality to the 2014 whites. Most describe the 2015 whites as forward, buxom and relatively soft in style. As 2015 was a very hot summer, it is going to be interesting to see how the pinot noirs will evolve and show this element in the finished wines- certainly everyone commented on just how beautiful the grapes looked coming in at harvest time- but no matter where on the ladder of recent vintages the quality ultimately ends up for the 2015 reds, there are going to be an awful lot of truly beautiful 2014 reds in the marketplace and they deserve more attention than they are currently receiving from segments of the market that are already looking past them and hoping for another windfall vintage with the 2015s. I know I have been writing about being cautious with the 2015s since November, but that is what the *vignerons* are quietly saying behind the scenes and it seems proper for me to share this with readers. We will see in a few months what is the shape and style of the reds of this vintage, but I am not going to arrive in November expecting the second coming of the 2005 vintage- that is for sure!

On this trip I did not get around to taste at some of my favorite estates that I tend to cover every year and are typically part of my spring itinerary. Estates such as Domaine Bart in Marsannay, Domaine Rossignol-Trapet in Gevrey-Chambertin and Domaine Lafouge in Auxey-Duresses were just a few that I did not hear back from in time to schedule appointments to taste their 2014s, but I will make extended efforts to get back and taste at these estates next year, as they are amongst my favorites in the Côte d’Or. In Chablis, as I was in Burgundy during the week of Les Grands Jours this March, I spent the day tasting at the Grands Jours event to start off my week and covered a bit more ground that would have been possible visiting cellars, but this meant that I did not always taste the full range from a domaine during the Grands Jours event. I have included notes on additional vintages from Chablis estates here, if they chose to show those at the tasting. I also dropped by at Domaine Patrick Piuze during my day in Chablis to taste through his 2015s here before they are bottled, but will save those notes for a later issue, as the focus of this report is primarily the 2014 vintage in Burgundy. I was again stymied from tasting at Domaine de la Romanée-Conti on this trip and am not really sure why, as other folks I ran into around the region were happily tasting the 2014s in the cellars here, but the domaine did not want to see me once again.

Chablis

Domaine Jean-Claude Bessin (La Chapelle Vaupelteigne)

As readers may recall from Issue 60, I caught the 2014 wines of Jean-Claude Bessin right after they had been filtered and/or assembled during my November visit and made a point of getting back to taste them when they were back on form during my spring trip. I was very happy that I did so, as the wines had bounced back beautifully and were everything I would expect from the very steady and talented Monsieur Bessin and a top flight vintage in Chablis. The mise for the “villages” level bottlings here had been in the middle of January, with the premier crus at the beginning of March, so tasting them during Les Grands Jours on March 21st was pretty good timing. I found at Les Grands Jours that the villages level wines had begun to bounce back from their earlier bottling and the premier crus had not yet started to shut down, so everything was really showing quite well here.

2014 Chablis “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Jean-Claude Bessin

The 2014 Vieilles Vignes cuvée from Monsieur Bessin was showing very well indeed at Les Grands Jours, wafting from the glass in a fresh and vibrant blend of grapefruit, pear, chalky minerality, white flowers, beeswax and a touch of straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and beautifully focused, with a good core, fine youthful complexity and a long, zesty finish that closes with good mineral drive and grip. A classy bottle. 2016-2035. **91.**

2014 Chablis “Montmains”- Domaine Jean-Claude Bessin

The 2014 Montmains was really on form in March, wafting from the glass in a superb bouquet of grapefruit, lemon, tart pear, oyster shell, lemongrass and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, long and rock solid at the core, with a fine sense of reserve out of the blocks, lovely focus and balance, bright acids and fine cut and grip on the long and classy finish. A fine bottle in the making. 2020-2050. **92+.**

2014 Chablis “Fourchaume”- Domaine Jean-Claude Bessin

The Fourchaume was another of Monsieur Bessin’s 2014s that was really on form at Les Grands Jours and again, shows excellent structural reserve for a long life in bottle. The nose jumps from the glass in a deep and classy blend of lemon, grapefruit, paraffin, chalky minerality and just a hint of the “woody” signature note of Fourchaume that will arrive with bottle age. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and racy, with lovely mid-palate depth, a fine girdle of acidity and excellent balance on the long and youthful finish. 2020-2050+. **93.**

2014 Chablis “La Forêt”- Domaine Jean-Claude Bessin

The 2014 La Forêt is another excellent premier cru in the making *chez* Bessin this year, wafting from the glass in a pure and perfectly ripe blend of tangerine, grapefruit, a touch of pear, chalky minerality, spring flowers and a distinct topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a superb core, excellent focus and grip and a long, vibrant and mineral finish. Fine, fine juice. 2020-2050+. **93.**

2014 Chablis “La Pièce au Comte”- Domaine Jean-Claude Bessin

The 2014 La Pièce au Comte was also right on form at Les Grands Jours. As readers will recall, this is a special old vine bottling of Fourchaume that Monsieur Bessin has produced on its own for several years. The 2014 is excellent, offering up a pure and vibrant bouquet of green apple, lime, pear, chalky minerality, spring flowers and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and cut, excellent balance and a long, youthful and very promising finish. There is just a dollop more depth at the core here than in the very fine regular bottling of Fourchaume. 2020-2050+. **93+.**

2014 Chablis “Valmur”- Domaine Jean-Claude Bessin

The 2014 Valmur was again much more on form at Les Grands Jours than it had been in November and what a world of difference! The stunning nose soars from the glass in a deep and youthful mélange of grapefruit, pear, lemon, stony minerality, citrus zest, paraffin and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and laser-like in its focus, with a rock solid core, lovely nascent complexity and outstanding length and grip on the mineral bath of a finish. A fine, fine bottle of Valmur in the making. 2022-2065. **95+**.

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 here includes Vaugiraut, Vaillons, Fourchaume, Montée de Tonnerre, Montmains and Mont de Milieu (starting with the 2015 vintage), but the domaine did not bring their entire range to this year's Les Grand Jours tasting. 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 of age. 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. At this year's Grands Jours, they had a couple of 2014 premier crus with them, but the villages bottling that they were showing was already a 2015 and the Montmains and Les Clos were 2013s. This domaine makes very good wines and I hope to find time to expand my visits in Chablis in November and pay a proper visits to their cellars.

2015 Chablis- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The 2015 Chablis *villages* was still in tank, but the domaine brought along a sample to show at Les Grands Jours. The wine is pretty and quite fresh and racy for the vintage, offering up scents of pear, tart orange, a hint of fresh apricot, stony minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite racy for a '15, with a good core and a long, zesty finish that closes with a distinct touch of apricot. This will drink well from release. 2016-2025. **89**.

2014 Chablis “Vaillons”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The Duplessis Vaillons bottling comes from four different *lieux à dits* that are entitled to Vaillons status: Minot (the warmest parcel in the Vaillons constellation), Epinottes, Séchet and Chatain. The 2014 version is excellent, delivering a fine, slightly candied nose of grapefruit, lemon, beeswax, chalky minerality and a topnote of white flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and focused, with a good core and fine length and grip on the snappy and nicely mineral finish. This is a classic bottle of Vaillons in the making. 2018-2040. **91**.

2014 Chablis “Montée de Tonnerre”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The 2014 Montée de Tonnerre from the Duplessis family is excellent, with lovely mineral drive coupled with ripe, fresh and vibrant fruit tones. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a lovely blend of pear, apple, white flowers, chalky minerality and a gentle topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is racy, focused and rock solid at the core, with a full-bodied personality,

lovely backend mineral drive and impressive length and grip on the very energetic finish. Fine juice. 2016-2035. **92+**.

2013 Chablis “Montmains”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The domaine has two parcels in Montmains from which they produce this bottling, with one thirty-five years of age and the other fully seventy years old. The family decided to show the 2013 version at Les Grands Jours and the wine is very good, offering up a fine bouquet of apple, pear, a touch of grassiness, orange peel, lovely minerality and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and nicely crisp, but built for earlier consumption than the racy 2014s that preceded it in the tasting. This is wide open and already drinking quite well. 2016-2022+. **91**.

2013 Chablis “Les Clos”- Domaine Gérard Duplessis

The 2013 Les Clos bottling from Domaine Gérard Duplessis is also quite forward in personality and shares a bit of a candied touch to its fruit tones in this vintage. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of candied lime, pear, granny smith apple, wet stones and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, quite wide open and ready to drink, with a good core, fine balance and very good grip on long finish. This does not seem quite as clean and precise as the 2013 Montmains. 2016-2025. **90+**.

Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen (Chablis)

Frédéric and his lovely wife, Céline Gueguen have made very nice wines in the 2014 and 2015 vintages and I only wish that they had a few more premier cru parcels with which to work these days. The couple brought a mix of 2015s and 2014s to Les Grands Jours this year, with all of the wines showing very well.

2015 Coteaux Bourguignon Sacy “Cépages Confidential”- Dom Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2015 Cépages Confidential had already been bottled for a month by the time of Les Grands Jours, but had not yet closed down and was showing quite nicely. The bouquet offers up a surprisingly complex blend of grapefruit, a touch of grassiness, stony minerality and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and focused, with perfectly respectable depth at the core, bright acids and lovely mineral drive on the finish. Good juice. 2016-2020. **88**.

2014 Côtes d’Auxerre Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2014 Côtes d’Auxerre Bourgogne Blanc from the Gueguens is a good juicy wine for near-term drinking. The wine offers up a fine aromatic blend of pear, a touch of tangerine, chalky soil tones, a bit of oyster shell and a touch of iodine in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and succulent, with good acids and fine length and grip, if not a ton of complexity. A good basic bottling. 2016-2023. **88**.

2015 Petit Chablis- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2015 Petit Chablis has also been in bottle for only one month at the time of Les Grands Jours and the wine was still showing very well. The bouquet is bright, pure and expressive, offering up a mix of pear, lemon, flinty minerality, orange peel and dried flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and shows excellent cut and grip for the vintage, with a good core and a long, quite classy finish. This is very, very good Petit Chablis. 2016-2025+. **89+**.

2015 Chablis- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2015 Chablis AC from the domaine is a bit riper in personality than the Petit Chablis, but was not showing as precise at the time of the tasting. That said, this was also bottled a month

ago and perhaps it is not as well recovered as the Petit Chablis. The nose offers up a more fruit-forward blend of pear, apple, a dollop of oyster shell and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, plump and juicy, with good mid-palate depth, sound framing acids and a fairly long, succulent finish. This is more along the lines of what I expect in general from the 2015 vintage in Chablis. 2016-2020. **88.**

2014 Chablis “Vosgros”- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2014 Vosgros is a good bottle of wine in the making, but it is not quite as precise in its expression of minerality as one used to find from some of the other premier cru vineyard sources from the Gueguens from days gone by. The wine offers up a good nose of grapefruit, tart orange, flinty soil tones, citrus peel and plenty of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and still quite tightly-knit, with a fine core, bright acids and a long, still quite primary finish. The focus is not great here today, but that may simply be a function of the wine’s youth and more precision may emerge with a bit of time in the bottle. The wine certainly has good stuffing at the core and plenty of length and grip. 2018-2035+. **90.**

2014 Chablis “Vaucoupin”- Domaine Céline et Frédéric Gueguen

The 2014 Vaucoupin from the Gueguen family is a bit more focused at the present time than the Vosgros and is a fine example in the making. The youthful bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of yellow fruit, oyster shell, white flowers, beeswax and a stylish topnote of lemon zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and classy, with a fine core, excellent balance and grip and a long, focused and youthful finish. A lovely bottle. 2018-2035. **91+.**

Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils (Chablis)

The team from Christian Moreau Père et Fils did not have their Hospices de Clos bottling with them this year, but had a fine range of the domaine’s 2014s beyond this flagship cuvée. One of these days I am going to find time to add this excellent domaine to my annual range of cellar visits, as I am long overdue to taste here sur place. But, as you can see from the notes below, they have made some simply stellar 2014s.

2014 Chablis- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

The 2014 Chablis AC from Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils was not bottled until September of 2015 and was showing beautifully at Les Grands Jours. The quite complex bouquet wafts from the glass in a vibrant blend of grapefruit, lemon, flinty soil tones, a touch of smokiness, citrus peel and a nice dollop of wet stone minerality. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and well-balanced, with fine purity on the attack, a good core and a long, focused and racy finish, A high class *villages*. 2016-2035+. **89+.**

2014 Chablis “Vaillons”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

The domaine’s 2014 Vaillons is outstanding and one of the best premier crus that I tasted during the whole day at Les Grands Jours. The bouquet is pure, vibrant and very expressive, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of lemon, grapefruit, beeswax, chalky minerality, white flowers and a gently savory topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively complex out of the blocks, with excellent focus and grip, a fine girdle of acidity and a long, racy finish that shows off outstanding mineral drive. Fine, fine juice. 2020-2055. **93.**

2014 Chablis “Vaudésir”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

The 2014 Vaudésir from Domaine Moreau is also outstanding, but it presents a more properly reserved profile than the excellent Vaillons out of the blocks. The nose is a lovely constellation of grapefruit, tart orange, smoky overtones, wet stone minerality, orange peel and

just a bit of straw in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a still quite primary personality, brisk acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and very young finish. This has excellent potential, but it will need some time in the cellar to blossom. 2021-2060+. **94.**

2014 Chablis “Valmur”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

Not surprisingly, the domaine’s example of 2014 Valmur shows more depth and muscle than the fine Vaudésir. The bouquet is still quite primary, but there is a great wine lurking here in its blend of pink grapefruit, tart orange, flinty minerality, a touch of beeswax, citrus peel and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, really, really solid in the mid-palate, with bracing acids, laser-like focus and a very, very long, pure and racy finish. All this outstanding example of Valmur needs is patience not to open it too soon! 2024-2065. **95.**

2014 Chablis “Les Clos”- Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils

The 2014 Les Clos from Domaine Christian Moreau Père et Fils is even a hair better than the Valmur! The bouquet wafts from the glass in a complex and very sophisticated constellation of grapefruit, lime, a touch of the pear to come, kaleidoscopic minerality, a touch of anise, spring flowers and just a whisper of incipient beeswax in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and racy, with a great, great core, superb mineral drive on the backend and a very, very long, focused and youthful finish. A stunning Clos. 2024-2065. **95+.**



Gevrey-Chambertin

Maison Pierre Bourée Fils (Gevrey-Chambertin)

There are lots of changes in the works at Maison Pierre Bourée et Fils, as they were in the midst of the construction of a new cellar and cuverie just out behind their main offices on the Route Nationale, which will make elevage and bottling far easier here in the years to come. Presently, the Vallet family has a second cellar facility in Morey St. Denis where they do their bottling, which requires casks to be moved there later in the winter in anticipation of bottling, and it will greatly ease the workload on the cellar team to have all of the facilities centrally located in the years to come. The plan is to finish everything in time for the 2016 harvest and the project was right on schedule at the time of my visit. As is so often the case when I visit and taste here in the spring, some wines had already been moved to the other cellars for bottling (all of the 2014 whites), whereas others were a bit reduced and tough to taste and other cuvées were absolutely singing. This has always been the case for as long as I can remember and I never worry about wines that are not on form and simply form my impressions of the vintage here on the wines that are in a happy mood for tasting. The estate has been producing superb, old school Burgundies for far longer than I have been drinking wine, and as some of my first great bottles of Burgundy wore the Pierre Bourée label, I am always content to simply see which wines are showing well at the time of my visit and report on those wines. There are some absolutely superb 2014s in the cellars here, and I am sure that the wines that were a bit grumpy at the time of my visit will be spot on by the time they find their way into bottle and then onto collector's cellars or restraint wine lists. This remains one of the fine, old school small négociants in Burgundy and I continue to be delighted by the quality of the wines that the Vallet family turns out under the Pierre Bourée et Fils label. I should also remind readers that this is one of the few cellars in Burgundy these days where there remains stocks of older vintages for sale, and it is well worth enquiring of the Vallets for a list of older vintages that might be available, as the wines routinely age long and gracefully and I would love to see a few more restaurant wine lists around the globe with mature Pierre Bourée wines listed!

2014 Auxey-Duresses- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2014 Auxey-Duresses- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils is a pretty, red fruity middleweight this year. The nose offers up a stylish blend of cherries, forest floor, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and focused, with a good core, silky tannins and nice length and grip on the finish. There may be even a bit more stuffing lurking here than the wine is currently showing, and if this is the case, bump it up a couple of points. 2016-2025. **87+**.

2014 Aloxe-Corton- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2014 Aloxe AC was due for its racking, as there was just a touch of VA on the backend. However, underneath this is a lovely wine, offering up a nice, meaty nose of red and black cherries, roasted venison, woodsmoke, cocoa and a fine base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and nicely structured, with a good core, moderate tannins and a long, bouncy finish. Good juice. 2019-2045. **89+**.

2014 Santenay “Gravières”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2014 Gravières from Maison Bourée is a good, red fruity middleweight in the making. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of cherries, gamebird, nutskin, woodsmoke, mustard seed and chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and nascently complex, with good transparency, modest tannins and sneaky length and grip on the well-

balanced finish. This is another wine that I suspect has a touch more mid-palate stuffing that it was showing at the time of my visit, and if this is the case, then my score will be conservative. 2018-2040. **88+**.

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2014 Gevrey AC here was a touch reduced at the time of my visit, but there are good raw materials here underneath the bit of reduction. The nose eventually offers up (after a bit of swirling) notes of red and black cherries, grilled meats, dark soil tones, cocoa and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely chewy in personality, with a fine core of sappy fruit, lovely soil signature and a long, modestly tannic finish. A fine AC in the making. 2019-2040+. **89**.

