

# VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman

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## RECENTLY TASTED OLD SCHOOL AND NEO-CLASSICAL AMERICAN WINES



*Rolling vineyard hillsides in the Russian River Valley in Sonoma County.*

Though the title claims that these are “recently-tasted” American wines from the old school and their inspired new colleagues, the genesis of this article actually dates back to last year when I began working on my piece on Kalin Cellars which finally appeared in February of this year. At that time, I realized that I had also accrued a lot of tasting notes on older American wines out of my cellar (and from my generous friends in the tasting groups that I participate in here in New York) in the last year or so and also had built up a sizable pile of samples from US producers who had heard of View From the Cellar and felt that their more classically-styled wines might find a sympathetic ear here. A number of these wines were from small estates that I had not even heard of previously- folks like Poe Vineyards, Knez Winery, Bravium and Kendric Vineyards, and others were from good “old school” producers whose samples were languishing in my cellar during what has been a very busy twelve months of nearly constant travel for me. After working on the Kalin piece early in this year (one of the most pleasurable periods of research I can ever recall, by the way!), I knew I had to find time to get this generous pile of samples tasted through and this article finally into a coming issue. So, when I returned from my last trip to Burgundy in early June, I reached out to many of my favorite old school producers in California and Washington for samples of their current

releases to round out the feature and got to work pulling corks on a superb array of American wines from the “traditionalist” school. Even with this issue going out a couple of weeks late, there was not time for everyone I contacted out west to send samples, so some of my favorite producers, such as Joseph Swan Vineyards and Littorai are not covered in this article, but if they send samples over the next month or two, they will certainly find their way into part two of this piece in a coming issue.

What was quite clear from the tastings I have conducted over the last several weeks is that the number of “neo-classicists” in American wine country is continuing to grow and we may well be on the edge of new renaissance in American wine, with the dinosaurs of the monster truck school of extraction, overripe fruit and over-oaked and highly-manipulated wines eventually fading into extinction and the US returning to an ageworthy and balanced style of wine that befits the legacy that was left to American winegrowers in the wines from the decades of the 1960s and 1970s. To be fair, I of course sampled very few wines from the “modern school”, as I studiously try to avoid tasting these wines if at all possible, and if one or two somehow cross my path in the course of my travels, their corresponding scores generally ensure that I do not see follow-up vintages sent along from the winery. But, I had a very interesting conversation with several collectors of these modern, cult classics, when our paths converged in Burgundy this spring, and they unanimously commented that they have been underwhelmed with most of their cult wines (of the purportedly highest pedigrees) that they have pulled out of their cellars in the last few years and which had seen more than seven or eight years of bottle age. They all spoke of finding the wines rather shriveled up in terms of fruit and far less impressive than they remembered them, with the tannins still relatively intact, but the glossy fruit of youth now gone and the wines starting to get a bit eviscerated and decidedly charmless. I opined that this is the natural evolution of wines made to show best in their youth, as these wines certainly have been, and I counseled that sending them off to auction with alacrity would be their best course of action, as this is likely to be a quite common occurrence in the years to come and eventually the goose that laid these golden eggs is going to be out of fashion.

I should note that I offered to stop by any time that they want to organize a tasting or two of their cult wines, so that we could taste them together and see how their evolutions looked likely to course over the coming years, so perhaps one day I will have a bevy of notes on medium-aged cult classics to grace these pages. But, in the interim, I have been very pleased to see how many svelte, low alcohol and soil-driven wines have found their way out of the vineyards of the western US and into my tastings in the last couple of vintages, and there really are some exciting new wines out there these days that will delight lovers of American wines from the glory days of the ‘60s and ‘70s. One of the things that was readily apparent from these tastings was that the epicenter of return to the old school stylistic paradigm, at least in California, is emphatically not Napa Valley. Far more interesting wines are coming out of the Santa Cruz Mountains, Sonoma and Mendocino Counties these days than out of Napa, and it does really seem, with a few noteworthy and truly exceptional estates, Napa is really the home of the least interesting and most over-priced wines in the entire world these days. This is a sad reality (or at least my opinion of the current state in Napa- others will no doubt quibble about my grip on

reality!) for the Napa Valley, for as the notes on the older vintages listed below will attest, Napa was once the absolute center of the universe for great American wines and the great legacy of superb wines produced here in decades past continues as a testament of just what is possible from these *terroirs* and vineyards, if the current miasma of high octane vinous fashion could be broken through and this region could return to its deep and impressive winegrowing roots. Just look at the beautifully poised and balanced cabernets produced by Cathy Corison in the heart of Napa Valley and one can clearly see that the potential of this region has not been lost to global warming or phylloxera in the last couple of decades, but to human culpability, technological naiveté and cynical greed.

Perhaps the most important barometer of whether or not Napa Valley will start to feel the gravitational pull of the wine world at large and start to rein in the excesses of the last few decades and again start to produce world class wines *en masse* will be the evolution of Mayacamas Vineyards under its new owner, Charles Banks. Monsieur Banks was of course, the founder of Screaming Eagle Vineyards, which is hardly a strong endorsement for optimism at Mayacamas, but his recent investment in Wind Gap (about as low octane and as far removed from the cult circles of Screaming Eagle as one can get) and the seeming lack of change in direction there inspires at least a little bit of hope for Mayacamas' fate under its new management. It will be an interesting time to watch Mayacamas, as Monsieur Banks and his associates have purchased one of the greatest *terroirs* in the world for cabernet sauvignon, not to mention an historical legacy of "just how to do it right" that stretches back through time to the Travers family's very first vintage in 1968, and the most prudent investment at Mayacamas would be to change absolutely nothing- not a single old *foudre* or one little line item in the *elevage* practices that made this wine such a legend for so many long years- but, one is hard-pressed in this day and age to hope for such a fantastical approach by a new ownership team. But, whatever happens at Mayacamas in the next few years will certainly serve as a prism to view the Napa Valley's long-term health as a world class wine-producing region.

But outside of the closed world of Napa glitter, there are an awful lot of great things going on in other parts of California wine country, and I would assume further afield in the best vineyards of Washington and Oregon (regions that have been on my "to do list" since I started [View From the Cellar](#) at the start of 2006 and which still find my plate too full for a proper stretch of visiting cellars, meeting winegrowers and tasting in depth to really have a firm grasp on the trends in these important regions). I hope that this coming year will find more time for me to investigate and reacquaint myself with these regions and their wines, as it is a glaring hole in my coverage of American wines- with the exception of the superb wines from Andrew Will Cellars in Washington, which I am planning a feature on in the next issue. Within California, things are really humming for those who love the old school style of winemaking, with the hotbed of Sonoma County and the Russian River Valley having now spread to Anderson Valley in Mendocino and even to Humboldt County (formerly, or perhaps still currently, far better known for other agricultural products besides pinot noir and chardonnay). And Kevin Harvey's Santa Cruz Mountain-based winery of Rhys Vineyards has certainly created an epicenter of change on its own in the few short years of its existence, firmly showing that the abomination of the "modern school" of California wine is a crisis of conscience, not of

climate change. As one sage connoisseur of neo-classical California wine commented to me while preparing this article, “just imagine how we would all feel if Kevin Harvey had purchased Mayacamas instead of Charles Banks!”

I should take a moment to mention that a great many of the wines that I tasted in preparation for this report (and which I will continue to taste for part two of this article) hail from the 2011 vintage in California, one of the coolest and potentially one of the most profound of recent memory for the neo-classicists and old school producers. I was in Napa and Sonoma in September of that year and remember vividly how a couple of well-known young winemakers were lamenting the *fin de saison* weather forecasts, which projected prolonged and heavy rain coming in before the sugars had climbed to the customarily scary Brix numbers that these young gents were accustomed to working with and which had them opining “that the 2011 vintage could be a total loss”, while the sugars were actually already sufficiently high enough to produce wines in the 13.5 percent range at the time they were lamenting the fate of the year! In notable contrast, when I wandered over later that afternoon to the Joseph Swan winery in the Russian River Valley, the grapes were already coming in and Rod Berglund was extremely upbeat about the potential engendered by this atypically cool season! Similarly, Kevin Harvey of Rhys Vineyards opined that 2011 “could very easily be our finest vintage to date.” I guess beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Needless to say, I have been looking forward to sinking my teeth into the 2011 vintage from California for a year and a half now and was really delighted with what I tasted from most estates, as it looks likely to be one of the most cellar-worthy vintages in many, many years- at least for traditionalists.

When one considers where the most exciting traditional styles of wines are blossoming in California wine country, it is not surprising that the varietals that are experiencing the most important renaissances are pinot noir, chardonnay and syrah. It is a pity that cabernet sauvignon producers have generally not kept pace with the ever-increasing number of top estates turning out truly impressive, old school-styled pinots and chardonnays, and if there are new Young Turks out there working with cabernet in Napa Valley (obviously, David Jeffrey’s fine new project of Calluna Vineyards in Chalk Hill is in Sonoma is outside of this lament for the fate of Napa cabernet), I have yet to cross paths with their wines. So for fanciers of this varietal (which remains my absolute favorite in the state for long-term cellaring, despite the ever-increasing number of outstanding and quite obviously ageworthy examples of pinot noir and syrah emerging with each passing year), it remains the old school producers who need to be searched out, including Heitz Wine Cellars, Ridge Vineyards, Mayacamas Vineyards (at least for the next couple of releases, while the Travers’ wines are still in the pipeline- we will see what the future brings here), Corison Vineyards, Philip Togni and Stony Hill Vineyards (yes, Mike Chelini’s fine touch extends now to this varietal and the new release of Stony Hill cabernet is truly stunning) and a handful of others, such as Ritchie Creek Vineyards. I should note that I also really loved the 2011 Snowden Vineyards cabernets that I tasted for this report, which gives me more hope for Napa, but it remains to be seen if this lower octane style at the winery is simply a result of the style of the vintage or represents an important shifting of gears here. Over in Sonoma, Calluna Vineyards’ 2010s certainly demonstrate that it remains possible to make low octane, stunning cabernet-based wines