2014 Fixin “la Croix Blanche”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

We tasted the 2014 Fixin “la Croix Blanche” out of a new barrel, as the older casks were a bit reductive, but this wine will only be raised in about twenty percent new wood this year. The wine is excellent in 2014, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of cassis, sweet dark berries, lovely minerality, bitter chocolate and roasted venison. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, suave tannins and a long, nascently complex finish. Fixin can sometimes be a touch on the rustic side, but the inherent elegance of the vintage has really polished this into a little gem in the cellar and this will be a fine value. 2019-2045. **90+**.

2014 Nuits St. Georges “Perrières”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

Over the years I have had some marvelous Nuits St. Georges bottlings from Maison Bourée, and the 2014 Perrières is destined to be another one with some bottle age. The first class nose wafts from the glass in a mix of plums, cherries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, cocoa and a fine underlying signature of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully structured, with a fine core of fruit, lovely soil signature and a long, focused and ripe tannic finish. This is a classic example that reminds me quite a bit of the Robert Chevillon version in terms of style. Fine juice. 2022-2060. **92+**.

2014 Nuits St. Georges “Cuvée Guillaume Lahaye”- Hospices de Nuits (Pierre Bourée Fils)

This wine was purchased primarily for the estate’s Japanese clients and was the first time I had tasted a Hospices de Nuits bottling from the Vallet family. Monsieur Vallet cautioned me that this was one hundred percent new wood, as this is how their clients requested its *elevage*, but implied that he would have been happy to rack it out of new barrels into older ones along the way. The nose is deep and fine, offering up scents of cassis, espresso, gamebird, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with a good core, ripe tannins and a long, well-balanced and quite classy finish. This is a fine example and might have been even superior if it could have been racked into older casks for the second half of its *elevage*. 2022-2050. **92**.

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The estate’s flagship bottling of Clos de la Justice was being bottled the day of my visit, but the 2014 Champeaux was on hand and singing. The quite black fruity bouquet is deep and excellent, wafting from the glass in a mix of dark berries, black plums, woodsmoke, grilled meats, dark soil tones and cocoa. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely sappy at the core, with fine focus and structure, ripe, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the primary and very promising finish. A lovely example. 2022-2060. **92+**.

2014 Charmes-Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

As readers know, I am a big fan of this bottling *chez* Vallet and the 2014 is another classic in the making. The excellent bouquet delivers a constellation of black cherries, plums, grilled meats, dark soil tones, a touch of mustard seed, woodsmoke, dark chocolate and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, soil-driven and nascently complex finish. Good Charmes-Chambertin is so dramatically under-appreciated these days and this is a stellar bottle in the making. 2023-2075. **94.**

2014 Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2014 Chambertin from Maison Pierre Bourée Fils is also exceptional in this vintage. The classic nose wafts from the glass in a blend of black plums, red and black cherries, a beautifully complex base of soil, woodsmoke, grilled meats and a deft framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine complexity, impressive focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and outstanding length and grip on the poised and primary finish. I have been tasting here for decades and this was the first time I learned that this bottling hails from vines planted in Clos de Bèze! 2025-2075. **95.**

2014 Clos de la Roche- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2014 Clos de la Roche is a bit more high-toned in personality than the Chambertin, but this too is an excellent example. The bouquet delivers a fine blend of cherries, beetroot, roasted venison, cocoa, a fine base of soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very transparent in personality this year, with a fine core, excellent balance and nascent complexity and a long, suavely tannic and tangy finish. Another excellent wine! 2024-2075. **94.**

2014 Clos Vougeot- Maison Pierre Bourée Fils

The 2014 Clos Vougeot from the Vallet family is a big, meaty example of the vineyard and another very promising bottle. The nose offers up a complex blend of black cherries, cassis, grilled game, bonfire, a fine base of soil and a deft framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly broad-shouldered this year, with good depth at the core, firm, ripe tannins and fine grip and focus on the long and youthful finish. Good juice. 2024-2075. **93+.**

Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy (Gevrey-Chambertin)

The father and son team of Gérard and Philippe Harmand have made excellent wines once again in 2014 and I continue to believe that this is one of the finest and most underrated domaines in all of Gevrey-Chambertin. All of the wines had already been bottled by the time of my visit on the 25th of March, with the exception of the Lavaux St. Jacques and the Mazis-Chambertin, both of which were still in tank and ready for bottling in the next week or so. The Lavaux had just been filtered the day before my visit and was a tad out of sorts, but the Mazis was still in fine form. The remainder of the range was showing no ill effects from their recent bottlings and the wines were classic expressions of the 2014 vintage, with beautiful fruit tones, lovely minerality and plenty of typicité as one moved from cru to cru. It was certainly not a surprise, but this was one outstanding collection of 2014s!

2014 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2014 Bourgogne from the Harmands had been bottled in January of 2016 and was showing nicely at the time of my visit. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of cherries, grilled meats, a fine base of soil, spice tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is

medium-full, pure and juicy, with a just a touch of backend tannin perking up the long finish. A serious example that will actually drink with generosity out of the blocks. 2016-2030. **87.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2014 Gevrey *villages* was also in fine form at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of red and black cherries, dark soil tones, grilled meats, mustard seed and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, fine-grained tannins and a long finish that will be quite velvety with a bit of bottle age. 2019-2045. **89.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “en Jouise”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2014 en Jouise from Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy is also a lovely wine in the making and will also drink with style with only a few years of cellaring. This is far more black fruity than the straight Gevrey this year. The bouquet delivers a fine blend of black cherries, cassis, dark chocolate, a touch of meatiness, fresh herb tones, black minerality and a hint of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite classy in profile, with a good core, modest tannins and a long, focused and vibrant finish. Good juice. 2019-2045+. **89+.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos Prieur”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The Harmand family’s 2014 Clos Prieur is an excellent wine. As readers will recall, this is a combination of very old vines in the *villages* section of the vineyard and a portion in the premier cru part. The nose on the 2014 jumps from the glass in a classic blend of cassis, grilled meats, dark soil tones, espresso, a bit of cigar smoke and a touch of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very classy, with a fine core, suave tannins and impressive length and grip on the complex finish. Fine juice. 2021-2050. **91.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The inherent elegance of the 2014 vintage is very much in evidence in the domaine’s old vine bottling from Gevrey, as the wine offers up a lovely constellation of black cherries, sweet dark berries, grilled meats, bitter chocolate, just a touch of new wood and a fine base of Gevrey’s black minerality. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine, sappy core of fruit, ripe tannins and a very long, tangy and soil-driven finish. High class juice. 2021-2050. **91+.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Bousière”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2014 la Bousière from the Harmand family is also very lovely, with just a bit more structure out of the blocks than the top *villages* bottlings. The bouquet is a fine blend of black cherries, dark berries, espresso, woodsmoke, a complex base of dark soil and a deft framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely defined by its excellent minerality this year, with very good depth in the mid-palate, ripe tannins and fine length and grip on the still fairly youthful finish. This will need some time to blossom. 2023-2060. **92.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Perrière”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy Perrière is one of the finest examples of this vineyard to be found in the village, and I really like the profile of the wine in 2014. The very refined bouquet offers up a complex blend of sweet dark berries, cassis, black minerality, espresso, incipient notes of the grilled meat and a bit of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and focused, with a silky attack, a superb core of very pure fruit, excellent transparency and a long, fine-grained and vibrant finish. This is high class juice in the making. 2021-2060. **93.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2014 Champeaux from the Harmand family is also outstanding. The bouquet delivers a fine blend of black cherries, cassis, meaty tones, espresso, a fine base of Gevrey’s black

minerality, a touch of spicy oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very transparent in personality this year, with a sappy core, lovely focus and balance and a long, ripely tannic and seamless finish. Lovely. 2023-2060+. **93+**.

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Lavaux St. Jacques”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2014 Lavaux was a touch cranky after having just been filtered, but its overall quality was still very much in evidence. The bouquet is a superb, black fruity mélange of cassis, black cherries, espresso, grilled meats, dark soil tones, cigar smoke and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and ripely tannic, with a lovely core, fine balance and grip and a long, nicely transparent finish. This was not as impeccably balanced as the rest of the range, but it had just been filtered, and I am sure that the focus will return promptly once it recovers. Fine juice. 2024-2060+. **93-94**.

2014 Mazis-Chambertin- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy

The 2014 Mazis-Chambertin from Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy was also still in tank and awaiting its bottling in the coming weeks, but it was a tad less grumpy than the Lavaux St. Jacques at the time of my visit. The nose jumps from the glass in a nascently complex blend of dark berries, cassis, nice meaty tones, black minerality, a touch of bonfire, French roast and spicy wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a rock solid core, excellent focus and grip and a very long, very pure and ripely tannic finish. A superb example in the making. 2024-2075. **95**.



Morey St. Denis

Domaine Taupenot-Merme (Morey St. Denis)

Romain Taupenot is really making excellent wines these days and his 2014s are another very, very strong set from top to bottom. He was a little apprehensive when I made my appointment, as he had fairly recently bottled up the entire cellar of 2014s, but the wines ended up showing beautifully. I will try to get to this domaine during my November round of visits to taste the 2015s, so that we do not have to taste the wines again soon after the mise, as my gut feeling is that the 2015 vintage will be another that is generally bottled on the earlier side. Romain Taupenot is one of the vignerons that is absolutely enamored with the quality and style of the 2014 red Burgundies and he feels that this vintage will be an absolute classic with sufficient bottle age. The combination of pure, generous fruit tones and superb fidelity to the underlying terroir of each wine is very much in evidence in the domaine's 2014s and this is likely to be one of Romain's finest two or three vintages of his career thus far. As we were working our way through the lineup, all of a sudden Romain commented "damn, I forgot to prepare bottles of the Hospices de Nuits wines for you this year", so I have no notes on these cuvées from the domaine this year. As Romain Taupenot is one of the more active buyers from the Hospices de Nuits, often splitting lots with his good friend Laurent Lignier, I was sorry not to be able to taste these wines this year, but maybe I can circle back around to them in November when I am tasting the 2015s out of barrel.

2014 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Bourgogne Rouge from Domaine Taupenot-Merme had been bottled only three weeks prior to my visit, but was showing very well indeed. The nose offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, a nice touch of dark soil and a bit of currant leaf in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and well-balanced, with a good core, fine focus and lovely length and grip on the tangy and very modestly tannic finish. Good juice. 2018-2030. **88.**

2014 Auxey-Duresses "Premier Cru"- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Auxey-Duresses "Premier Cru" from Monsieur Taupenot was also very much on form at the time of my visit, delivering a bouquet of red and black cherries, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, woodsmoke, gamebird and espresso. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with fine mid-palate depth, bright acids and a long, gently tannic and very classy finish. A lovely example. 2020-2050. **90.**

2014 Morey St. Denis- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Morey *villages* is very pure on the both the nose and palate and nicely black fruity this year. The wine wafts from the glass in an aromatic constellation of cassis, black cherries, dark chocolate, a fine base of soil and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and focused, with a good core, ripe tannins, bright acids and a long, vibrant and quite promising finish. 2020-2050. **90+.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Chambolle AC from Domaine Taupenot-Merme is also a very fine bottle in the making, delivering a fine nose of black cherries, a touch of plums, dark chocolate, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a lovely base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and well-balanced, with suave tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, tangy and classy finish. 2021-2050. **90.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

Of the three *villages* wines here, the 2014 Gevrey seems to have the most sappiness at the core, but as all three were just recently bottled, it may well be that they will all show this characteristic once they have more time out from the *mise*. In any case, the 2014 Gevrey here is excellent, offering up scents of red and black cherries, a touch of gamebird, black minerality, mustard seed and a nice topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and shows nice sappy depth in the mid-palate, with fine transparency, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and well-balanced finish. 2021-2050. **91.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “la Combe d’Orveau”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Combe d’Orveau was really singing at the time of my visit, jumping from the glass in a superb mix of red and black cherries, gamebird, dark soil tones, espresso, mustard seed, a touch of cedary wood and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and deep at the core, with great backend energy and sappiness to its fruit component, suave tannins and a very long, soil-driven and complex finish. Fine, fine juice. 2022-2060. **92+.**

2014 Morey St. Denis “la Riotte”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 la Riotte from Romain Taupenot is also quite fine and absolutely classic in personality. The bouquet delivers a lovely constellation of cherries, beetroot, a complex base of soil, gamebird, coffee, mustard seed and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and impressively transparent, with a fine core, tangy acids and a very long, ripely tannic finish. A lovely example. 2022-2060. **92.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Bel Air”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

I love good examples of the premier cru of Bel Air, which I do not get to taste as often as I would like, but which always show such unique personality when well made, as is the case with this 2014. The first class nose wafts from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, black Gevrey minerality, espresso, gamebird, woodsmoke and a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a fine, sappy core, ripe tannins, impeccable focus and grip and a very long, pure and elegant finish. All this needs is some time in the cellar to blossom. 2023-2060+. **92+.**

2014 Nuits St. Georges “les Pruliers”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

Romain Taupenot always makes a very strong example of Pruliers and the 2014 is no exception. As I found in cellars such as Domaines Robert Chevillon and Henri Gouges, the inherent elegance of the 2014 vintage really adds a nice early glossiness to the young Pruliers this year, and this is also very evident with the Domaine Taupenot version. The bouquet is deep, pure and nascently complex, offering up scents of cherries, pomegranate, fresh herb tones, a bit of venison, vinesmoke, nutskin and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and sappy at the core, with stunning transparency, fine-grained tannins and outstanding length and grip on the very energetic and complex finish. This is a superb bottle in the making. 2025-2065+. **93+.**

2014 Corton “Rognet”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Corton “Rognet” is really superb this year, offering up a deep and nascently complex nose of red and black cherries, bonfires, coffee, stony soil tones, venison and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure on the attack and nicely structured, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and grip and a long, ripely tannic and quite soil-driven finish. Classic young Corton. 2025-2075. **94.**

2014 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Charmes-Chambertin from Domaine Taupenot-Merme is outstanding on both the nose and palate. The pure and complex nose wafts from the glass in a classic blend of red and black cherries, gamebird, mustard seed, coffee, a fine, complex base of soil, smoky overtones and a nice touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and beautifully sappy at the core, with fine-grained tannins, lovely focus and grip and a very long, very pure and absolutely vibrant finish. Fine, fine juice. 2023-2075. **94+**.

2014 Mazoyères-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Mazoyères-Chambertin from Romain Taupenot is equally refined as the Charmes, but more black fruity in personality, as is typical of this bottling. The superb bouquet delivers a complex constellation of sweet dark berries, black plums, espresso, bonfire, dark soil tones, vanillin oak and a distinct topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very refined on the attack, with lovely mid-palate depth, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and nascently complex finish. 2025-2075. **94+**.

2014 Auxey-Duresses Blanc- Domaine Taupenot-Merme

The 2014 Auxey-Duresses Blanc was the only white wine I tasted on this visit to Domaine Taupenot-Merme and it was quite lovely. The bouquet offers up a pure and vibrant mélange of apple, pear, fresh almond, excellent, chalky minerality and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and focused, with a good core, lovely poise and balance and a long, vibrant finish. Good juice. 2016-2025. **90**.

Chambolle-Musigny

Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig (Chambolle-Musigny)

Gilbert Felettig is really making exceptional wines and every year it seems he has a new surprise to add to his lineup. This year he has a new Morey St. Denis AC bottling, which he makes from grapes he trades a neighbor for, as well as bottling his Vosne-Romanée “Reignots” on its own, rather than blending it in with his other small premier cru holdings in the village. There is also another new premier cru bottling in Chambolle-Musigny in 2014, from the vineyard of Lavrottes, where the family used to sell the grapes to Olivier Bernstein, but have retained the production here beginning in this vintage to make their own version. Monsieur Felettig began harvesting in 2014 on September 12th in his parcel of Gevrey “la Justice” and finished the picking at the end of the month, on the 29th of September with the last of his pinot noir grapes. The villages bottlings and the regional wines were all bottled in January of 2016, the premier crus at the start of March, or three weeks prior to my visit. He has used a touch higher percentage of new oak for a couple of the wines this year, which normally would not excite me, but I could not detect any difference in the wines of 2014 that were raised in a higher percentage of new wood. I actually left this visit, blown away by the quality and thinking that I must be getting “soft” when it comes to new oak! The quality of the range of villages bottlings this year was particularly exciting, as these wines across the board exude an almost 2010-like sappiness at their cores, great soil expression and suave, polished structures that will carry them far in bottle. Many will be premier cru quality when they reach their apogees! Moving up the ladder, the entire range of premier crus chez Felettig this year are brilliant and again, really seem like a lineup of 2010s in style and quality, as there is a depth of fruit here that harkens back to the very low yields of that magical vintage. To my palate, the 2014s here are the finest range

Gilbert Felettig has crafted so far in his career and they are exceptional wines of depth, purity and soil signature that will age long and gracefully in bottle. Chapeau!