these days and one does not have to be part of the Woodstock Generation to have learned how to make great, restrained and ageworthy cabernet-based wines in California. And, in a theme that I will be exploring in detail in the next issue, Chris Camarda up in Washington state's fine Andrew Will Cellars has been making excellent Bordeaux-inspired blends for many years, but his new releases are the most exciting wines I have tasted from him in many, many vintages, as they are decidedly lower in octane than recent releases (most in the thirteen percent range!), pure and beautifully structured wines that show that one can find great wines for the cellar from these varietals further afield than Napa, Sonoma and Santa Cruz.

However, when one starts to wander into the realm of chardonnay, pinot noir and syrah, there are so many superb choices out there these days for traditionally-styled, old school and ageworthy bottlings that it is almost a full-time job to keep up with all the good things going on with these varietals. It is not only the old school estates like Stony Hill Vineyards, Kalin Cellars, Heitz Wine Cellars, Littorai, Joseph Swan and the like who are producing truly cellar-worthy examples of chardonnay these days, as I tasted some absolutely stellar young examples from the likes of Rhys Vineyards and Porter Creek Vineyards that also looked built for the long haul, and with more medium-term cellaring potential, there was a lot to like from folks like Wind Gap and Poe Vineyards in the realm of chardonnay. With syrah, and keep in mind that I have not yet received samples from one of the very best producers of this varietal, Steve Edmunds of Edmunds St. John, there are some absolutely stellar, truly low octane and soil-driven examples hitting the market from folks like Copain Wine Cellars, Wind Gap, Porter Creek Vineyards and Rhys Vineyards. A lot of these examples have very classic Northern Rhône-inspired aromatics and flavors, but are synthesized onto more medium-full and very transparent palate formats that strike one as much more structurally akin to pinot noir than traditional wines from the likes of places like Hermitage or Cornas. It is a very inspiring and classy style that I suspect will find a broader and broader audience in the years to come, once the memory of American "monster truck" syrahs of recent times fades to the background.

In the realm of pinot noir, the American wine scene has never been awash in so many outstanding possibilities, and I say this without even having had the pleasure to really get my feet wet with Oregon pinot noir in an embarrassingly long time now. But sticking to the American regions with which I am quite familiar with these days that specialize in pinot noir and are doing some absolutely stellar work, there are literally dozens of world class producers who have shown a mastery for this varietal and have delved into the variations of *terroir* that are available throughout the varied state of California. Wines from the likes of producers such as Rhys, Kalin Cellars, Porter Creek, Joseph Swan, Copain and Littorai are really stunning testaments to just what is possible when pinot noir is planted in the right places in California and produced in such a way as to maximize its varietal purity and transparency of soil signature. Newcomers (at least to me) such as Poe Vineyards, Kendric Vineyards, Knez Winery and Bravium show that this varietal is really coming of age in several different regions of California, and today, pinot noir is really far more interesting in general than is cabernet sauvignon as a genre in the state for those interested in more traditionally styled wines. In preparation for this report I was really delighted to become reacquainted with a producer such as Napa-based

El Molinõ as well, whose wines I had been very impressed with back in my sommelier days and which I had not tasted in a long time. As the notes below will attest, it is not a prerequisite to have vineyards in the coolest AVA's such as Anderson Valley, the Sonoma Coast or the Santa Cruz Mountains to still make very, very good pinot noir (though I do note that El Molinõ has begun producing a small lot of Sonoma Coast pinot noir as well in recent times). And this of course is only the producers whose paths I crossed paths with during the last year, and there are plenty of other really good estates whose wines I have not tasted in a couple of years and who are really doing great work with pinot noir.

While most of the discussion has focused on the red wines from the US, there are some really good things going on with white wines as well these days, as more and more producers seem to be backing away from the overripe, overtly oaky and heavily *battonaged* styles of white wines- particularly chardonnays- and moving back towards a more restrained and balanced style that shows fine promise of aging with style and grace. Of course, producers such as Mount Eden, Stony Hill and Kalin Cellars have always made long-lasting and classic styles of chardonnays and been widely recognized for this fact, but the new releases from folks such as Rhys, Copain and Wind Gap seem to indicate that the number of chardonnays made for serious cellaring is growing. Then there are the old school producers such as Heitz, Forman and El Molinõ, who have always made chardonnays that cellar well- though they are not necessarily renowned for their white wines' longevity. I was very, very happy to taste through a small vertical of El Molinõ chardonnays for this report and was simply stunned with how well a wine like their 1991 chardonnay continues to drink twenty-two years out from the vintage! So good things are happening out west with this varietal as well- and, again, I note that I am only up to date with what is going on within a small slice of the California "traditionalist" wine scene and I imagine that equally exciting things are happening further north in Oregon and Washington on the white wine front.

I fully anticipate doing a second part for this report in the next issue, as there are several wineries that I contacted about samples and who did not have a chance to send them out in time for this article, and there were others that I did not yet reach out to as the pile of samples started to really pile up in my cellar and time began to run short for getting out this issue even remotely close to the original deadline! I also received a lovely vertical from Chris Camarda at Andrew Will Winery in Washington state that I could just not get to in time for this issue, so I will be doing a feature on his wines in the next issue of the newsletter as well. But, I hope that the notes below will attest to just how much good, old school wine is now coming out of the best addresses on the west coast of the United States these days, and it is certainly starting to look like the sad days of the 1990s and early 2000s are starting to recede in the face of more and more producers seeking to turn back the clock to the styles of wines that once made California famous. I apologize in advance for so many citations of the alcohol level of the wines in the notes that follow, but the reality is that it is a key indicator to the style of wine one will often find on the other side of the cork (when it has not been "watered back" dramatically to make the octane look good on the label, even if the flavors and aromatics remain undeniably scorched by notes of *sur maturité*) and it is important to know what an American wine's



level of alcohol is in any given vintage. Of course the numbers have some “wiggle room” on US wine labels, so reported levels are often inaccurate, and additionally, the percentage of alcohol seems to be getting harder and harder to read on labels in any case as wineries out west seem to be in competition to see who can use the smallest typeface and the lightest possible print color for conveying this information these days. But, I have still studiously reported the levels in many cases, at least to demonstrate that the lower stated octane levels on many of the wines from the traditionalists suggest that we are really on the edge of a sea change that may well usher in a second renaissance for American wines.



*Russian River Valley chardonnay grapes coming in at Joseph Swan in September of 2011.*

### ***Chardonnay***

#### **2012 Heitz Wine Cellar “Napa Valley” Chardonnay**

I have long been a fan of the old school style of the Heitz chardonnays, with no malo and good acidity for aging, and indeed, this bottling has a very good track record for cellaring well over ten or more years. The 2012 is a fine bottle in the making, tightly-knit, crisp and youthfully complex, with a bouquet of apple, pear, a lovely base of soil, a touch of fresh almond, a bit of leesiness and a nice, discreet base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely balanced, with a good core, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the still quite primary finish. This really will be better with a couple of years of bottle age to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Good juice. 2015-2030. **90.**



**2011 Clos Blancheau “James Berry Vineyard” Chardonnay (Paso Robles)**

The 2011 Clos Blancheau chardonnay sees no new wood during its *elevage*, being raised entirely in older casks and is very impressive for its low octane of 12.9 percent. The wine is excellent, offering up a deep and complex nose of pear, apple, a touch of *crème patissière*, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, a touch of fresh nutmeg and a bit of acacia blossom in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and focused, with a lovely core of fruit, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the well-balanced and classy finish. This is really lovely juice. 2013-2017. **92+**.

**2011 Copain Wine Cellars “Tous Ensemble” Chardonnay (Anderson Valley)**

The 2011 Tous Ensemble chardonnay from Copain Wine Cellars is a lovely, low octane wine that comes in at 12.9 percent and offers up a classy nose of apple, peach, gentle leesy tones, a fine base of minerality, citrus peel and a touch of *Mâconnais* toastiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and quite soil-driven, with its full-bodied format nicely defined by crisp acids, nascent complexity and a long, youthful and dancing finish. Stylistically, this really shares a lot in common with some of the top end *Mâconnais* wines from Dominique Lafon. I am sure it will age very well indeed and will be even better to drink with a year’s worth of bottle age. 2013-2020+. **89+**.

**2011 Copain Wine Cellars “Brousseau Vineyard” Chardonnay (Chalone)**

Wells Guthrie’s 2011 chardonnay from the Brousseau Vineyard in the Chalone AVA is a lovely young wine, with a lovely purity and nascent complexity tied to superb inner tension on the palate. The bouquet is still quite young and unevolved, but offers up lovely notes of white peach, apple, a gentle touch of smokiness, a really lovely and complex base of soil tones, a touch of acacia blossoms, bee pollen and a whisper of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully defined by its *terroir*, with a superb core of fruit, bright acids, lovely focus and balance and a very, very long, primary and oh, so promising finish. This is the best chardonnay to date I have had the pleasure of tasting from Wells Guthrie, and though it is a baby and really will demand three or four years of bottle age to really come into its own, this is a wine to seek out! 2016-2030+. **93**.