2014 Haute Côte de Beaune Blanc- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 Haute Côte de Beaune Blanc from Gilbert Felettig is produced from twenty year-old vines and is quite a pretty example. The nose wafts from the glass in a bright and bouncy blend of lemon, green apple, salty soil tones and a topnote of lemongrass. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and zesty, with fine focus and good grip and length on the well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2016-2023. **88.**

2014 Coteaux Bourguignons Rouge- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 Coteaux Bourguignons from Domaine Felettig is comprised of a blend of two-thirds pinot noir and one-third gamay. The wine is quite lovely and vibrant, offering up scents of cherries, a touch of cranberry, woodsmoke and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is quite full-bodied, focused and impressively sappy at the core, with a touch of backend tannin and good length on the vibrant and bouncy finish. A lovely example. 2016-2025. **87+.**

2014 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 Bourgogne rouge has more depth and structure than the above wine, while also sharing that nice sappiness at the core. Monsieur Felettig's vines lie between Chambolle and Gilly, right alongside those of Ghislaine Barthod. The wine was raised in ten percent new wood this year. The bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, cocoa, woodsmoke, a nice base of soil and a touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and with lovely focus and balance, a nice sappy core and a bit of backend tannin to carry the wine nicely in bottle. A really lovely Bourgogne that will need a few years to blossom. 2018-2030. **88.**

2014 Haute Côte de Nuits Rouge- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The domaine's Haute Côte de Nuits is really strong in 2014, offering up lovely purity and again, sappiness at the core. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, a fine base of soil, a touch of violet and just a bit of nutty oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with fine focus and grip, lovely balance and a long, modestly tannic and tangy finish. Good juice. 2020-2040. **88+.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 Chambolle AC from the Felettigs is a very strong example, offering up a fine bouquet of black cherries, red plums, a touch of bitter chocolate, gamebird, chalky soil tones, new oak and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent structure, fine-grained tannins and a long, well-balanced and still fairly primary finish. This will need time, but will be a fine example. 2021-2050. **90.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny "Clos le Village"- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

These are forty year-old vines, whereas those for the straight Chambolle are a bit closer to fifty these days. Nevertheless, the Clos le Village is just a touch more refined and precise on both the nose and palate than the above wine, delivering a really lovely bouquet of red and black cherries, chalky minerality, woodsmoke, mustard seed, rose petals and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and tightly-knit out of the blocks, with a fine core, superb backend focus and vibrancy and a long, ripely tannic finish. This will just nose out the straight Chambolle in 2014, but both are excellent. 2022-2055. **91.**

2014 Morey St. Denis- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The new bottling of Morey *villages* at Domaine Felettig hails from the parcels in the *lieux à dits* of Trés Girard, les Cognées and les Chenevery and includes forty percent whole clusters in 2014. The wine is superb and is a fine new addition, offering up a bright bouquet of red plums, cherries, cocoa, dark soil tones, gamebird, fresh herbs and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely sappy at the core, with fine focus and grip, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, tangy and very well-balanced finish. Fine juice. 2022-2055. **91.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Justice”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 la Justice from Gilbert Felettig offers up an excellent and pure bouquet of cherries, red plums, dark soil tones, a touch of meatiness, mustard seed, cocoa and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very, very refined this year, with a fine sappy core, excellent focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and a long, poised and promising finish. This will need five years in the cellar to blossom, but it will be lovely once it has started to open up. 2021-2050. **91.**

2014 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 Vosne-Romanée AC from Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig is another very strong *villages* this year, with excellent purity and nascent complexity. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of raspberries, cherries, cocoa, a fine base of minerality, woodsmoke and new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with fine depth of sappy fruit, excellent transparency and a long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. Fine juice. 2022-2050. **91.**

2014 Nuits St. Georges- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

Two-thirds of the blend for the Nuits AC bottling come from vines on the Prémieux side of the village, and one-third from the Vosne side. The wine this year was raised in fifty percent new oak, but does not show this at all and tasted blind, I would have guessed more like thirty percent. The bouquet is very refined, reflecting the style of the vintage beautifully in its mélange of cherries, blood orange, a touch of pomegranate, nutskin, a fine base of soil, vanillin oak and a nice touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully soil-driven in personality, with a sappy core, ripe tannins and a very long, gently chewy and youthful finish. This will need a bit of time to blossom, but it will prove to be a supremely elegant bottle of Nuits when it is ready for primetime. 2023-2055+. **91+.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Combottes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 Combottes *chez* Felettig is outstanding. The superb nose wafts from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, cocoa, gamebirds, a lovely base of dark soil tones, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with lovely depth at the core, suave, fine-grained tannins and a very long, beautifully-balanced and sappy finish. I love the combination here of sappy fruit and really pure soil signature. 2024-2060+. **92+.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Feusselottes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 Feusselottes is excellent this year, but it is probably the most structured of the premier crus out of the blocks and will need a good decade to blossom completely. The vines here were planted in 1956, so they are closing in on sixty years of age. The bouquet is still a bit marked by its new oak, but is absorbing it nicely amongst the scents of red and black cherries, cocoa, marvelously complex base of soil tones, gamebird and violets in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with lovely purity on the attack, a core that gets very sappy with a bit of air, and a very long, focused and ripely tannic finish. This was raised entirely in new oak this year, but will carry it well. 2024-2065+. **94.**



Pollarded trees lining the road up from Vougeot center to Chambolle-Musigny.

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Lavrottes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

Les Lavrottes is a premier cru that I do not cross paths with too often. It lies just below the southern end of Bonnes-Mares, sandwiched between les Baudes and Gruenchers on the slope. The vines were younger before, which is why the Felettigs sold the grapes, but they celebrated their twentieth birthday in 2014 and the domaine decided that it was time to reclaim them for their lineup. The 2014 includes forty percent whole clusters and offers up a fine bouquet of red plums, cherries, cocoa, violets, a nice base of soil tones and a fine framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and impressively suave on the attack, with a sappy core, moderate tannins and very good length and grip on the focused finish. A lovely new addition to the portfolio *chez* Felettig. 2021-2050. **92.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Fuées”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

As I noted last year, the domaine has two parcels of vines in les Fuées, with one planted to fifty year-old vines on the border with les Cras (and right next to Christophe Roumier’s rows there) and the other, which are twenty years of age and lie at the other end of the vineyard right next to Bonnes-Mares. The 2014 Domaine Felettig les Fuées is one of the more reserved premier crus out of the blocks (or perhaps more shut down after the *mise?*), but with some coaxing delivers a fine nose of red and black cherries, chalky soil tones, a nice touch of Bonnes-Mares-like heather, violets and new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, focused and very suave on the

attack, with a full-bodied and tightly-knit format, very good sappiness down in the core, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the poised and focused finish. 2024-2065+. **93+**.

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Carrières”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The 2014 les Carrières is another very promising premier cru, but like the les Fuées, it was a little reticent at the time of my visit. The bouquet is pure and blossoms with some swirling to offer up notes of red and black cherries, a touch of nutskin, gamebird, a lovely base of soil, fresh herbs, new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripely tannic, with fine depth at the core, ripe, well-integrated tannins and a long, soil-driven finish. Fine juice. 2024-2065+. **94**.

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Charmes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

As I mentioned last year, the domaine’s parcel in les Charmes is very well-situated, lying directly across from the les Amoureuses of Domaine Robert Groffier. These are sixty year-old vines and only produced thirty hectoliters per hectare in 2014. The resulting wine is superb, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, a beautiful base of chalky soil tones, woodsmoke, incipient notes of gamebird and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and sappy down deep, with ripe tannins, fine focus and grip and a very long, pure and youthful finish. This is going to be excellent! 2024-2065. **94**.

2014 Vosne-Romanée “Reignots”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

Monsieur Felettig has decided to bottle each of his small parcels of Vosne premier crus separately this year, so there will be individual bottlings of les Chaumes, Reignots and Petits Monts. There was enough production in 2014 to make one, four hundred liter cask of this beautiful Reignots, which is planted with fifty year-old vines. The bouquet is outstanding, offering up scents of raspberries, cherries, Vosne spice tones, a touch of smokiness, cedar and a really lovely vein of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent in personality, with a beautiful core of red fruit, fine-grained tannins, excellent focus and nascent complexity and a very, very long, tangy finish. Great juice. 2024-2065. **94**.

2014 Echézeaux- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig

The Domaine Felettig vines lie in the *lieu à dit* of les Treux, but these are some of the youngest vines they own, as they are only fifteen years of age. The wine has really excelled in 2014, but one has to imagine that as these vines get older, the distance between the Echézeaux and the domaine’s excellent lineup of premier crus will increase. The bouquet of the 2014 offers up a gorgeous and red fruity blend of raspberries, cherries, blood orange, duck, Vosne spice tones, a fine base of dark soil, woodsmoke and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and focused, with a fine core, tangy acids and a long, focused and ripely tannic finish. 2022-2060. **94+**.

Pernand-Vergelesses

Domaine Rollin Père et Fils (Pernand-Vergelesses)

Domaine Rollin Père et Fils has made excellent 2014s. Rémi Rollin was in very good spirits at the time of my visit, as he was very content with the quality of his wines from 2014, despite the fact that there was again some hail damage this year in some of his parcels and yields were correspondingly small in those vineyards. But, as he said, “this is nature and we have to adapt to what we are given each year.” So, for example, he has only produced fifteen to twenty hectoliters per hectare in Corton-Charlemagne in this vintage, due to the storm on June 28th cutting back the crop. All of the wines had been bottled at the time of my visit, though over a bit of a range of dates, as the wines were ready for bottling at different times this year. With the

exception of the Haute Côtes de Beaune Rouge, which was bottled in September of 2015, all of the other reds here had been bottled in January of 2016 and seemed to have nicely recovered from their mise by my visit on the 24th of January. These are a superb set of 2014s from a domaine that is quickly becoming one of my favorites for delivering exceptional quality at very fair prices!

Vins Blancs

2014 Bourgogne Aligoté- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2014 Bourgogne Aligoté from Domaine Rollin is really a lovely example this year, wafting from the glass in a quite classy blend of pear, lime, stony minerality and white flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is crisp, fullish and nicely focused, with a good core, fine mineral drive and a sneaky long and classy finish. Good juice. 2016-2025. **88.**

2014 Bourgogne Haute Côtes de Beaune Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The parcel of vines for the Haute Côtes de Beaune Blanc bottling hail from a parcel just outside of the limits of Pernand and the wine really has a lot of Pernand character to it. This wine was bottled in August of 2015, after having been raised entirely in older *foudre*. The 2014 is a terrific bargain in the making, as it offers up a superb bouquet of pear, apple, lime blossoms, chalky soil tones and a nice touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and elegant, with fine focus and grip, a good core, ripe acids and fine length on the really quite complex finish. A delicious wine. 2016-2030. **89+.**

2014 Pernand Vergelesses Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2014 Pernand *villages* Blanc was bottled one month later than the above wine and it too is outstanding this year. The wine offers up a complex and vibrant bouquet of pear, lime, a touch of the *crème patissière* to come, spring flowers, crystalline minerality, orange zest and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and racy, with an excellent core, lovely balance and plenty of grip on the long and vibrant finish. This is terrific AC. 2016-2035. **91.**

2014 Pernand Vergelesses “les Clous” Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2014 les Clous bottling from Domaine Rollin is a bit more reserved in personality than the AC, but equally fine. The lovely and youthful bouquet offers up scents of apple, pear, chalky minerality, a touch of beeswax, white flowers and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows really beautiful purity to its fruit tones, with fine core, bright acids and excellent cut and grip on the long and still quite primary finish. All this wine needs is a bit of time in the cellar to blossom. 2018-2035+. **91+.**

2014 Pernand Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles” Blanc- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The vineyard of Sous Frétilles is an excellent *terroir* and I often find this wine to be the mini-Corton-Charlemagne of Burgundy. The 2014 from Monsieur Rollin is absolutely superb, wafting from the glass in a nicely reserved blend of pear, lemon, a hint of the pastry cream to come, chalky minerality, spring flowers, lemon zest and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is very, very pure and precise, with a full-bodied format, superb mid-palate intensity, lovely focus and grip and a simply superb girdle of acidity adding bounce and cut on the very long finish. A beautiful wine. 2019-2040. **93.**

2014 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2014 Corton-Charlemagne from Domaine Rollin is a stunning example. The bouquet is deep, pure and nascently complex, offering up scents of pear, apple, a complex base of chalky minerality, lemon zest, *crème patissière*, lime blossoms, vanillin oak and an almost salty topnote.

On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with great focus and grip, lovely purity and delineation and a very long, very zesty and youthful finish. Great juice in the making. 2020-2060. **96.**



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

Vins Rouges

2014 Bourgogne Haute Côtes de Beaune Rouge- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2014 Haute Côtes de Beaune Rouge is a very pretty and nicely red fruity wine, wafting from the glass in a blend of cherries, a touch of quince, woodsmoke, herb tones and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, forward and quite tasty, with a good core, fine base of soil and a long, gently tannic finish. This is just a touch rustic in personality, but not in a bad way. 2016-2025. **87.**

2014 Pernand Vergelesses- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2014 Pernand AC *rouge* from Domaine Rollin is a fine bottle, with a more youthful personality than the above wine and in need of a couple of years in the cellar to blossom. The bouquet delivers a primary blend of red and black cherries, coffee, a nice touch of meatiness, woodsmoke, soil and a bit of pepper in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and shows very good mid-palate depth, with moderate tannins, fine focus and a long, soil-driven finish. This will be quite tasty in a few years. 2019-2035. **88+.**

2014 Savigny-lès-Beaune “aux Grands Liards”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The Rollin family’s parcel of sixty year-old vines in Grands Liards have really produced a dynamite example of the vintage in 2014. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a blend of cherries, red currants, woodsmoke, gamebirds, coffee, stony soil tones and a nice touch of mustard seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy at the core, with fine transparency, bright acids and a long, complex and nicely structured finish. Fine, fine juice. 2021-2050. **92.**

2014 Aloxe-Corton- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The 2014 Aloxe-Corton from Domaine Rollin Père et Fils is also an excellent bottle in the making, offering up a nascently complex bouquet of red and black cherries, venison, iron soil tones, woodsmoke, coffee and a nice touch of coriander seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, fine soil drive and a long, well-balanced and ripely tannic finish. This will be lovely with three or four years in the cellar. 2019-2045. **91.**

2014 Pernand Vergelesses “les Fichots”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

The Rollin family has very old vines in the premier cru of Fichots, with two-thirds of the vines now sixty years of age and the other third now in excess of eighty years old. The wine has turned out beautifully in 2014, offering up a fine, black fruity nose of black cherries, dark berries, espresso, a fine base of soil, a bit of roasted venison and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite reserved in profile, with a fine core, very good length and grip, ripe tannins and fine balance on the classy and youthful finish. Another excellent red *chez* Rollin. 2022-2050. **92.**

2014 Pernand Vergelesses “Île des Vergelesses”- Domaine Rollin Père et Fils

Two-thirds of the vines in the Rollins’ Île des Vergelesses parcel are also eighty years of age, with the others now thirty years old, as that section had to be replanted after the severe frosts of 1985. This is an excellent young wine, delivering a fine bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of orange peel, coffee, marvelous soil tones, venison, woodsmoke and a Corton-like topnote of coriander seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a nice sense of reserve, a lovely core, great minerality and a very long, ripely tannic and perfectly balanced finish. High class juice. 2024-2060. **93.**

Savigny-lès-Beaune

Domaine Antonin Guyon (Savigny-lès-Beaune)

The 2014 Domaine Guyon red wines were a bit all over the place (in terms of where they were in their evolutionary cycles) at the time of my visit towards the end of March, with some still in tank, some bottled as far back as September of last year and others only bottled the day before my visit! The malolactics here were late on a few of the wines, which accounted for the different times that certain cuvées were ready for bottling. So a little jumping around stylistically was to be expected, but enough wines were showing well for it to be quite obvious that 2014 is another excellent vintage here. Domaine Guyon has been making outstanding red and white wines now for as long as I have been visiting and tasting here sur place, and I get the sense that this remains one of the great, undiscovered sources for top quality Burgundy these days. The wines are very, very good, on both the red and white sides of the ledger, and Domaine Guyon certainly deserves to be a bit better known amongst Burgundy lovers looking for long-lived and very classic examples of their respective terroirs!