**2011 Inman Family “Russian River” Chardonnay (Sonoma) screwcap**

The 2011 Inman Family Russian River chardonnay is just a touch pinched on both the nose and palate from its closure, but is still quite obviously a well-made and tasty bottle of low octane (12.9 percent) chardonnay. The bouquet is a very pretty blend of apple, peach, lovely soil tones, spring flowers and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, nascently complex and a touch angular from its closure (or its preparation for such), with ripe acids, good focus and pretty solid length and grip. This wine just seems “stripped” on both the nose and palate (copper fining?) and does not possess any of the personality found in either of the pinot noirs from this estate that I sampled (please see below). This is a winery that needs to hustle back to natural corks as fast as it can, as it is obviously wasting some great raw materials. 2013-2015+? **83**.

**2011 Poe Vineyards “Ferrington Vineyard” Chardonnay (Anderson Valley)**

I was really impressed with all four wines I tasted from Poe Vineyards, which were new to me, and their 2011 chardonnay from the Ferrington Vineyard in Mendocino is a lovely and quite youthful bottle. The deep and classy bouquet offers up a fairly primary blend of white peach, apple, very gentle leesy tones, a nice base of soil, lemon

blossoms and a stylish touch of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core of fruit, lovely, ripe acids and very good length and grip on the focused and still quite youthful finish. Structurally, this wine is not particularly forbidding or snappy, but in terms of flavor and aromatic development, it is still a puppy and could use at least a year or two in the cellar to start to develop its secondary layers of complexity. It is a very well-balanced wine at 13.4 percent alcohol and a lovely new addition (at least to me) in the firmament of California neo-classicists. 2014-2019+? **91+**.

**2011 Porter Creek Vineyards “Russian River Valley- Old Vine” Chardonnay**

Alex Davis is clearly one of the most talented winegrowers in the Russian River Valley and his 2011 chardonnay is a lovely example of the vintage. The wine offers up a classy bouquet of apple, white peach, gentle leesy tones, a nice touch of acacia blossoms and an understated base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very well-balanced, with good acids, fine focus and lovely length and grip on the still quite primary finish. This is grown up chardonnay at its cool 13.2 percent alcohol and should age very well and really will be even better with a couple of years’ worth of bottle age. 2013-2025. **90+**.

**2011 Porter Creek Vineyards “George’s Hill Vineyard- Old Vine” Chardonnay**

The George’s Hill Vineyard bottling from Porter Creek is another Russian River Valley cuvée from Alex Smith, and though it is a tad riper than the regular RRV bottling at 13.7 percent, it is every bit as refined and cool in the mouth. The deep and classy nose wafts from the glass in a very elegant mélange of pear, white peach, lovely soil tones, a touch of almond paste, spring flowers and a very stylish framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, crisp acids, excellent focus and balance and a long, classy finish. I suspect that the half a degree higher alcohol here will allow this wine to drink even better right out of the blocks than the 2011 Russian River Valley bottling, but, on the other hand, it probably will not age quite as long because of its slightly higher ripeness. 2013-2020. **91**.

**2011 Rhys Vineyards Chardonnay “Horseshoe Vineyard” (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2011 Horseshoe Vineyard Chardonnay from Rhys Vineyards weighs in at a cool and classy thirteen percent alcohol and is a gorgeous example of this fine vintage. The bouquet is deep, complex and nicely reserved, offering up a fine blend of pear, fresh pineapple, a gentle leesiness, orange zest, a beautiful base of soil, a hint of marzipan and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and racy, with a lovely core of fruit, superb focus and nascent complexity, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the very classy finish. If one can imagine a blend of a great example of Chassagne “la Romanée” and the great chardonnays made at Mount Eden Vineyards in the late 1970s and early 1980s, one can get a feel for the style of this absolutely superb young chardonnay. This wine is eminently drinkable today, but it clearly will gain in complexity with three or four more years of bottle age and should have no troubles cruising at least a dozen years in bottle. Impressive juice! 2013-2025+? **94**.

**2011 Rhys Vineyards Chardonnay “Alpine Vineyard” (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2011 Alpine Vineyard chardonnay from Rhys Vineyards is another absolutely stellar bottle in the making, offering up a deep, pure and magically complex bouquet of delicious apple, buttered pears, orange peel, a nice touch of leesiness, a very complex base of stony soil tones, a bit of hazelnut, very suave framing of new oak and a

touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with great nascent complexity, a superb core, bright, zesty acids and outstanding length and grip on the very classy finish. This almost has a bit of Meursault-like personality to it, and like the 2011 Horseshoe Vineyard, this wine will age impeccably well on its seamless balance and will be even better with a few years' worth of cellaring to unlock its secondary layers of complexity. A great wine. 2013-2025+. **94.**