Vins Rouges

2014 Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits- Dominique Guyon

The 2014 Haute Côtes de Nuits was bottled in September of 2015 and was showing well at the time of my visit. The bouquet delivers a pretty, red fruity mix of cherries, strawberries, spice tones, a nice base of soil and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, juicy and nicely transparent this year, with solid depth and a long, tangy finish. A very good basic bottling. 2016-2025. **87.**

2014 Chorey-lès-Beaune “Champs Longs”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 Chorey-lès-Beaune was still in tank at the time of my March visit, as this wine had the longest malo of any in the cellars and was several months behind the others in its evolution. The wine was on form at the time of my visit, offering up fine depth in its bouquet of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, a touch of gamebird and a good base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and sappy at the core, with fine-grained tannins and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. This will be a very good example and a fine value. 2018-2035+. **89+.**

2014 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Goudelettes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 les Goudelettes from Domaine Guyon had only been bottled the week before my visit, but had not yet shut down and was showing well. The bouquet offers up a generous nose of red and black cherries, gamebird, bonfires, a fine base of soil and a bit of iron minerality in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely tangy, with modest tannins, a good core and very good focus and grip on the long finish. This is showing just a tad less energy than the Chorey right now, but this may well just be a reflection of the recent *mise*. 2029-2045. **89.**

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Vergelesses”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 les Vergelesses is really a fine example this year, with lovely purity and depth of fruit on the nose coupled to excellent transparency. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a classy blend of black cherries, raw cocoa, a touch of Pernand spice tones, a fine base of stony soil and a bit of *pigeon* blossoming in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a fine core of sappy black fruit, ripe, suave tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and classic finish. This is a terrific bargain in the making! 2022-2050. **91.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “Clos du Village”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 Clos du Villages from Domaine Guyon was bottled at the start of February of 2016, so it was just starting to close down again for a bit of hibernation at the time of my visit. This is a strong Chambolle *villages* this year, delivering a fine bouquet of black cherries, plums, a touch of chocolate, lovely soil tones, woodsmoke and a topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely plush on the attack, with a good core, moderate tannins and fine length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Good juice. 2020-2050. **90+.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny “les Cras”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The Domaine Guyon les Cras is from the *villages* section of this vineyard, but the pedigree of the *terroir* here does not completely disappear as one crosses from the premier cru to the AC sections. The wine offers up a very precise and classy nose of red and black cherries, lovely minerality, a raw cocoa, woodsmoke, gamebird and a nice touch of spices in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with lovely backend mineral drive, fine-grained tannins and impressive length and grip on the bouncy finish. This will need a few years to blossom, but is an excellent example of Chambolle. 2022-2050. **91+.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Justice”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 La Justice had only been bottled the day before my visit and was a bit agitated as a result. Underneath the turbulence is a very good wine for sure, as the bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, dark soil, a touch of meatiness, woodsmoke and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and tangy, with a good core, impressive transparency, fine-grained tannins and a long finish. The focus and detail of the wine are currently hidden from the bottling the day before, but the raw materials here are very strong and I am sure this will be an excellent village wine. 2021-2050. **90-91.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Carougeot”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The other Gevrey AC at Domaine Guyon has had the name of its *lieu à dit* now included on the label for the first time in the 2014 vintage. The vineyard of Carougeot lies in the center of the village, just below the band of premier crus that includes Corbeaux, Perrière and Cherbaudes. This had not been bottled the day before and was showing very well, wafting from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, lovely spice tones, gamebird, dark soil, mustard seed and a touch of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and nicely plush on the attack, with a good, sappy core, sound acids, moderate tannins and lovely length and grip on the still fairly youthful finish. This is not showing quite the same precision as the two Chambolle AC bottlings, but it has good stuffing and will be tasty with a few years in the cellar. 2020-2050. **90.**

2014 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The Charmes-Chambertin from Domaine Guyon is one of the great sleeper examples of this underrated grand cru. The 2014 had been bottled six weeks before my visit and was showing beautifully, jumping from the glass in a very classy and complex blend of plums, red and black cherries, espresso, incipient notes of grilled meat, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh thyme and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure on the attack and very precise on the backend, with fine mineral drive, a lovely core and a long, suavely tannic and bouncy finish. High class juice. 2023-2075. **94.**

2014 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

As has been an almost constant refrain for the last five years, the Clos des Chênes was hit by hail at the end of June and Monsieur Guyon noted that the quantity was off by thirty percent as a result. This wine had only been bottled three weeks before my visit, so perhaps my impressions will be different the next time I see the wine, but I had the impression that the wine was just a touch rigid from the hail. The bouquet is fine, offering up scents of red and black cherries, venison, bonfires, fresh herb tones and a complex base of dark soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a good core, chewy tannins, fine complexity and a long, tangy finish. Right now, this wine seems just a touch less suave on the palate than the wines in the Guyon cellar that had no hail, but as I said above, perhaps some of this is due to the recent *mise*. 2022-2045. **89+?**

2014 Aloxe-Corton “les Fournières”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 Aloxe “Fournières” was bottled two weeks before my visit and had not yet started to shut down post-bottling and was showing very well indeed. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of cherries, red currant, woodsmoke, venison, coffee, coriander seed and a fine base of stony soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent in personality, with a fine core, impeccable focus and a long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. This will be a lovely bottle with five or six years in the cellar. 2021-2050. **90+.**

2014 Aloxe-Corton “les Vercots”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 les Vercots *chez* Guyon was one of the later wines in the cellar to finish up its malolactic fermentation and consequently, the wine was still not bottled at the time of my visit. The wine is deep, pure and offers up a lovely aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, coffee, iron-like soil tones, woodsmoke, gamebirds and again, a nice topnote of coriander seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite minerally in personality, with a fine core, ripe tannins and a long, well-balanced and nascently complex finish. Good juice. 2022-2050. **91.**

2014 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

Happily, both Cortons at Domaine Guyon were showing well. The Bressandes had been bottled in the middle of February, but was on form and offers up a lovely and quite classic bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of red currant, coffee, stony soil tones, coriander seed, venison and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with an excellent soil signature, ripe, fine-grained tannins and a very long, classy finish. 2024-2075. **93+.**

2014 Corton “Clos du Roy”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 Clos du Roy was also singing at the time of my visit and this is one superb, young bottle of Corton in the making. The refined nose wafts from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, gamebirds, coffee, a touch of raw cocoa, coriander seed, a touch of youthful white pepper, bonfire and a very complex base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly primary, but with a fine core and complexity to come. The finish is long, ripely tannic and tangy, with fine focus and balance. All this excellent Corton needs is some time in the cellar to blossom! 2026-2075. **94.**

Vins Blancs

2014 Bourgogne Blanc- Dominique Guyon

The 2014 Bourgogne Blanc from Dominique Guyon is a pretty example, offering up a bright nose of apple, pear, a touch of grassiness, citrus peel and a nice base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and focused, with good detail and fine length and grip on the finish. 2016-2023. **87+.**

2014 Pernand Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles” Blanc- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 Sous Frétilles was really singing at the time of my visit and this is a superb example of this vineyard, which can offer up an awful lot of Charlemagne-like personality at a fraction of the price. The wine jumps from the glass in a complex blend of pear, lime zest, chalky minerality, apple, white flowers and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and vibrant, with an excellent core of fruit, lovely minerality and a very long, complex finish. The grip and cut here is outstanding, but this wine is also quite open in personality and will drink well right from the outset. 2016-2035+. **92.**

2014 Meursault “Charmes Dessus”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

The 2014 Charmes Dessus *chez* Guyon was pretty reserved at the time of my visit and took some coaxing to get the wine to blossom on the nose. Eventually, plenty of nuance emerges in its aromatic constellation of pear, a touch of iodine, hazelnut, salty soil tones, citrus zest and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with lovely focus and detail, good, but not great acids and fine length and grip on the complex finish. This seems just a touch lower in energy on the palate than either the Sous Frétilles or the Pucelles today, but perhaps it is just hunkered down right now. 2019-2035. **92.**

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “les Pucelles”- Domaine Antonin Guyon

In contrast to the slightly grumpy Charmes, the 2014 Pucelles from Domaine Guyon was absolutely singing at the time of my visit, jumping from the glass in a superb blend of pear, apple, spring flowers, a touch of vanilla bean, complex, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and racy, with a fine core, excellent grip and a very long, vibrant and complex finish. This is an absolutely classic example of this great *terroir*. 20121-2050. **94.**

2014 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Antonin Guyon

There was a bit of hail on the hill of Corton in June and it seems to have given the 2014 Charlemagne from Domaine Guyon a slightly more forward personality this year than is typical of this fine bottling in most years. The bouquet is wide open and really attractive, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, apple, a touch of *crème patissière*, chalky soil tones, white flowers and vanillin oak. Oh the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a superb core of fruit, lovely balance, ripe acids and very good length and grip on the complex and succulent finish. One gets so accustomed to having to defer one's gratification with young Corton-Charlemagne, but this will not be the case with this lovely Domaine Guyon example in 2014-though I might be inclined to try and keep my hands off of it for a few years and allow more of its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2019-2045. **93.**

Beaune

Maison Champy (Beaune)

I tasted a nice lineup of Maison Champy an Domaine Laleure-Piot wines from the 2014 vintage with Chef de Cave Dimitri Bazas and Mark O'Connell, while also working through the Domaine Clos de la Chapelle 2014s. Unfortunately, I did not allot enough time for the appointment and did not finish the lineup, getting to none of white wines from Maison Champy the during the visit. As this was still early in my week, Dimitri and I decided to touch base via email and arrange another time slot to taste the white wines, or pick up the bottles to taste at my gîte in the evening, but this being the very busy week of Les Grands Jours, we could never find an opportunity for a second tasting or to pick up the bottles! As readers may remember from last year, the range of 2013s from Maison Champy had really shown well last March and I made it a point to ask Dimitri if I could taste the full range of 2014s this year. Many of the 2014s were singing at the time of my visit, but others were quite grumpy and not showing in prime form. As these wines generally tend to be bottled a bit later than the Domaine Clos de la Chapelle bottlings, perhaps the recent mise was the reason a few were out of sorts? I have scored the wines that were spot on with a single digit and used a range for those that were not in the mood to be tasted, as this seems much more fair than trying to pin down a wine that is not in prime form. The Domaine Laleure-Piot wines are a separate estate that Maison Champy markets exclusively, so these were shown alongside the Maison Champy 2014s.

Domaine Laleure-Piot Vins Blancs

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses- Domaine Laleure-Piot

The 2014 Pernand Blanc from Domaine Laleure-Piot was showing well at the time of my visit, offering up scents of pear, lemon, chalky soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp, but just a touch four-square, with a good core, bright acids and good length and grip on the finish. This will drink well out of the blocks. 2016-2025. **88.**

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Caradeux”- Domaine Laleure-Piot

The 2014 les Caradeux is a step up in precision on both the nose and palate and is really quite a lovely example. The fine bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of pear, pastry cream, lime blossoms, stony minerality and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely complex, with a good core, fine balance and a long, zesty finish. Good juice. 2016-2030. **90.**

2014 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Laleure-Piot

The Laleure-Piot vines are in the extreme northern end of the hill in Pernand and the wine was raised in fifty percent new oak in the 2014 vintage. This is a slightly more forward example of Corton-Charlemagne, but the wine has impressive depth and complexity on both the nose and palate. The fine bouquet offers up scents of pear, apple, fresh almond, chalky soil tones, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and focused, with a nice touch of generosity on the attack, a fine core and a long, vibrant and still fairly primary finish. Even though this is quite structurally accessible today, I would be inclined to give it just a couple of years in the cellar to allow some secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Fine juice. 2018-2035. **93.**

Domaine Laleure-Piot Vins Rouges

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “Clos de Bully”- Domaine Laleure-Piot

The 2014 Clos de Bully from Laleure-Piot was bottled in September of 2015, so in theory, the wine should have been showing pretty well, but this was one of the cantankerous wines in the cellar. The nose offers up scents of cherries, currants, soil, coffee and dried herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, soil-driven and softly tannic, with a chunky finish. There is no focus at all in the wine today, but is this just the *mise*? 2019-2040+? **86-88?**

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “Île de Vergelesses”- Domaine Laleure-Piot

In contrast, the domaine’s 2014 Île de Vergelesses was showing quite well. This wine was raised in twenty-five percent new casks and offers up a lovely and quite classic nose of red and black cherries, espresso, woodsmoke, gamebird, a touch of spice, a fine base of soil and a discreet framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with good focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and good length and grip. 2021-2050. **90+.**

Maison Champy Vins Rouges

2014 Pommard- Maison Champy

The vines that go into the Pommard AC from Maison Champy are farmed organically. This was bottled in February of 2016 and a bit unsettled, but showed good constituent components. The bouquet offers up a classic mélange of cherries, quince, a touch of cocoa, gamebird and soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows a good core, with suave tannins and good length and grip on the slightly grumpy finish. There is not a lot of focus here today, but with the wine having only been in bottle a month or so, this is understandable. 2021-2050. **88-90.**

2014 Volnay- Maison Champy

The 2014 Volnay *villages* was bottled at the same time as the Pommard, but it was far more cranky after its *mise* and was really very difficult to taste. The wine showed good depth at

the core and quite fine-grained tannins, but was muddled from its bottling and I did not try to take a precise note.

2014 Chambolle-Musigny- Maison Champy

In contrast, the 2014 Chambolle *villages* had been bottled in November of 2015 and was spot on. The very pretty and laid back nose offers up scents of cherries, cocoa, gamebird, mustard seed, a good base of soil and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and shows nice sappiness at the core, with moderate tannins, bright acids and good length and grip on the finish. This is not the most complex village Chambolle, but it shows plenty of generosity and will drink well from a relatively early age. 2020-2045. **89.**

2014 Beaune “Premier Cru”- Maison Champy

The Beaune “Premier Cru” bottling is comprised of a blend of Champs Pimonts, aux Cras and Reversées. The wine was bottled in January of 2016 and was showing quite well on the nose, but was still a bit chewy on the backend from what I assumed was bottling grumpiness. The bouquet is quite fine, offering up scents of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, herbs, a fine base of soil and a bit of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows a good core, with a slightly chewy edge to the moderate tannins and good length and grip. If the tannins here get a bit more suave as the wine stretches out away from its *mise*, then it will merit a score at the top of the range. 2020-2045+. **88-90.**

2014 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Vergelesses”- Maison Champy

The 2014 les Vergelesses from Maison Champy was bottled in February, but this was the most settled in after its *mise* of the wines bottled the month before my visit and its quality was quite easy to read. This was raised in one-third new wood and included fifty percent whole clusters this year. The wine wafts from the glass in a fine, youthful blend of red and black cherries, a touch of red currant, a nice touch of meatiness, dark soil, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and quite sappy at the core, with fine focus and soil signature, ripe tannins and lovely grip on the long and promising finish. Fine juice. 2022-2055. **92.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Cazetiers”- Maison Champy

The 2014 Cazetiers from Maison Champy was also very much on form at the time of my visit and will prove to be a very fine, quite elegant rendition of this lovely premier cru. The bouquet offers up a lovely and refined blend of red and black cherries, gentle meatiness, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, polished and elegant in profile, with a sappy core, fine transparency and a long, fine-grained finish. This is really very good. 2022-2060. **92.**

2014 Mazis-Chambertin- Maison Champy

The 2014 Mazis-Chambertin from Dimitri Bazas was also very much on form at the time of my visit and this is going to be an excellent wine. The wine offers up a deep and classic nose of cassis, dark berries, grilled meats, a touch of currant leaf, dark soil tones woodsmoke and a touch of spicy wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and pure on the attack, with fine mid-palate depth, suave tannins and impressive length and grip on the classy finish. A very refined example of Mazis. 2023-2065+. **93+.**

2014 Clos de Vougeot- Maison Champy

The 2014 Clos de Vougeot was bottled in November of 2015, but this wine still seemed quite grumpy to me and was not showing the focus of the Mazis or Cazetiers. There are some very, very good raw materials here, with scents of plums, black cherries, gamebird, soil, vanillin oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core,

with ripe tannins and very good length and grip on the finish. If the wine snaps into slightly better focus, it will warrant a score at the top of the range, but given it had been bottled so many months before my visit, I was a bit perplexed at its showing. It will certainly be a good wine, but it may well be outstanding once it starts to show more precisely. 2024-2065. **89-92?**



Maison Jaffelin's talented, young Chef de Cave, Marinette Garnier, in their tasting room in Beaune.

Maison Jaffelin (Beaune)

Marinette Garnier kindly made time to see me on this visit, despite the fact that the day I had requested was also the "Beaune" day of the Les Grands Jours tastings and she had to be at the booth for a few hours in the morning before our tasting, and then had to hustle right back to the Palais de Congrès for the tasting right after we had finished working through her lovely range of 2014s. All of the 2014 white wines in the Jaffelin range had been bottled in September of 2015, whereas the reds from 2014 had only been bottled two weeks before my visit. Most of these had not yet begun to shut down and were showing very well, despite their very recent mise. As I noted when writing up my visit to Maison Jaffelin to taste the 2013s, Mademoiselle Garnier was most recently working in the cellars at Domaine Méo-Camuzet prior to taking the position as Chef de Cave at Maison Jaffelin, and she has hit the ground running here and is making excellent wines. Not surprisingly, given her stage at Domaine Méo-Camuzet, Marinette comments that "I love new oak, as long it does not dominate the wines." And in fact, despite many of these wines hailing from fairly modest appellations, they are generally raised in a fairly

generous percentage of new wood. During my week in Burgundy, a couple of proposed appointments that I suggested to Mademoiselle Garnier were not possible, as she had to go to the tonnelier to oversee the selection of staves for the casks she would be using for the 2015 vintage, so she is obviously quite meticulous about selecting her oak to ensure that the casks she use do not make the wines too oaky- which has not been the case in any of the examples I have tasted from the 2013 and 2014 vintages. Maison Jaffelin does a very good job sourcing old vine parcels in some of the less-prestigious appellations in the Côte d'Or, as the house's marketing strategy is to offer clients very good Burgundies at very fair prices. They are doing a very good job in this regard and the range of 2014s from Marinette was absolutely exceptional.