**2010 Bravium “Thomas Vineyard” Chardonnay (Carneros)**

Of all the wines I tasted from Bravium in preparation for this article, this chardonnay was the only one that did not really impress. The wine is not bad, but at 14.3 percent alcohol, it is a bit ripe and simple, and I had the distinct impression that it was harvested at even a bit higher brix than the 14.3 percent would suggest and some sugar was left in the blend unfermented. The nose is a buxom blend of pineapple, peach, a slightly green edge, a bit of smokiness, lemongrass and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripe in its fruit display, but with no signs of heat, solid mid-palate concentration, some overt residual sugar, modest acids and a pretty long, but chunky finish. There is not a whole lot of complexity or focus here- is this from really young vines? This is okay, but there are some serious fireworks from this winery from other varieties and it would appear that chardonnay is not yet a staple of the estate. 2013-2015. **85.**

**2010 Cornerstone “Willamette Valley” Chardonnay (Oregon)**

The 2010 Cornerstone chardonnay is a very good bottle of wine for current drinking, but it comes across as just a touch soft (in comparison to their fine pinot noir) and a bit oakier as a result. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of pear, a touch of marzipan, lovely soil tones, dried flowers and a generous base of buttery new oak. On the palate the wine is broad, full-bodied and intensely flavored, with good, but not great depth at the core (are these young vines?), adequate, rather than vibrant acids and a slightly woody finish. This wine is 13.5 percent alcohol, which is quite judicious, but it seems that it could do with a bit less new wood to ramp up the freshness here, as it is already tasting just a bit “old” at age three and probably will want drinking up in the next year or two. The wine is not bad, but given how good their pinot noir is and how well it is built to age, I was expecting just a bit more from their chardonnay. 2013-2014+? **87.**

**2010 El Molinõ Winery “Rutherford” Chardonnay (Napa)**

The 2010 El Molinõ chardonnay is rather a ripe specimen at 14.8 percent alcohol, but it is surprisingly fresh and light on its feet for such an octane level. The nose is a ripe and ready, but complex blend of pineapple, peach, a nice base of soil tones, acacia blossoms, a touch of almond paste and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit heady, with the octane level blurring the precision a bit from the mid-palate back and the finish closing with some uncovered and rather bitter alcohol notes. This has some lovely elements to it, but it is really just too high in alcohol to maintain focus on the palate and there is no way for the alcohol not to show on the backend. 2013-2015+? **82.**

**2010 Knez Winery “Demuth Vineyard” Chardonnay (Anderson Valley)**

I was very impressed with the entire range of wines that I tasted for this article from Knez Winery, which was new to me until these fine bottles came knocking on my

door. The 2010 Demuth Vineyard chardonnay is a very old school and classic 13.2 percent octane and offers up a very pretty and floral nose of white peaches, apple, lemon blossoms, gentle leesy tones, vanillin oak and a touch of muskiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and young, with a good core, nascent complexity, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the still pretty primary finish. I would opt for giving this stylish chardonnay another year or two in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Good juice. 2014-2020+. **89+**.

**2010 Nalle Chardonnay “Reserve” Hopkins Vineyard (Russian River)**

Nalle Winery is run these days by Doug Nalle and his wife Lee, as well as one of their sons, Andrew, who joined his father in the sharing winemaking responsibilities a few years back. I had liked their wines back in the late 1980s, but had not seen them in several years until these lovely samples came knocking at the door in time for this article. The 2010 Reserve Chardonnay is barrel fermented and aged in a mix of new and older oak barrels. The bouquet is lovely, offering up scents of pineapple, apple, a nice base of Sonoma soil from its Russian River origins, spring flowers and a hint of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely balanced, with a good core, sound acids and a fair bit of ripeness perking up on the long finish. This is a touch higher in octane than the 2009 Reserve (13.6 versus 13.2 percent alcohol) and seems likely to want drinking up a bit sooner than the lovely 2009. 2013-2018. **88**.

**2010 Poe Vineyards “Ferrington Vineyard” Chardonnay (Anderson Valley)**

The 2010 Poe Vineyards chardonnay from the well-known (at least to fans of Williams-Selyem wines) Ferrington Vineyard is a very pretty and forward bottle of chard that will drink best over the relatively near-term. At 14.1 percent alcohol it is pretty low by today’s California octane standards and offers up a pretty nose of apple, tangerine, a touch of honeycomb, almond paste, a nice dollop of soil, acacia blossoms and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely balanced, with fine focus, moderate acids and fine length and grip on the complex and classy finish. If the wine was a bit crisper in structure, I am sure that it would age well, but with its fairly soft acidity, I would opt for drinking it up over the next few years while it is still shapely and vibrant. A lovely bottle. 2013-2015. **91**.