Vins Blancs

2014 Rully- Maison Jaffelin

The 2014 Rully from Maison Jaffelin is a lovely example, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, tart orange, wet stones and a nice topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and nascently complex, with a good core, bright acids and lovely length and grip. Good juice. 2016-2023. **89.**

2014 Saint Romain- Maison Jaffelin

The Saint Romain from Maison Jaffelin hails from vines that range from sixty to seventy years of age. Marinette raised the wine in one-third new wood in 2014 and the wine is very fine and will be a terrific value. The bouquet is pure and vibrant, offering up scents of tangerine, white peach, chalky minerality, citrus peel, dried flowers and a deft framing of buttery new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely mineral in personality, with a fine core, lovely complexity and cut and a long, vibrant and beautifully balanced finish. This is really a serious bottle in the making! 2016-2025+. **90.**

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses Blanc- Maison Jaffelin

There are only three casks of Pernand Blanc this year in the Jaffelin cellars, with one of them new. This is one of the few wines in their lineup that is not made from older vines, as this parcel is only fifteen years of age, but the vines are situated in one of the premier crus of Pernand and Marinette declassifies this to village wine to take into account the young vines. The 2014 version is very good, wafting from the glass in a lovely aromatic blend of apple, a touch of fresh pineapple, lovely soil tones, citrus peel and bit of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focuses and quite open and accessible out of the blocks, with a good core, bright acids and a long, crisp and classy finish. Good juice. 2016-2025. **90+.**

2014 Santenay "Passetemps" Blancs- Maison Jaffelin

The yields were very short this year for this wine, as there were only two *pièces* out of a customary five casks, so Marinette used one new barrel out of two in 2014 for the Passetemps bottling. The wine is very pretty and stylish, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, chalky soil tones, a touch of *crème patissière*, gentle notes of acacia blossoms and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with lovely succulence on the attack, a fine core and a long, focused and zesty finish. Another impressive example. 2016-2025. **90+.**

2014 Meursault- Maison Jaffelin

The 2014 Meursault AC from Maison Jaffelin hails from two different *lieux à dits* in the village, with seventy-five percent from the vineyard of Sous la Velle (which lies down below the village center on the same level as en l'Ormeau) and twenty-five percent from La Forge, which is next to Meix Chavaux. The vines in both parcels are forty years of age and the wine was again raised in fifty percent new oak. The bouquet is excellent, offering up a quite classic blend of

pear, passion fruit, hazelnuts, a touch of iodine, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and classy, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, quite complex finish. A very fine bottle of AC and one that will drink beautifully right from the outset. 2016-2030. **91.**

2014 Saint Aubin “Sur Gamay”- Maison Jaffelin

The rows of vines in Sur Gamay that Maison Jaffelin purchases lie right on the Puligny-Montrachet border in this fine premier cru vineyard. Marinette decided to raise this wine in forty percent new oak, which like all of these other 2014 whites, does not seem to have seen such a high percentage of new wood, as it carries the oak seamlessly. The complex and vibrant bouquet jumps from the glass in a superb blend of pear, orange zest, pastry cream, lovely floral tones, chalky soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very elegant, with a fine core, excellent complexity and grip, bright acids and a very long, bouncy and elegant finish. A really lovely bottle of Saint Aubin. 2016-2035. **92.**

Vins Rouges

2014 Chorey-lès-Beaune “les Champs Longs- Maison Jaffelin

The 2014 Chorey-lès-Beaune “les Champs Longs from Maison Jaffelin is produced from thirty year-old vines and was showing beautifully at the time of my visit. The bouquet is very pretty and red fruity, wafting from the glass in a mix of strawberries, cherries, a fine base of soil tones, woodsmoke and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very transparent, with a good core of red fruit, fine focus and grip, modest tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. This is going to drink with great style right out of the blocks and would be a great wine for a well-stocked wine list. A very impressive example. 2016-2030+. **90.**

2014 Givry “les Grandes Vignes”- Maison Jaffelin

The les Grandes Vignes bottling hails from eighty year-old vines in Santenay and this too is excellent this year. The wine offers up a fine nose of cherries, blood orange, gamebird, a lovely base of soil, fresh herb tones and a touch of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and very soil-driven in personality, with an excellent core, bright acids and a long, gently tannic finish. I would opt to tuck this away in the cellar for four or five years and really let it blossom before drinking it. 2020-2045. **90.**

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “en Caradeux”- Maison Jaffelin

The 2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “en Caradeux” from Maison Jaffelin is produced from a parcel of vines where three-quarters are eighty years of age and the “younger vines” are sixty years old! This is excellent in 2014, having been raised in one-third new wood and offering up an lovely bouquet of red plums, red currants, stony soil tones, a touch of violet, gamebirds, fresh herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and very refined on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, fine soil signature, fine-grained tannins and a very long, tangy and beautifully focused finish. Another excellent wine. 2020-2050. **91.**

2014 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Vergelesses”- Maison Jaffelin

In 2014, Marinette Garnier included fifteen percent whole clusters in this bottling, which was raised in thirty percent new wood and which hails from a parcel of sixty year-old vines. This is really a stunning young bottle of Savigny, soaring from the glass in a superb constellation of cherries, red plums, a touch of currant, gamebird, beautifully complex, stony soil tones, a touch of youthful stems and a nice base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a sappy core of red fruit, fine structure and a very long,

stony and ripely tannic finish. Great juice in the making and a wine that Savigny fans should most emphatically search out! 2022-2060. **93.**

2014 Auxey-Duresses “les Duresses”- Maison Jaffelin

The vineyard of les Duresses was hit by the hail on June 28th and the yields were tiny in 2014, with Marinette figuring that they were in the fifteen hectoliters per hectare range for this bottling. This too is eighty year-old vines and twenty percent whole clusters were used in this vintage. The wine was a bit grumpy from its recent *mise* (one of the very few in the cellar) and I have scored it in a range as a result, but based on how strong the other 2014 reds are here this year, I would expect this to place towards the upper limit of the range when it recovers. The nose offers up a really classy blend of cherries, strawberries, a touch of cinnamon, chalky soil tones, gamebirds and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite shut down after the bottling, but with a good core, fine-grained tannins and a long, tangy finish. I am sure this will be very fine, but it is too grumpy today to assign a precise score. 2021-2050+. **91-93.**

2014 Beaune “Sur les Grèves” Clos Ste. Anne- Maison Jaffelin

The Clos Ste. Anne is a monopole of Maison Jaffelin, planted to eighty year-old vines, and the wine was raised in twenty-five percent new oak in 2014. The wine was showing very nicely on the nose, but this too was a bit reserved on the palate at the time of my visit from its recent *mise*. The bouquet is a fine blend of cherries, strawberries, chalky minerality, gamebirds, fresh thyme, cedar and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely transparent in profile, with a good core, fine-grained tannins and a long, well-balanced finish. Again, this is a bit out of sorts from the recent bottling, but it will clearly be a fine bottle. 2022-2060. **92-93.**

2014 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Maison Jaffelin

The 2014 Gevrey “V.V.” bottling was less grumpy than the preceding two wines and really showing well. The wine was raised in fifty percent new wood this year, but carries effortlessly, offering up a fine nose of red and black cherries, a touch of red plum, cocoa, woodsmoke, dark soil tones, cedar and a nice topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure on the attack and beautifully transparent, with a lovely core of fruit, suave tannins and a long, tangy and complex finish. Fine juice. 2019-2045. **91.**

2014 Chambolle-Musigny- Maison Jaffelin

The 2014 Chambolle *villages* included thirty percent whole clusters in this vintage and was raised in fifty percent new oak as well. The wine was really singing in March, jumping from the glass in a blaze of cherries, red plums, woodsmoke, chalky soil tones, a touch of youthful stems, mustard seed and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite velvety on the attack, with a sappy core, lovely focus and grip and a very long, fine-grained and classy finish. Lovely Chambolle! 2016-2035. **91+.**

2014 Fixin “les Hervelets”- Maison Jaffelin

The Fixin “les Hervelets” bottling from Maison Jaffelin hails from a parcel of forty year-old vines and is absolutely superb in 2014. This too was raised in fifty percent new oak this year, but shows no signs of this on its nose or palate. This is very red fruity this year, which is pretty rare for les Hervelets, as it wafts from the glass in a blend of cherries, strawberries, fresh herb tones, a touch of pepper, lovely minerality, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very transparent in personality, with a fine core, suave tannins and lovely balance on the long, suavely-tannic finish. A very, very elegant Fixin! 2021-2045+. **92+.**

Pommard

Domaine Michel Gaunoux (Pommard)

I had my first look at the very fine 2013 wines from Domaine Michel Gaunoux, which will delight fans of this consistently excellent domaine. Alexandre Gaunoux has been absolutely rock solid here for many, many years, and I get the sense that there are only a very few estates in the entire Côte d'Or that can present the same track record of excellence over the last fifteen years as can Domaine Michel Gaunoux, and of this elite group, this estate remains probably the only one that flies a bit below the radar of Burgundy cognoscenti. When I began to first drink and sell the wines of Domaine Michel Gaunoux with regularity twenty-five years ago, the domaine was one of the ultimate "insider producers" in all of Burgundy, with its very loyal clientele quite content to keep things quiet in the marketplace and happily tuck away their yearly allocations in the cellar. A quarter century has come and gone since those days, but not a whole lot has changed in this regard, as the Domaine Gaunoux wines remain some of the least publicized, great wines of Burgundy, and one gets the sense that this is just fine with the Gaunoux family, who are some of the nicest and most honorable people one is likely to meet in the Côte d'Or. Their understated style is very much in keeping with the traditional Burgundy I came to know and love in my early days in the wine trade and which has to some degree disappeared from the firmament of the new Burgundy, where so many domaines are fêted on a global basis these days and their proprietors are the newest rock stars of the world of wine. That the recognition is quite overdue for some estates that are now international stars is certainly true, but it was a magical time in Burgundy, when one would visit estates with absolutely brilliant wines and the proprietors seemed almost uncomfortable with lavish praise one would espouse for their wines. It was a time when producing great wines from the great terroirs was "just the right thing to do", as many, many producers in the Côte d'Or took very seriously their guardianship of the vineyards, having had these parcels passed down from previous generations of the family. The market's reaction to the wines was of secondary importance- provided of course that one had enough clients to buy through the production of each vintage- which was not that difficult to find when one did a good job in the vineyards and cellars. Things are a bit different today, but there are still very strong pockets of this previous era of Burgundy scattered around the Côte d'Or, and Domaine Michel Gaunoux is certainly one of these great traditionalist domaines. The 2013 wines from the Gaunoux family are excellent, with beautiful transparency across the board, lots of red fruity personality and the dynamically-balanced structures to age long and gracefully. And, of course, this being one of the old school domaines that keeps back a percentage of their production to show when the wines are starting to blossom, there are always a few very tasty bottles to become reacquainted with at the end of the range of the new releases! I always have great fun tasting the wines after the new releases, as the Gaunoux family serves them blind and it is great practice to try and nail the wine in the glass. Some years I do better than others at this exercise, but this year my guesses were not all that close!

2013 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2013 Bourgogne Rouge from Domaine Gaunoux is a lovely example. The wine wafts from the glass in a pretty, red fruity mélange of cherries, quince, a fine dollop of soil tones, fresh herbs and a bit of citrus zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, bright and impressively soil-driven in personality for a regional bottling, with a touch of backend tannins and good acids. This will age nicely and really could do with a few years in the cellar to properly blossom. Good juice. 2019-2035+. **88+**.

2013 Beaune Rouge- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2013 Beaune is another very strong bottle in the making, with lovely personality on the nose and a more properly structured palate that will need some bottle age to really start to drink with generosity. The bouquet is nascently complex and quite classy, delivering a blend of cherries, quince, woodsmoke, gamebirds, a very complex base of soil and a nice touch of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and very transparent in personality, with a lovely core of red fruit, modest tannins and fine length and grip on the tangy and very well-balanced finish. This will be quite refined when it reaches its plateau. 2021-2060. **90+**.

2013 Pommard “Premier Cru”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2013 Pommard Premier Cru bottling from Alexandre Gaunoux is really an outstanding example of the vintage, with a beautifully pure and inviting bouquet coupled to lovely structure and a properly youthful personality on the palate that will demand seven or eight years of bottle age to start to stir. The nose wafts from the glass in a very vibrant blend of strawberries, quince, refined minerality, gamebird, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a topnote of citrus zest. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and very transparent, with a fine core, impeccable focus and balance, ripe, moderate tannins and a long, tangy finish. The wine closes today with a touch of youthful *herbacité* that will be subsumed into the wine more fully over the passing years. This is a really fine and very classic rendition of the low fat 2013 vintage. 2023-2065. **92**.

2013 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2013 Grands Epenots from the Gaunoux family is really excellent this year. The bouquet is a fine blend of strawberries, cherries, a superb base of minerality, roses, *pigeon* and lovely fresh herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, young and soil-driven, with fine mid-palate depth, fine-grained tannins, bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and properly chewy finish (this is young Pommard after all). Excellent potential. 2023-2065+. **93**.

2013 Pommard “Rugiens Bas”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The Domaine Gaunoux Rugiens Bas 2013 is also outstanding and really is showing fine depth and early dimension in this vintage. Like all of the 2013s *chez* Gaunoux, the Rugiens Bas really shows great purity and precision on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up a nascently complex constellation of cherries, beetroot, citrus zest, lovely minerality, a touch of currant leaf and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows lovely intensity at the core, with ripe tannins, fine focus and grip and a long, tangy and beautifully balanced finish. This will be stellar in the fullness of time. 2023-2065+. **94**.

2013 Corton “Renardes”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2013 Renardes from Domaine Gaunoux is also an excellent bottle in the making, but it is more classically reserved out of the blocks than the relatively suave Pommard premiers. The bouquet is pure and primary, delivering scents of cherries, red berries, a touch of coriander seed, roses, vinesmoke and a superb base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very promising, with an excellent core, fine focus and grip, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex and zesty finish. Another stellar bottle in the making. 2025-2075. **94+**.

2011 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2011 Grands Epenots was really showing well at the time of my visit and was more accessible than I originally anticipated it would be at age five. The bouquet is focused and nicely open, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of cherries, pomegranate, superb minerality, a touch of mustard seed and a fine, complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish,

pure and tangy, with great backend soil drive, a lovely core of fruit, moderate, well-measured tannins and a long, complex and surprisingly wide open and tasty finish. Intuitively I know this is still a young wine, but I would have no difficulty drinking it tonight! 2016-2040+. **93.**

2008 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

I have loved this wine since the first time I tasted it at the domaine five years ago, and it was showing just beautifully during my visit in March. The bouquet is focused, sappy and beautifully reflective of its underlying *terroir*, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of red and black cherries, red plums, mustard seed, great complex minerality, gamebirds and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and gently sappy at the core, with great transparency and nascent complexity, tangy acids, suave tannins and a marvelously elegant and vibrant, long finish. This is stellar juice and really not all that far away from really starting to drink in its plateau. 2017-2060. **95.**

2007 Pommard “Rugiens Bas”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 2007 Rugiens Bas from Domaine Gaunoux is not far behind the beautiful 2008 Grands Epenots and is a beautiful bottle of Pommard in its own right. The bouquet offers up a blossoming blend of cherries, raspberries, orange zest, gamebird, stony minerality, roses and a lovely topnote of spices. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and transparent, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent focus and grip, moderate tannins and impressive length on the complex and perfectly balanced finish. This is perhaps a tad behind in its development than the 2008 Grands Epenots, but it too is starting to move towards its plateau and will be another outstanding wine with a bit more bottle age. 2018-2050. **94.**

1997 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

The 1997 Grands Epenots is a wine that I have not tasted in seven or eight years and it is really starting to drink at its apogee as it closes in on its twentieth birthday. The wine is very fresh for a '97 today, offering up a bright and classy bouquet of cherries, red currants, a touch of *sous bois*, coffee, venison, cloves and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a fine core of fruit, impressive minerality and just a bit of remaining tannin perking up the long and complex finish. This is aging very well indeed and is showing even more potential today than the last time I tasted it. 2016-2040. **92+.**

1972 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Michel Gaunoux

Way back in my merchant days, I had the good fortune to drink a fairly large number of 1972 red Burgundies, as this was a vintage that was still to be found in relatively plentiful amounts at auction or on lists from Burgundy specialists, as the wines had been tough and acidic for much of the first twenty or so years of their lives in bottles and not many folks had faith in the vintage after so long and stormy an adolescence. Happily, the wines really started to show well in the mid-1990s and could be found at good prices for quite some time, so I was able to get to know the vintage pretty well back in the day. The 1972 Michel Gaunoux Grands Epenots is a wine that I had not drunk since all the way back in 2003 and I was delighted to see how beautifully it continues to drink all these years later. The bouquet is pure, complex and tertiary, offering up scents of dried cherries, *sous bois*, a touch of blood orange, gamebirds, lovely spice tones, a beautiful base of soil, coffee, a touch of heather and plenty of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very complex, with beautiful balance, a good core and lovely length and grip on the focused and absolutely *à point* finish. A beautiful bottle that is still emphatically at its apogee and has plenty of life in it. 2016-2030+. **93.**



The Gaunoux family in the courtyard outside of their tasting room in Pommard.

Volnay

Domaine Clos de la Chapelle (Volnay)

I tasted the entire range of Domaine Clos de la Chapelle 2014s with Mark O'Connell, owner of this fine estate, and Chef de Cave, Dimitri Bazas. This year we tasted in their new tasting room alongside of the offices of Maison Champy in Beaune. As has been the case for the last several years, the Domaine Clos de la Chapelle wines were absolutely singing at the time of my visit and the range is excellent across the board. We also tasted several of the Maison Champy wines at the same time, darting back and forth between the two estates to match up appellations and levels in the hierarchy of the two lineups. There was another new bottling from Domaine Clos la Chapelle this year, a lovely Beaune "Theurons" that was showing beautifully at the time of my visit and is a fine new addition to the portfolio. Most of the reds here had been bottled in November of 2015, as the domaine likes to bottle on the early side and preserve the freshness of fruit in general, and this was particularly true in the very pure and elegant 2014 vintage. This has very quickly become one of my favorite domaines in Volnay!

Vins Rouges

2014 Beaune "Theurons"- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The 2014 Beaune "Theurons" from Domaine Clos de la Chapelle is excellent. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a superb blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, dark soil tones,

woodsmoke and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely focused, with a fine, sappy core, lovely soil signature and a long, finely-grained finish. A really lovely example. 2020-2060. **92.**

2014 Volnay “en Carelle”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The domaine’s vines in en Carelle are planted north-south, which served to shelter the bunches a bit during the hail at the end of June and there was really quite moderate damage done here in 2014. The wine was raised in twenty percent new oak and these fifty-five to sixty year-old vines have produced an excellent wine in this vintage⁴. The bouquet offers up scents of cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, gamebird, cedar and a lovely topnote of spices. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and intensely flavored, with a velvety attack, a good core and a long, suavely-tannic finish. Just a lovely wine. 2021-2060. **92+.**

2014 Volnay “Clos de la Chapelle”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The domaine’s flagship wine was hit a bit harder by the hail on June 28th, so yields are again down very low for this wine in 2014, but the wine was showing well at the time of my visit. The nose wafts from the glass in a fine blend of cherries, red plums, currant leaf, a very good base of soil, a touch of coffee and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and more reserved in profile than the en Carelle, with a good core and fine mineral drive on the long and moderately tannic finish. This will need a bit more time to blossom and has ended up a touch chewier than the en Carelle, due to the hail in June- though there is no signs of hail taint, just a bit more structure out of the blocks here. 2023-2065. **92+.**

2014 Volnay “Taillepieds”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The Taillepieds bottling from Clos de la Chapelle was new in 2013. As readers may recall, this hails from a parcel of forty to fifty year-old vines that lie between the rows of Domaines de Montille and Marquis d’Angerville. The 2014 was another very short crop here, as they only produced three casks, whereas in a normal crop, they should have nine! The wine is superb in 2014, delivering a fine aromatic constellation of red berries, red plums, a beautifully complex base of soil tones, gamebirds, pretty spice notes and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and shows good stuffing at the core, with fine focus and grip and a moderately chewy finish. 2024-2060. **93.**

2014 Pommard “Chanlins” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The eighty-five year-old vines here have produced a very pretty and red fruity example of the vintage in 2014. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a classy blend of cherries, quince, a touch of blood orange, *pigeon*, woodsmoke and a gentle framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really very suave on the attack (particularly for a young Pommard!), with a fine core of fruit, fine grained tannins and a long, focused and tangy finish. This will be outstanding in the fullness of time! 2022-2060. **94.**

2014 Pommard “Grands Epenots”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The 2014 Grands Epenots from Clos de la Chapelle was bottled a bit later than most of the red wines in the cellar, with the *mise* coming at the start of February of 2016. The wine was showing very well at the time of my visit, offering up a pure and nascently complex nose of red plums, cherries, woodsmoke, gamebird, cocoa, cedar and a superb base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant in profile, with a superb core of fruit, lovely soil signature and a very long, ripely tannic and focused finish. A very high class example of this superb *terroir*. 20124-2065+. **93+.**

2014 Corton “Rognet”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The Rognet in 2014 from Clos de la Chapelle was raised in one-third new wood and included fifty percent whole clusters this year. These vines lie just above those of Jean-Nicolas Méo on the slope. The wine really shows the elegant side of the vintage, wafting from the glass in a beautiful aromatic constellation of cherries, red currants, a superb base of minerality, a bit of gamebird, lovely Corton spice tones and a bit of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with fine transparency, lovely focus and grip and a very long, ripely tannic and tangy finish. There is a touch of stems here today, but these will become cinnamon-like down the road and just add to the spicy appeal of this lovely Corton. 2025-2075+. **94.**

2014 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The 2014 Bressandes here also included fifty percent whole clusters and was raised in one-third new casks. The wine is dynamite, soaring from the glass in a blaze of red and black cherries, red currants, a touch of venison, coriander seed, a bit of bonfire, raw cocoa, stony soil tones and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a very sappy core of fruit, lovely transparency, fine-grained tannins and a very long, tangy and promising finish. Great juice in the making. 2025-2075. **95.**

Vins Blancs

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

The 2014 Beaune “Reversées” Blanc from Domaine Clos de la Chapelle is a good, solid example of the vintage. The bouquet offers up nice complexity in its mélange of lemon, crab apple, citrus peel, chalky soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and nicely balanced, with crisp acids, fine focus and good length and grip on the bouncy and wide open finish. A good example for relatively near-term drinking. 2016-2030. **89.**

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

The 2014 Sous Frétilles from Clos de la Chapelle is excellent and a fine new addition to the portfolio here. The nose jumps from the glass in a pure and quite accessible blend of pear, lemon, white flowers, chalky minerality and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and juicy at the core, with fine focus and grip and a long, zesty and quite delicious finish. This is not as structured an example of Sous Frétilles as one finds for example at Domaine Rollin, but it is a very tasty and classy bottle. 2016-2035+. **91.**

2014 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle

The 2014 Corton-Charlemagne from Clos de la Chapelle is a very fine bottle in the making. The deep and serious nose offers up scents of apple, pear, a touch of iodine, lovely, chalky soil tones, a touch of citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with lovely mineral drive, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. Fine juice in the making. 2020-2045+. **93+.**

Meursault

Domaine Arnaud Ente (Meursault)

I had been unable to visit with Monsieur Ente on my November trip, due to the complications of both of us having very busy schedules that month, so I was very happy to have a chance to visit his 2014s on my spring trip this year. Given the hail storm on June 28th, which affected the northern half of the commune of Meursault, I was expecting the wines of Domaine Ente to show a bit of the effects from this storm, which in other cellars in Meursault seemed to

have taken just a touch of energy out of the finished 2014s. However, this was emphatically not the case with the wines from Monsieur Ente and his 2014s are very racy, tensile and pure and he is very, very happy with the style and quality of the vintage. The domaine began picking on September 15th in this year and brought the grapes in quickly, as is their wont, so as to keep acidity levels nice and zesty and the fruit pure and elegant. As Arnaud Ente commented, “the wines that I like to drink today are very precise and minerally, so these are the types of wines that I want to produce.” There was a surprise in the lineup for me this year, as I was unaware that Monsieur Ente had added a parcel in the Puligny-Montrachet premier cru of Champgains in time for the 2014 vintage. This is a twenty-five ares parcel, located on the edge of the vineyard towards Truffières, with Domaine Sauzet’s rows of vines situated right on the Truffières boundary, and next door to them Antoine Jobard’s rows and then these new rows of vines of Arnaud Ente. The vines were planted in 1956, so these are now old vines and the first vintage here of 2014 is truly stunning!

2014 Bourgogne Aligoté- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The 2014 Bourgogne Aligoté from Monsieur Ente is excellent, as these old vines always seem to produce one of the most refined examples of this varietal in all the Côte d’Or. The 2014 version offers up a superb bouquet of apple, pear, chalky minerality, a bit of orange zest and a lovely floral topnote redolent of lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and beautifully focused, with a fine core and a very long, racy and very well-balanced finish. This wine really has beautifully pure fruit tones in this vintage! 2017-2030+. **90.**

2014 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The Bourgogne Blanc bottling from Arnaud Ente used to be about a fifty-fifty blend of parcels on the two far sides of the village of Meursault, with some up towards Volnay and the other half from plots of vines on the Puligny-Montrachet border. However, the Volnay parcel has now been replanted and the 2014 Bourgogne Blanc was produced solely from the vines on the Puligny side of town. The wine is lovely and quite juicy out of the blocks, offering up a very pretty nose of pear, a touch of fresh almond, orange blossoms and a fine base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and round on the attack, with a fine core, vibrant acids and fine focus and bounce on the long and generous finish. This is more forward out of the blocks than the Aligoté this year and will drink well right from the outset. 2016-2025. **89.**

2014 Meursault- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The 2014 Meursault AC from Domaine Ente is really strong this year and shows the same cut and vibrancy on the backend as the stellar Aligoté. The bouquet is pure, focused and jumps from the glass in a blend of pear, tangerine, lemon zest, excellent minerality and a bit of Meursault nuttiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, long and full-bodied, with a nice sense of generosity on the attack, coupled with really fine cut and grip on the long and racy finish. This is a lovely *villages* that will really drink well with just a couple of years’ worth of bottle age. 2018-2035. **91.**

2014 Meursault “Clos des Ambres”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The 2014 Clos des Ambres is really a lovely bottle right out of the blocks this year, and though it will deserved a few years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to start to blossom, it does not seem to have quite the same snappy backend structure of the straight AC this year. The bouquet is excellent, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, a touch of iodine, hazelnuts, chalky minerality and a fine floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-

bodied and beautiful on the attack, with a very good core of fruit, fine soil signature and a very, very long, vibrant finish. There are still lovely acids here to frame the wine, but the above is slightly snappier this year. 2018-2035+. **92.**

2014 Meursault “Petits Charrons”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The Domaine Ente 2014 Petits Charrons is cut more in the style of the racy *villages* bottling this year than in the slightly more generous style of the Clos des Ambres. The beautiful bouquet jumps from the glass in a blaze of pear, hazelnut, tangerine, a beautiful base of minerality, a touch of vanillin oak and a complex floral topnote that shows signs of orange blossoms and also a touch of geranium. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, racy and nicely reserved in personality out of the blocks, with a fine core, lovely grip and balance and a long, laser-like and almost crystalline finish. High class juice. 2020-2040+. **92+.**

2014 Meursault “la Goutte d’Or”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The 2014 Goutte d’Or is also outstanding from Monsieur Ente this year. This too is very properly reserved out of the blocks, offering up a very promising bouquet of apple, pear, nutty tones, a lovely base of chalky minerality and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with outstanding backend energy and grip, vibrant acids and a very long, nascently complex and precise finish. Superb wine. 2020-2040. **93.**

2014 Meursault “la Sève de Clos”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The 2014 la Sève de Clos is another excellent and nicely reserved example of this fine vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a pure and still fairly primary blend of apple, orange zest, hazelnut, a fine, complex base of minerality and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with an explosive backend that ripples with energy and great mineral drive. The finish is very, very long, pure and promising, but this wine will want some bottle age to really blossom. Outstanding juice. 2022-2050. **94+.**

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “Referts”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The 2014 Referts is also nicely pure and racy out of the blocks, with an excellent girdle of acidity to carry the wine far into the future. The excellent nose offers up scents of pear, lemon, fresh almond, a touch of acacia blossom, chalky minerality and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with lovely mid-palate depth, bright acids and a very long, tensile and zesty finish. Just a beautiful bottle of Puligny! 2020-2050. **94+.**

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “Champgains”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The new addition of Champgains is absolutely stellar in 2014 as well. These nearly sixty year-old vines have produced a classic example that has a bit more depth at the core than the Referts, but which is equally racy and refined. The bouquet offers up scents of white peach, apple, a fine base of chalky soil tones, orange zest and just a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely complete in personality, with a fine core, bright acids and excellent cut and grip on the very long, very elegant finish. *Chapeau!* 2021-2050. **94+.**

2014 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The very, very old Gamay vines that made the Grande Ordinaire were finally replanted after the 2013 vintage, but the 2014 Bourgogne Rouge bottling here is a nice substitute. The wine is quite pale in color this year, but shows plenty of personality in its nose of cherries, a touch of cranberry, woodsmoke, soil and a touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, transparent and impressively long and tangy, with a touch of backend

tannin and superb grip and focus. This is a lean and intensely flavored middleweight that is loaded with personality. 2018-2030. **88.**

2014 Volnay “Santenots”- Domaine Arnaud Ente

The 2014 Volnay “Santenots” was a bit grumpy at the time of my visit and quite reticent. This is only 12.1 percent octane this year and offers up a cool and reserved nose of dark berries, espresso, dark soil tones, an exotic touch of botanicals and peppercorn. On the palate the wine is medium-full and tightly-knit out of the blocks, with a very soil-driven personality, solid depth at the core and a long, moderately tannic and quite closed down finish. This needs time to blossom and it is hard to get a read on right now, as it is quite shy on the palate. The wine may end up always being a touch lean, but it could just be closed down and could blossom beautifully. Hence the range of score, as it is just too early to say right now. 2022-2040+. **86-92?**



Spring just starting to swell in the buds of the trees in the village of Meursault.

Domaine Guy Roulot (Meursault)

I was unable to find a possibility that worked in my busy schedule in November to visit Domaine Roulot (who was probably even busier than I in the annual November crush of visitors that is now part of the Burgundy landscape) and we agreed to find a time in March for a visit to taste the 2014s here. A few of the wines had just been bottled in February (the Bourgogne Blanc and Meursault “Vireuils” and “Tillets”), with the rest assembled in tank and awaiting bottling in the coming weeks after my visit. As was the case with my visit to Julian Haart in Piesport the

week before, I also ran into a few wines that had just been filtered in the days leading up to my visit, so I will strive to make an appointment in November to take a look at the 2015s, as the wines were a bit varied in how happy they were to be tasted this past March. However, enough wines were on form and absolutely singing that it was pretty easy to interpolate for the others and Domaine Roulot has clearly done a very fine job with the 2014s. A wine or two seemed a bit easy-going structurally as the result of the hail at the end of June, but these were the “odd men out” in the lineup, and in at least one case, the seemingly more laid back structure could just as easily have been a result of recent filtering. I had to chuckle to myself during the appointment, which I shared with a lovely team from a winery in California, who had just come from tasting the 2014s at DRC. Given that the office at DRC had told me only a couple of weeks before that the 2014s would be in the midst of bottling during my trip and consequently, they would not be able to see any visitors, it was pretty clear that someone at the domaine does not want me tasting there anymore. In any case, the 2014s chez Roulot are a very strong set of wines and the team here was happy to see me, even though they actually were in the midst of bottling.

2014 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Bourgogne Blanc was showing very well, particularly for having been bottled a month prior to my visit. The nose wafts from the glass in a very pretty blend of pear, apple, chalky soil tones, a touch of nuttiness and a nice topnote of fresh lime. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and well-balanced, with a good core, bright acids and fine length and grip on the stylish finish. This will be a lovely middleweight. 2016-2025+. **89.**

2014 Meursault- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Meursault AC was still in tank and destined to be bottled in the coming fortnight, but was singing at the time of my visit. The bouquet is bright and very classy, offering up a vibrant mix of lemon, pear, refined minerality, spring flowers, citrus zest and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, racy and tensile, with a good core, superb mineral drive (particularly for a blended *villages*) and fine focus and grip on the long and snappy finish. A very fine AC. 2016-2030. **91.**

2014 Meursault “Vireuils”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Vireuils *chez* Roulot had been bottled in February, but had not yet shut down post-bottling and was really showing well. The nose jumps from the glass in a nascently complex blend of apple, pear, chalky minerality, lime blossoms, a touch of fresh almond and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, long and racy, with a fine core, very good cut and grip and a focused and very vibrant finish. Really a lovely bottle. 2016-2035+. **92.**

2014 Meursault “Meix Chavaux”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The Roulot family’s old vines in Meix Chavaux (they were planted in the 1950s) have really produced another fine example in the 2014 vintage. The bouquet here is pure and classy, wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, hazelnut, a touch of iodine, chalky soil tones, white flowers and lime zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and elegant, with a good core, bright acids and a long, clean and energetic finish. Fine juice. 2016-2035. **92.**

2014 Meursault “Luchets”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Luchets here had just been filtered and was showing a little easy-going on the palate, but given the vibrancy of the previous wines, I had to attribute this characteristic to its recent filtration. The bouquet is lovely, delivering a fine blend of fresh lime, pear, hazelnut,

chalky minerality, spring flowers and a nice touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and round on the attack, with fine mid-palate depth, good focus and grip and a long, well-balanced and nicely vibrant finish. I am sure this will prove excellent. 2016-2035. **91-92+.**

2014 Meursault “Tillets”- Domaine Guy Roulot

As I mentioned above, the 2014 Tillets was one of the wines bottled in February, but was still showing very well on the third week of March. The nose is pure and very classy, wafting from the glass in a constellation of lime, pear, almond, chalky minerality, spring flowers and that stylish Roulot base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and very zesty, with fine mineral drive on the backend, a good core and a long, zesty and nascently complex finish. Good juice in the making here. **92+.**

2014 Meursault “Tessons” Cuvée Mon Plaisir- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Tessons from Domaine Roulot is another excellent wine in the making. The bouquet delivers scents of lime, pink grapefruit, pear, iodine, crystalline minerality, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and racy, with excellent mid-palate depth, fine balance and a long, very promising and classy finish. 2018-2040. **93.**

2014 Meursault “Poruzots”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Poruzots had just been bottled a few days before my visit and was still a little out of sorts from the recent *mise*. The bouquet delivers plenty of depth and potential complexity in its mélange of pear, apple, iodine, orange blossoms, chalky minerality, a bit of fresh almond and a lovely base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and seems nicely reserved in profile, with a good core, fine transparency and a long, zesty finish. Despite it being a bit grumpy right after its bottling, the wine is impressively long and there is plenty of complexity to come, so this will certainly be a fine bottle. 2020-2045+. **93-94.**

2014 Meursault “Clos des Bouchères”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Clos des Bouchères had only been filtered the day before my visit, but it seemed relatively unaffected and its quality was pretty self-evident. The nose wafts from the glass in a very elegant blend of lime blossoms, chalky minerality, pear, apple, almond, a touch of iodine and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely soil-driven in personality, with a good core, fine focus and grip and impressive energy on the long finish. Structurally, this seemed just a touch laid back, but I have to believe that is a result of its filtration. 2020-2045+. **93-94.**

2014 Meursault “Charmes”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Charmes *chez* Roulot had just been bottled, but was still open and had not yet closed down post-bottling. The bouquet here is stellar, jumping from the glass in a blaze of pear, Apple, almond, a touch of youthful iodine, salty soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a good core, fine grip and a very long, poised and exquisitely focused finish. A beautiful bottle of Charmes in the making. 20102-2045. **94.**

2014 Meursault “Perrières”- Domaine Guy Roulot

The 2014 Domaine Roulot Perrières was also just filtered- the morning before my appointment- but was showing pretty well. The nose is elegant and nascently complex, offering up scents of pear, apple, passion fruit, iodine, great minerality, apple blossoms and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, long and focused, with a fine core, excellent mineral drive on the backend and a long, vibrant finish. I am sure this will be outstanding. 2022-2050. **94-95.**

Domaine Jean Chartron (Puligny-Montrachet)

Jean-Michel Chartron was a busy man when I stopped by to taste his 2014s during the week of Les Grands Jours. As the president of the growers' association for Puligny-Montrachet, he was responsible for overseeing the setup for the Puligny tasting a couple days after my visit and you could tell he had a million things to do to get the site ready for its hundreds of visitors. As is typical when I visit here in March, the lion's share of the villages and premier crus had already been bottled, with the lone exceptions in 2014 being the new bottling of Pernand-Vergelesses "les Belles Filles" and the Chassagne "Caillerets", both of which had a bit later completions of their malolactic fermentations and were still in tank. There is another new addition to the lineup this year, beyond the Pernand Blanc, a Santenay "Champs Perrier" Blanc, which is yet another example of a top producer in Puligny reaching out to this village to add a serious bottling that will offer excellent value. Amongst the grand crus, all were still in tank and destined for bottling in the coming weeks after my visit. Jean-Michel Chartron has been on quite a roll of late, but his 2014s look poised to compete favorably with his beautiful lineup of 2010s as the best he has made in the last decade. This is a very, very strong set of wines in 2014!