**2010 Stony Hill Vineyards Chardonnay (Napa)**

The new release from Mike Chelini at Stony Hill is going to be a terrific bottle of chardonnay in the fullness of time, which happily still remains the way this great old school estate continues to do things! The pure and youthful nose wafts from the glass in a blend of apple, lemon, a touch of bee pollen, a superb base of soil tones, a touch of vanillin oak and a lovely topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with a very primary personality, superb acids and lovely length and grip on the dancing and totally reserved finish. This looks likely to be a classic vintage from Stony Hill, but give it time in the cellar! 2020-2060. **93+**.

**2009 Nalle Chardonnay “Reserve” Hopkins Vineyard (Russian River)**

The 2009 Nalle Chardonnay Reserve is a touch more precise and racy than its 2010 counterpart- probably due to a touch less ripeness in this vintage. The bouquet is lovely, offering up a still fairly youthful blend of apple, tangerine, a bit of smokiness, buttered almonds, a nice base of soil and a gentle base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very nicely focused, with a bit more reductive personality than the wide open 2010 version, a fine core, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the

complex and classy finish. I really like the aesthetic sensibilities of the Nalle chardonnays, which remind me very much of the style of California chardonnay I cut my teeth on in the early 1980s, with no over the top oakiness and an avoidance of aggressive *battonage*. This is fine juice. 2013-2020+. **89+**.

**2009 Wind Gap “Yuen” Chardonnay (Central Coast)**

The Yuen bottling of chardonnay from Wind Gap is made up of a blend of fifty percent fruit from the Brousseau Vineyard in the Chalone ridge and fifty percent from the James Berry Vineyard in Paso Robles. Both parcels are old vines by California standards (33 and 45 years respectively) and are Wente clones, and the wine sees no new wood during its *elevage*. It is a very lovely bottle of low octane chardonnay, coming in at 12.8 percent and offering up a lovely, understated nose of pear, white peach, gentle leesy tones, a lovely base of soil, lime zest and a touch of high end smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely transparent, with fine complexity, crisp acids and impressive length and grip. I really like the style here, as the wine is quite soil-driven, with its pure fruit tones definitely taking a back seat to the other elements in the wine. Lovely juice. 2013-2017. **91+**.

**2008 Domaine Drouhin “Cuvée Arthur” Chardonnay (Oregon)**

The 2008 Cuvée Arthur chardonnay from Domaine Drouhin is a lovely wine both on the nose and the palate, with a fairly ripe personality (fourteen percent ABV), but with impressive poise and complexity. The bouquet is absolutely lovely, wafting from the glass in a refined blend of pear, apple, gentle leesy tones, orange peel, lovely minerality and a gentle base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with excellent complexity, sound framing acids, and just a touch on the soft side on the long and classy finish. This wine is so beautifully balanced that it should continue holding nicely for another four or five years, despite its acids being already a bit on the gentle side. Good juice. 2013-2017. **90**.

**2000 Arcadian “Sleepy Hollow Vineyard” Chardonnay (Monterey)**

This was my first introduction to the wines from Joe Davis at Arcadian and I was very, very impressed with what I tasted. While the 2000 Sleepy Hollow chardonnay is not the current release from the winery, the estate’s philosophy of holding back their wines several years prior to release obviously is a testament to their commitment to producing truly cellar-worthy wines. This 2000 chardonnay is drinking beautifully and is at its apogee of peak maturity, offering up a deep and complex nose of pears, acacia blossoms, a touch of beeswax, lemon curd, a very pretty base of soil, citrus oils and buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite zesty, with a great core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, fine structure and a long, complex and tangy finish that closes with a bit of citrus peel. This is a lovely bottle at its apogee, but still with plenty of life ahead of it. Impressive juice. 2013-2020+. **92**.

**1998 El Molinõ Winery “Rutherford” Chardonnay (Napa)**

The 1998 El Molinõ chardonnay is a full half a degree lower in alcohol than the 2010, and while still plenty ripe at 14.3 percent, the difference is quite telling in terms of focus and backend precision and the wine has really aged quite well. The nose remains fresh and vibrant in its maturing blend of buttered pears and pineapples, a touch of toasted almond, a fine base of “dusty” Rutherford soil, just a touch of orange zest, fresh nutmeg and butter oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and nicely

focused, with a fine core, lovely acids and a long, complex and slightly heady finish. This is far more precise than the riper 2010 and has clearly shown that it has the ability to age well, but it is still just a touch over the threshold of balance with its 14.3 percent alcohol and shows a bit of backend heat that keeps down the score a bit on what is otherwise an outstanding bottle of mature chardonnay. 2013-2020. **87.**

**1996 El Molinõ Winery “Napa Valley” Chardonnay (Rutherford)**

The label on the 1996 El Molinõ actually says “Napa Valley” on the front label, but the back label notes that the grapes come from the winery’s Rutherford vineyards. This is still a tad lower in octane than the 1998 (14.1 versus 14.3 percent) and the wine is correspondingly more precise and vibrant as a result. The bouquet is really beautiful for a seventeen year-old chardonnay, offering up a complex blend of apple, pear, fresh nutmeg, a touch of *crème patissière*, lovely Rutherford soil tones and a very stylish base of buttery new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely ripe, with a good core, crisp acids, lovely focus and balance and a long, classy and still bouncy finish. This lovely wine still has plenty of life in it! Fine juice. 2013-2020+. **92.**