2014 Bourgogne Blanc "Clos de la Combe"- Domaine Jean Chartron

Monsieur Chartron's 2014 Bourgogne bottling was showing well at the time of my visit, offering up a bright nose of apple, a youthful touch of grapefruit, chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and nicely balanced, with a good core, fine focus and a long, quite racy finish. Good juice. 2016-2030. **88.**

2014 Haute Côtes de Beaune Blanc "En Bois Guilleman"- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Haute Côtes de Beaune Blanc from Domaine Chartron is very floral and very stylish this year, delivering a fine blend of pear, lemon zest, acacia blossoms, a touch of pastry cream and a nice base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and shows fine backend energy, with a good core, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the long and stylish finish. Really a lovely bargain this year! 2016-2030. **89+.**

2014 Santenay "Champs Perrier"- Domaine Jean Chartron

The new 2014 Santenay "Champs Perrier" is excellent on both the nose and palate and will be another great value in the domaine's portfolio this year. The bouquet is very stylish, wafting from the glass in a mélange of pear, lemon, lovely, chalky soil tones, *crème pâtissière* and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and racy, with a succulent core of fruit, fine focus and grip and a long, refined and vibrant finish. This is a terrific new addition! 2016-2030. **90.**

2014 Savigny-lès-Beaune "les Pimentiers" Blanc- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Savigny-lès-Beaune "les Pimentiers" Blanc from Domaine Jean Chartron is also very fine, delivering a fine aromatic constellation of lime, a touch of crab apple, quince, white flowers, stony minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nicely reserved in profile, with a good core, lovely focus and grip and a bright, snappy finish. This will want at least a year in the cellar to more fully blossom, but will be delicious. 2017-2035. **90.**

2014 Rully "Montmain"- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Rully from Jean-Michel is a fine example. The bouquet is quite classic in its blend of apple, wet stone minerality, dried flowers, lime zest and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is crisp, full-bodied, long and nicely focused, with a good core, bright acids and fine length and grip on the bouncy finish. 2016-2025. **89.**

2014 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Belles Filles”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The new cuvée here of Pernand-Vergelesses “les Belles Filles” was raised in twenty percent new oak, and due to a slightly slower finish to its malo, was still in tank at the time of my visit. The bouquet is pure and classy, offering up scents of apple, pear, chalky minerality, white flowers and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and classy, with a good core, fine bounce and grip on the backend and a long, nicely structured finish. This will certainly be accessible out of the blocks, but it will be better with a year in the cellar to more fully blossom. 2017-2030+. **90.**

2014 St. Aubin “Perrières”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 premier cru bottling of Perrières from St. Aubin is really lovely this year *chez* Chartron. The bouquet is pure and stylish, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, lemon zest, chalky minerality, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is quite deep at the core, full-bodied and zesty, with fine complexity and grip and a long, racy finish. This is really lovely juice. 2016-2035. **91+**.

2014 St. Aubin “Murgers des Dents de Chien”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Murgers des Dents de Chien is even better than the Perrières in this vintage, offering up a superb nose of pear, white peach, chalky soil tones, a touch of acacia blossom, incipient notes of pastry cream and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and has a bit more stuffing at the core than the Perrières, with a fine girdle of acidity, bright acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and nicely reserved finish. Classy juice. 2018-2035+. **92.**

2014 Meursault “les Pierres”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Meursault AC here is quite wide open in personality out of the blocks, but seems to lack just a touch of energy *vis à vis* the Chassagne and Puligny *villages* examples, which I would attribute to the hail in the village in June. The nose is very pretty, wafting from the glass in a mix of apple, a touch of tangerine, hazelnut, a bit of iodine, chalky soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and has nice framing acids, with a good core, plenty of early generosity and good length on the complex finish. This will drink well right out of the blocks. 2016-2030. **90.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Benoites”- Domaine Jean Chartron

Jean-Michel’s 2014 Chassagne AC bottling has more vibrancy and bounce than the Meursault this year, jumping from the glass in a lovely aromatic blend of lemon, pear, a fine base of soil, dried flowers, hints of butteriness and a nice base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a lovely core, fine focus and grip and a long, zesty finish. A fine example. 2016-2035. **91.**

2014 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Jean Chartron

Domaine Chartron always produces a very, very strong example of Puligny *villages* and the 2014 is another in that long line of excellent bottlings. The bouquet is pure, focused and very vibrant, delivering scents of white peach, apple, chalky soil tones, a potpourri of spring flowers, incipient notes of *crème patissière* and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite svelte and elegant on the attack, with a fine core, bright acids, lovely focus and grip and a long, energetic and nicely lifted finish. Fine juice. 2016-2035. **91+**.

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Caillerets”- Domaine Jean Chartron

As I noted above, the 2014 Chassagne “Caillerets” was still in tank at the time of my visit and was absolutely singing. The great young nose soars from the glass in a nascently complex blend of lemon, pear, a touch of tangerine, kaleidoscopic minerality, floral tones and vanillin

oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and absolutely rock solid at the core, with a fine sense of youthful reserve, laser-like focus, racy acids and outstanding length and grip on the zesty and electric finish. This is a great example of this superb *terroir*. 2020-2040+. **94.**

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “Folatières”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Folatières from Domaine Chartron is another lovely example of the vintage, and amongst these last premier crus, this is the one that will drink the most charmingly out of the blocks. The bouquet offers up a lovely constellation of pear, white peach, fresh almond, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and juicy, with a bit more sense of reserve than the wide open and very inviting nose suggests. The wine has a fine core, lovely soil signature and very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Despite its very engaging personality out of the blocks, I would try to give it at least a year or two to more fully blossom on the palate, but it is not going to be easy keeping one's hands off of this wine in the cellar! 2018-2040. **92+.**

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “Clos de la Pucelle”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 vintage is really exceptional for the Clos de la Pucelle. The stunning nose offers up a youthfully complex blend of pear, white peach, a touch of orange zest, fresh almond, incipient pastry cream, chalky minerality and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly classic in profile, with a superb core, a lovely girdle of acidity, great focus and grip and a very long, very pure and racy finish. This is still a puppy and should be tucked away for a handful of years in the cellar to really let it blossom completely. Great juice! 2021-2050. **94.**

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “Clos des Caillerets”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Clos des Caillerets is even better! The stunning bouquet roars from the glass in a very refined blend of pear, apple, lemon blossoms, a very, very complex base of limestone minerality, vanillin oak and a gentle topnote of acacia blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nascently complex, with a great core of fruit, superb mineral drive and a very long, laser-like and racy finish. Stunning wine. 2021-2050. **95.**

2014 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Corton-Charlemagne from Jean-Michel Chartron is outstanding, but perhaps cannot quite match the refinement of his stellar Clos des Caillerets this year. The quite youthful bouquet is a fine and classic blend of apple, a touch of grapefruit, chalky minerality, hints of the pastry cream to come with bottle age, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and broad-shouldered, with a fine core of fruit, lovely mineral drive and a very long, racy and still quite primary finish. There is a fine combination here of deep fruit and a serious girdle of acidity that should carry the wine far into the future. 2022-2050+. **93+.**

2014 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Domaine Chartron Bâtard-Montrachet is a great wine in the making. The deep and pure nose offers up a primary constellation of apple, pear, orange zest, a great base of chalky soil tones, lemon blossoms and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, racy and absolutely rock solid at the core, with outstanding focus and grip, a properly reserved personality out of the blocks and a very, very long, perfectly balanced finish. Stellar juice. 2023-2060+. **95+.**

2014 Chevalier-Montrachet “Clos des Chevaliers”- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Clos des Chevaliers is equally profound and absolutely classic in profile this year. The outstanding nose offers up scents of pear, apple, fresh almond, incipient *crème patissière*, a fine base of complex, chalky minerality, lovely floral tones and a discreet base of

vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and primary, with outstanding mid-palate depth, lovely cut and grip and a very long, laser-like and supremely elegant finish. A brilliant wine in the making. 2023-2060+. **96+**.

2014 Montrachet- Maison Jean Chartron

Jean-Michel Chartron's Montrachet is not from his own vineyards, and though this is always a very good example, it can never quite match the precision and purity of his own grand crus. The 2014 is lovely, wafting from the glass in a ripe blend of apple, peach, a hint of honey, a fine base of soil, acacia blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core,. Bright acids and a long, juicy and fairly accessible finish. I would give this three or four years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers to emerge. 2019-2040. **93+**.

Vins Rouges de Domaine Jean Chartron

2014 Haute Côtes de Beaune Rouge "Sous la Roche"- Domaine Jean Chartron

The 2014 Sous la Roche rouge has turned out quite nicely this year. The bouquet is a youthful blend of black cherries, game, a touch of forest floor and a nice base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, long and nicely balanced, with a good core and a bit of backend tannin. This had only been bottled the week before my visit and was starting already to close down again, so my score could be just a tad conservative. 2016-2030. **87-88**.

Chassagne-Montrachet

Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard (Chassagne-Montrachet)

Richard Fontaine and his daughter Céline have made absolutely stunning 2014s. All the white wines were bottled over the winter months of 2015 and had recovered beautifully by the time I stopped by to taste them towards the end of March. As was the case with the 2013s here, the precision to the expression of each underlying terroir is really vivid again in 2014 chez Fontaine, with the wines also showing a bit more amplitude out of the blocks to their pure fruit components than was the case with the previous vintage. There is really excellent inner mouth tension in each wine here that gives the wines vibrancy and really impressive backend energy. This is a vintage where the white wines will generally drink beautifully right out of the blocks, but where most of them also possess such beautiful balances and zesty acidity that it will be advisable to give them a few years in the cellar to allow more of their secondary layers of complexity to more fully come to the fore. It is truly an exceptional vintage for the domaine's white wines, and the reds here are also excellent examples of the 2014 vintage. While the Fontaines were fortunate with their white wines in this vintage, as the hail on June 28th hit further north than Chassagne, their parcels in both Clos des Chênes and Rugiens were hammered, so that they lost sixty percent of their production in the former and fully seventy-five percent in Rugiens! It has just been so hard on these two communes in the last several vintages, and as I write this report up on the 2014s, news comes to me that the villages have been hit by a severe frost this year and the crop will once again be very small in these two communes! Will Mother Nature ever relent again in Volnay and Pommard?



Richard Fontaine in his cellars in Chassagne-Montrachet.

Vins Blancs

2014 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Bourgogne Blanc from the Fontaines is a lovely example, offering up a pure and vibrant nose of pear, apple, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish, crisp and shows impressive depth at the core, with bright acids and fine length and grip on the surprisingly serious finish. Really a fine bottle. 2016-2025+. **89.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Chassagne *villages* from Fontaine-Gagnard is as good as many of the premier crus out there from other estates. The bouquet is really refined this year, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of pear, apple, an incipient note of *crème patissière*, chalky soil tones, a deft touch of vanillin oak and a lovely topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and very well-balanced, with a fine core, excellent focus and grip and a long, vibrant finish. This is really a superb AC. 2016-2035. **91.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “la Maltroie”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

Maltroie can sometimes be a touch heavy-handed in style when young, but this is emphatically not the case with this very svelte 2014 from the Fontaine family. The wine offers up a superb nose of pear, a touch of fresh pineapple, wet stone minerality, floral tones, vanillin oak and lovely smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp

and complex, with fine mid-palate depth, excellent cut and grip and a long, poised and perfectly balanced finish. Fine juice. 2018-2040. **92.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet- “Clos des Murées”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Clos des Murées is also very elegant and vibrant in personality this year, wafting from the glass in a fine aromatic constellation of pear, apple, lemon blossoms, lovely minerality and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with fine cut and grip and a long, bouncy and very promising finish. Another lovely bottle in the making, the 2014 Clos des Murées will need a couple more years in the cellar to blossom than the Maltroie, but will be equally fine once it reaches its plateau. 2020-2040+. **92.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Clos St. Jean is also nicely reserved out of the blocks and will need a few years to start to drink with real generosity, but it is going to be another really lovely bottle from Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard. The pure and primary nose offers up scents of pear, apple, a touch of almond, chalky soil tones, vanillin oak and spring flowers. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and shows off excellent mid-palate depth, with superb acidity and focus, lovely soil signature and a long, balanced and still quite primary finish. 2019-2040. **92.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chenevottes”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Chenevottes *chez* Fontaine is stellar. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a vibrant blend of pear, tangerine, a touch of almond butter, chalky soil tones, citrus zest and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, focused and very solid at the core, with fine focus and grip, excellent balance and outstanding cut on the long and very precise finish. High class juice. 2016-2040. **93.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet Vergers”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Vergers from the Fontaines is also a lovely wine and is clearly as long and pure as the Chenevottes, but without perhaps the same stunning backend energy. The bouquet is all charm and nascent complexity, delivering a lovely blend of pear, apple, lime blossoms, chalky soil tones and a lovely base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very stylish, with bright acids, fine focus and grip and a long, classic and elegant finish. Fine, fine juice. 2019-2040. **92+.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeots”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Morgeots is outstanding from Monsieur Fontaine, offering up a beautifully precise and fairly primary bouquet of lemon, pear, chalky soil tones, citrus zest, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and laser-like in its focus, with a rock solid core, great soil signature and a very long, snappy and complex finish. A dynamite example of Morgeots. 2020-2040+. **93+.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Boudriotte”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Boudriotte is also excellent here this year, but it does not quite possess the same mid-palate intensity of the Morgeots. The bouquet is pure and stylish, wafting from the glass in a mix of orange, pear, complex minerality, citrus peel, vanillin oak and lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully delineated, with good, but not great depth at the core, bright acids, impeccable focus and balance and a very long, nascently complex finish. This will drink beautifully right out of the blocks. 2016-2035. **92+.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “la Grande Montagne”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The tiny monopole of la Grande Montagne is really superb this year and one of the best premier crus in the cellar in 2014. The nose delivers a complex and very vibrant blend of apple, pear, chalky minerality, citrus blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-

bodied, complex and very elegant in profile, with a fine core, bright acids and excellent backend energy on the long and promising finish. A beautiful wine that will want just a couple of years in the cellar to allow it to blossom fully. 2018-2035+. **93.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Caillerets”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The Fontaine family’s 2014 Caillerets is an absolutely classic example of this fantastic *terroir*. The deep, pure and vibrant bouquet delivers a great constellation of apple, pear, a touch of fresh pineapple, complex, chalky minerality, spring flowers, lemon zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very intense at the core, with great cut and grip, laser-like focus and a very, very long, vibrant and nascently complex finish. A great wine in the making! 2020-2050. **94+.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “la Romanée”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 la Romanée from the Fontaines is also an excellent wine in the making, but it is more reserved in personality out of the blocks than the stunning Caillerets and will need a year or two longer in the cellar to reach its plateau. The bouquet is fairly primary, but deep and pure, offering up a blend of pear, pineapple, stony minerality, spring flowers, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and reserved in profile, with a rock solid core. Great cut and grip and a very long, youthful and seamlessly balanced finish. All this beautiful wine needs is time. 2021-2050. **94.**

2014 Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

I love the domaine’s example of Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet and the 2014 is one of the finest young vintages of this cuvée that I have tasted here. The stunning nose is youthful and very pure, soaring from the glass in a fine constellation of pear, apple, a touch of pastry cream, stunning chalky soil tones, spring flowers, vanillin oak and a vibrant topnote of lemon zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and bottomless in the mid-palate, with impeccable focus and grip, bright, snappy acids and a very, very long, intense and seamless finish. Stunning juice. 2020-2060+. **96.**

2014 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Bâtard-Montrachet *chez* Fontaine is more closed down than the Criots, but it displays enormous backend energy, cut and grip and probably will catch the Criots once it has had sufficient slumber in the cellar. The primary nose is deep and pure, offering up scents of apple, pear, superb, chalky soil tones, lemon blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and powerfully built, but with the great balance of the vintage very much in evidence as well, with a very, very long, primary and racy finish of outstanding potential. 2023-2060+. **95+.**

2014 Montrachet- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The entire range of 2014s from Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard is brilliant, but the Montrachet this year possesses that extra dimension that made this *terroir* so cherished a century or two ago. The celestial bouquet soars from the glass in a stunning and youthful blend of pear, a touch of fresh pineapple, iodine, complex, chalky minerality, a touch of bacon fat, gorgeous floral tones, vanillin oak and a topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with stunning focus and grip, electric, seamless acidity and an utterly pure, refined and magical finish. Montrachet simply does not get any better than the 2014 *chez* Fontaine. 2021-2075. **100.**

Vins Rouges

2014 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

Two-thirds of the vines for the Bourgogne rouge bottling here lie in Volnay, with the other third in Chassagne. This wine has turned out really nicely in 2014, wafting from the glass in a stylish bouquet of cherries, strawberries, chalky soil tones, a touch of woodsmoke and a topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fairly complex and nicely juicy at the core, with just a touch of backend tannin and impressive length and grip on the finish. This is really very elegant this year. 2018-2035. **88.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

Happily for the domaine, the Chassagne *rouge* bottlings were not affected by the hail at the end of June in 2014 and the entire range has turned out beautifully. The 2014 Chassagne AC *rouge* is deep, pure and just starting to blossom on the nose, offering up scents of red and black cherries, a touch of raw cocoa, a fine base of soil and a lovely topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very promising, with a lovely core, ripe tannins and a long, pure and still quite primary finish. This was bottled at the end of January, so perhaps it is still a bit shut down from the *mise* and will show a more forward personality again in a few more months. It will be a terrific value and a wine that would be great on restaurant wine lists. 2020-2045+. **90+.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean” Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

I love Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard’s example of Clos St. Jean *rouge* and the 2014 is going to be another excellent wine from the estate this year. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a classic and very elegant blend of cherries, strawberries, chalky soil tones, gamebirds, just a touch of vanillin oak and a topnote of roses. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, long and impressively complex out of the blocks, with the inherent elegance of the vintage really making its presence felt here. The finish is very long, focused and perfectly balanced, with suave tannins and lovely balance and grip. An absolute steal for red Burgundy in 2014! 2020-2055. **92.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeots Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The Fontaines’ Morgeots red hails from vines in the vineyard of Boudriotte and the 2014 has turned out beautifully. The bouquet is deep, pure and a bit more reserved in personality than the Clos St. Jean, offering up a deep and classy nose of sweet dark berries, black cherries, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil tones, just a touch of vanillin oak and a topnote of currant leaf. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a fine core, very good length and grip and a well-balanced and ripely tannic finish. Fine juice in the making. 2022-2050. **92.**

2014 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Clos des Chênes is a good, solid example of the vintage that shows a bit more chewiness than the Chassagne *rouge* bottlings this year, as a result of the hail. However, the nose is clean, precise and quite classic in its aromatic mélange of cassis, dark berries, espresso, woodsmoke, gamebirds, herb tones, dark soil and a nice touch of currant leaf again in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite reserved in profile, with a good core, ripe, chewy tannins and fine length and grip on the youthful finish. This will be a fine bottle in the fullness of time, but it cannot quite match the elegance displayed by the Chassagne reds this year. 2024-2060+. **91+.**

2014 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard

The 2014 Rugiens from Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard is just a bit less chewy out of the blocks than the Clos des Chênes, though this too is a bit less polished structurally than the reds

that were unaffected by the hail. The bouquet is deep and primary, offering up scents of cherries, quince, lovely minerality, gamebirds, woodsmoke and a nice touch of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely transparent in personality, with a good core, moderate, chewy tannins and good length and grip on the tangy and focused finish. This will be a very good example with sufficient bottle age. 2022-2060. **92.**



Domaine Michel Niellon (Chassagne-Montrachet)

Michel Coutoux has fashioned lovely examples of this fine white Burgundy vintage. The wines had all been bottled leading up to the harvest of 2015, with the exception of the two grand crus, which were bottled a bit later. The days when we could speak of two grand crus at Domaine Michel Niellon are going to have to be put on hold for a bit after the 2015 vintage, as the very, very old and diseased vines in Bâtard-Montrachet finally had to be grubbed up after this harvest. As Monsieur Coutoux commented, “it killed my father-in-law, but he also understood that we would have to do it one day, and they were really so feeble now that it just made no sense to try and keep them going for even a few years longer.” Happily, the penultimate vintage of these very old vines is stunning and we still have the 2015 to look forward to next year, after which there will be at least a three year hiatus of Bâtard from the domaine. I did not taste the 2014 Chenevottes this year and forgot to ask Monsieur Coutoux about it until after I had returned to my gîte and realized it was not in the lineup of 2014s. As readers may recall, starting in the 2013 vintage, the family had purchased a second parcel in Chenevottes, making

the quantity a bit more viable (in the past, the tiny production always went to the market in England) for distribution and Monsieur Coutoux had shown the wine last spring. Maybe the UK importers have gobbled up the larger number of bottles exclusively, so that there was no reason to show the 2014?

2014 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Michel Niellon

The new bottling of Bourgogne Blanc is produced from a small parcel that Monsieur Coutoux planted right outside of the new winery on the route to Santenay. These are still young vines and this cuvée will continue to gain in depth as the vines mature. The 2014 is very pretty and well-made, offering up scents of lime, apple, a nice base of soil and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and nicely mineral on the backend, with crisp acids and nice cut and grip on the finish. Good juice. 2016-2025. **88.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon

I have been a long-time fan of the Chassagne *villages* bottling from Domaine Niellon, as I have been fortunate to drink this wine with some regularly since the vintages of the late 1980s. The 2014 is going to be another lovely wine, wafting from the glass in a blend of apple, a touch of pineapple, a fine base of soil tones, spring flowers and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a fine core, lovely focus and balance and a long, zesty finish. 2016-2035. **90+.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Champgains”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2014 Champgains is another strong bottle in the making, with a bit more mid-palate plushness than the *villages*. The bouquet delivers a fine, youthful mix of pear, apple, deep soil tones, orange peel, vanillin oak, a touch of smokiness and a gently herbal topnote that I often find in this cuvée. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and classy, with a good core, fine focus and balance and a long, vibrant and still quite primary finish. This is approachable already, but I would be inclined to give it a couple of years in the cellar to develop further. 2018-2035+. **91+.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos de la Maltroie”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2014 Clos de la Maltroie from Monsieur Coutoux is a lovely wine, offering up a nicely musky bouquet of apple, pineapple, musky floral tones, a good vein of minerality, citrus peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with very good mid-palate depth, lovely cut and grip and a long, vibrant finish. This too will want a couple of years in the cellar to really start to blossom. 2019-2035+. **92.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The vineyard of Clos St. Jean has quite a bit of clay in it and I generally cherish the red wines from this *terroir* more than I do the white wines. However, the 2014 from Michel Coutoux is really special and was absolutely singing at the time of my visit. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a fine blend of apple, tangerine, superb minerality, citrus blossoms, vanillin oak and a topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, vibrant and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, excellent focus and most impressive backend energy on the pure and very long finish. *Chapeau!* 2019-2035+. **93.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Vergers”- Domaine Michel Niellon

With each passing year, the vines get older here and this wine climbs closer to its accustomed to level of quality. There was a long stretch when this and the Clos de la Truffière were always the top premier crus in the cellar, but after the Vergers was replanted, this has a bit more competition amongst the lineup of premier crus. The 2014 Vergers is lovely, wafting from

the glass in a very expressive blend of apple, pear, acacia blossoms, a hint of *crème patissière*, lime blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and complex, with a good core, but not quite the same mid-palate intensity as the Clos St. Jean this year. The finish is long, focused and vibrant. A lovely bottle that will drink very well right from the outset. 2016-2035. **92.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chaumées Clos de la Truffière”- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2014 Clos de la Truffière is outstanding, offering up a stunning young nose of lime, apple, very complex minerality, a whisper of smokiness, citrus blossoms and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, and nascently complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, excellent backend mineral drive, brisk acids and laser-like focus on the very, very long and perfectly balanced finish. Excellent cut and grip this year. 2018-2040. **94.**

2014 Chevalier-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon

The 2014 Chevalier-Montrachet from Domaine Niellon is utterly classic in profile and a great wine in the making. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a beautiful constellation of apple, pear, chalky minerality, a touch of orange zest, incipient notes of pastry cream and a judicious base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and crisp, with a nice sense of reserve out of the blocks, bottomless depth at the core, a fine girdle of acidity and superb length and grip on the very long, poised and outstanding finish. Classic. 2021-2060. **96+.**

2014 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon

There will be one more go-round with the old vines in the Domaine Niellon parcel of Bâtard-Montrachet, but this most likely will be the last of the “classic” vintages of this wine, as early reports on the 2015 vintage are that it will not be as strong for white wines as is the case with the 2014. The bouquet here is stellar, offering up a young and vibrant blend of apple, pear, lime blossoms, complex, chalky soil tones, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very racy in profile, with a superb core, great cut and grip and a very long, tightly-knit and brilliant finish. A magical wine in the making! 2021-2060. **97.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean” Rouge- Domaine Michel Niellon

Domaine Niellon still has relatively old pinot noir vines in their section of Clos St. Jean still committed to producing red wine, as these vines are between forty-five and fifty years of age and they have produced a beautiful bottle in the 2014 vintage. This wine was bottled in November of 2015 and was nicely recovered by the end of March, offering up a pure and red fruity bouquet of strawberries, cherries, woodsmoke, a nice touch of fresh thyme and fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and elegant in personality, with a sappy core, fine length and grip and a ripely tannic, youthful finish. Fine juice, but it will need a few years in the cellar to start to blossom. 2022-2050. **90+.**

St. Aubin

Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils (St. Aubin)

I had the pleasure again this year to be greeted on this visit by both the Prudhon brothers, Vincent and Philippe, who are turning this domaine into one of the very finest in the Côte de Beaune. The entire range of 2014s is pure, transparent and vibrant and the Prudhon family has clearly not missed the opportunity to make great wines in this vintage. This was my last visit of my week in Burgundy, before moving on to Campania for the next week, and it was a perfectly fitting close to more than a month spent tasting the excellent 2014s. All of the wines had already been bottled by the time of my tasting on the 26th of March, but a few of the wines here had late malos and were bottled later as a result. The two Puligny bottlings were amongst these

sluggards in the cellars in 2014 and were only bottled a few weeks prior to my visit, so I have scored them in a range. While the Prudhon family is best known for the excellent quality of their white wines (deservedly so I might add!), I really liked the 2014 red wines here as well, as the elegance of the vintage really works well with their red wine terroirs. This is a domaine on a hot streak at the moment and their 2014s are outstanding wines that deserve a place in any conscientiously well-stocked Burgundy cellar!

Vins Blancs

2014 Bourgogne Aligoté- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 Bourgogne Aligoté is excellent from the Prudhons, offering up a bright and classy bouquet of lemon, green apple, plenty of chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is crisp m full-bodied and nicely racy, with a good core and fine length and grip. A lovely wine. 2016-2025. **87+**.

2014 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 Bourgogne Blanc shares the same fine raciness of the above wine, but with a bit more elegance to its fruit component from its chardonnay *cépages*. The nose wafts from the glass in a very pure and impressive blend of pear, apple, chalky minerality, lemon zest and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and nicely juicy on the attack, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, vibrant and minerally finish. This is really strong this year! 2016-2025+. **89**.

2014 St. Aubin “le Ban”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 St. Aubin “le Ban” from Domaine Prudhon is a bit more closed out of the blocks than the very stylish Bourgogne, but this too is a strong wine in the making. The nose wafts from the glass in a blend of pear, apple, a hint of the pastry cream to come, lovely minerality, spring flowers and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nicely structured, with a fine core, vibrant acids and lovely focus and grip on the finish. Good juice. 2017-2030. **90**.

2014 St. Aubin “les Castets”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhons’ 2014 les Castets is also outstanding, with really great purity and bounce. This wine had the latest malo in the cellar to finish up, so this was only bottled in January of 2016. The bouquet is lovely, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of apple, pear, orange blossoms, chalky soil tones and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine si deep, full-bodied and really defined by its minerality this year, with a fine core and lovely cut and grip on the focused and classy finish. Impressive. 2018-2035. **91**.

2014 St. Aubin “Sur le Sentier du Clou”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 Sur le Sentier du Clou is another really fine bottle of Saint Aubin, offering up a very refined bouquet of pear, lemon, a touch of *crème patissière*, limestone minerality, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and utterly seamless in its balance, with a fine core, lovely acids and excellent focus and grip on the long finish. 2019-2035+. **91+**.

2014 St. Aubin “les Perrières”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 St. Aubin “les Perrières” from Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils is beautiful this year and is the most minerally-defined wine thus far in the lineup. The bouquet offers up a classy constellation of delicious apples, pears, a really fine base of chalky minerality, spring flowers, vanillin oak, lemon zest and just a whisper of the pastry cream to come. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, focused and supremely elegant, with a lovely core of fruit, a tight-knit structure

and a long, zesty and youthful finish. I really like the backend lift and grip here. 2019-2035+. **92+**.

2014 St. Aubin “Sur Gamay”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 Sur Gamay *chez* Prudhon is more primary in personality, but with fine depth and nascent complexity. The wine offers up a promising nose of apple, pear, *crème patissière*, chalky soil tones, white flowers and a nice touch of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and classy on the attack, with a superb core, a fine girdle of acidity and a long, racy and youthful finish. This will be a lovely wine, but tuck it away for three or four years before broaching. 2018-2035. **91+**.

2014 St. Aubin “les Chantennières”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhons have fifty year-old vines in Chantennières and they have really excelled in this fine vintage. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a fine blend of pear, sweet apple, a touch of nutskin, complex, chalky minerality, citrus blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, focused and full, with a rock solid core, great mineral drive, bright acids and outstanding focus and grip on the long and classy finish. This is terrific juice. 2018-2035+. **92+**.

2014 St. Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

Choosing between the Remilly and Murgers in the cellars here is always difficult, as both wines are utterly exemplary bottles of their respective *terroirs*, but my gut feeling is that the 2014 vintage will find the Remilly winning the race by a nose. This is great, great white Burgundy in the making (and clearly the match for top premier crus in Chassagne or Puligny!), soaring from the glass in a stunning blend of pear, lemon zest, *crème patissière*, complex, chalky minerality, spring flowers and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate is deep, full-bodied and absolutely beautifully balanced, with great focus and blossoming elegance, a fien core and a very long, minerally and seamless finish. A stunning young bottle of St. Aubin. 2018-2035+. **94**.

2014 St. Aubin “les Murgers Dents de Chien”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 Murgers Dents de Chien is also outstanding and will not disappoint anyone who is lucky enough to secure some for the cellar. The bouquet offers up a pure and classy blend of apple, pear, pastry cream, a lovely base of limestone, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and bit more primary in personality than the Remilly out of the blocks, with a fine girdle of acidity, wonderful purity and a long, vibrant finish. Classic juice. 2018-2035+. **93+**.

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “les Enseignères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The les Enseignères was another slow wine to finish up its malo in 2014, so this wine was not bottled until the end of February of 2016 and was still shut down from the *mise*. The nose offers up scents of pear, white peach, fresh almond, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure on the attack and sports a fine core of fruit, with good soil signature and a long, vibrant finish. This was showing a bit chunky at the time of my visit, but I am sure this is just a reflection of the recent *mise*. 2018-2035. **90-92+**.

2014 Puligny-Montrachet “la Garenne”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 la Garenne was another slow malo wine this year, so this was bottled on the same date as the Enseignères. This is still out of sorts from its bottling, but the underlying material is clearly quite fine and this will certainly be a lovely wine when it has had a chance to recover from the *mise*. The nose offers up scents of white peach, apple, chalky soil tones, a hint of almond, spring flowers and new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and well-balanced, with good length and grip. This is out of sorts, but it is easy to appreciate its potential, which is very fine indeed. 2019-2040. **92-94**.

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Houillères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The vineyard of les Houillères has a lot of clay in it and the wines here can sometimes be a bit four-square, but the inherent elegance of the vintage has worked its magic and this wine is very elegant this year. The nose wafts from the glass in a classy blend of apple, a touch of tangerine, fresh lime, a lovely base of soil, vanillin oak and a zesty topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and classy, with a good core, fine soil drive and a long, complex finish. Fine juice. 2016-2030+. **91.**

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chenevottes”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhons’ 2014 Chenevottes is really lovely this year. The wine offers up a very classy bouquet of pear, apple, white flowers, incipient notes of butter, pastry cream, chalky soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and elegant, with a lovely core of fruit, impeccable balance, bright acids and a very long, precise and succulent finish. Classic Chenevottes. 2018-2035. **93.**



Vins Rouges

2014 St. Aubin “les Argillers” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 les Argillers was bottled at the end of February as well (at the same time as the Pulignys), but was not as shaken as the white wines and was actually showing beautifully. The bouquet is pure and red fruity, wafting from the glass in a blend of strawberries, cherries, chalky soil, woodsmoke and gamebird. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely transparent

out of the blocks, with a good core, fine focus and a bit of backend tannin perking up the long finish. Good juice. 2020-2040. **88+**.

2014 St. Aubin “les Frionnes” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 les Frionnes rouge was bottled in October of 2015 and was more shut down than the les Argillers. The wine has fine promise, offering up a pretty and youthful bouquet of raspberries, strawberries, *pigeon*, a fine base of soil, a touch of fresh herb tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, very soil-driven in personality, with ripe tannins, good focus and grip and a long finish. Despite this being a touch more closed, I think this will actually blossom a year or two ahead of the les Argillers. Another fine St. Aubin rouge bottling. 2019-2040. **88+**.

2014 St. Aubin “les Rouges Gorges” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The 2014 les Rouges Gorges was really singing at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil, gamebird and a distinct topnote of fresh thyme. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and already quite velvety on the attack, with a sappy core, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the superbly balanced finish. This has to be one of the great sleeper reds of the vintage! 2020-2045. **90+**.

2014 St. Aubin “Sur le Sentier du Clou” Vieilles Vigne Rouge- Domaine Prudhon et Fils

The Prudhon family’s seventy year-old pinot noir vines in Sentier du Clou have really excelled in the 2014 vintage, as this wine offers up great depth and purity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a fine blend of sweet dark berries, black cherries, woodsmoke, *pigeon*, a touch of espresso and an excellent base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved in profile, with a lovely core of black fruit, fine soil signature and a very long, ripely tannic and vibrant finish. This will need time in the cellar to blossom, but it is a fine bottle in the making. 2022-2050. **91+**.

2014 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Chambres” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils

The les Chambres *rouge* bottling from Domaine Prudhon is produced from a small parcel of forty year-old vines and is really quite elegant in personality in 2014. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a blend of plums, black cherries, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, gamebird, fresh thyme and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy at the core, with suave, moderate tannins and lovely length and grip on the very well-balanced finish. Fine juice. 2019-2045. **91+**.