**1993 El Molinõ Winery “Napa Valley” Chardonnay (Rutherford)**

Like the 1996, and the 1993 El Molinõ chardonnay also says Napa Valley on the label, but it too hails from the domaine’s long-standing chardonnay vineyards in Rutherford. The cork was a bit crumbly on this wine, and it shows a bit more advanced on the nose and palate as a result- though still with plenty of drinking interest. The nose is decidedly deeper-pitched in its mix of peach, orange, a touch of new leather, nutmeg, Rutherford soil tones and a nice dollop of browned butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a good core of fruit, lovely mature complexity and still very good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. I have a strong suspicion that this wine is even better than this sample and that the wine is slightly advanced from the crumbly cork, but even in this state, it really is a lovely glass of wine and far from declining. 2013-2016. **89+?**

**1993 Kalin Cellars “Cuvée LD” Chardonnay “Stealth Cuvée” (Sonoma)**

Over the years, Kalin Cellars has released a few “Stealth Cuvées” which are small lots of old vines that are aged for an extended period (even by the Leightons’ very “old school” approach to release dates!) prior to being let out of the cellar for Kalin initiates around the world. The stealth bottling of 1993 Cuvée LD (which Terry and Frances Leighton have dubbed “Le Darryl” for a longtime Kalinite who helped with a decades’-worth of harvests here and loved the style of Puligny’s grand crus) hails from the Jasper Long hillside vineyard in Dry Creek. This vineyard was also the source of the original ’93 LD released several years ago, but this very limited bottling (less than eighty cases were produced in total) was vinified to highlight the character of the ’93 vintage in a manner reminiscent of a Puligny grand cru. It was raised in fifty percent new wood and spent an extended period of twenty-four months aging on its fine lees prior to bottling and has been resting comfortably in the Kalin cellars since early 1996. The wine is absolutely stunning, soaring from the glass in a vibrant and very complex blend of pear, fresh apricot, orange zest, fresh nutmeg, salty soil tones (that are very reminiscent of mature Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet- just in case Darryl was curious), a hint of iodine and a lovely base of buttery oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and magically complex, with grand cru intensity and sophistication, a rock solid core, bright acids and stunning length and grip on the seamless and laser-like finish. This is an utterly



stunning bottle of chardonnay at its apogee of peak maturity, but in true Kalin fashion, it still has decades of life ahead of it! 2013-2030+. **96.**

**1991 El Molinõ Winery “St. Helena- Napa County” Chardonnay (Rutherford)**

Again, a different labeling iteration, but grapes from the same vineyards in Rutherford as all the other El Molinõ chardonnays tasted for this report. The 1991 El Molinõ chardonnay is the lowest octane of all of these lovely wines, tipping the scales at 13.8 percent alcohol and the wine has really aged beautifully. The bouquet is a mature and complex constellation of buttered pears, tangerine, sea salts, “Rutherford Dust” soil tones, dried flowers, a bit of cardamom and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and *à point*, with superb mid-palate depth, excellent focus and balance and a long, bright and complex finish. At age twenty-two, the 1991 El Molinõ chardonnay is in full bloom, but it still has years and years of life in it! A superb bottle and a pleasure to taste. 2013-2020+. **92.**



***Sauvignon Blanc***

**2012 Heitz Wine Cellar Sauvignon Blanc**

The team at Heitz has not been making sauvignon blanc for many years yet, but from the very first vintage they have shown a real touch with this grape and the 2012 is another fine bottle. The bouquet is deep, bright and unabashedly sauvignon in its blend of gooseberry, grapefruit, a lovely base of grassiness, pretty soil tones, a dollop of petrol and a topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and focused, with a fine core, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the ripe and zesty finish. This is a

really fine example of the grassy school of sauvignon blanc and it works beautifully at the table. 2013-2016+. **90.**

**2012 Snowden Vineyards Sauvignon Blanc**

I really like everything about the 2012 Snowden sauvignon blanc except its closure, which is a screwcap. But, at least today, the wine is drinking quite well and showing no signs of imminent reduction, as it jumps from the glass in a vibrant aromatic blend of pink grapefruit, lemon, fresh-cut grass, a nice touch of soil and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and bright, with a good core, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the bouncy finish. This cuvée comes in a heavy glass bottle and would it not make more sense to bottle the wine in a regular, less costly type of bottle and use the savings to put this lovely wine under natural cork for a potentially longer shelf life? There is good juice here under the screw, but for how long? 2013-2014+? **89.**

**1984 Grgich Hills Fumé Blanc**

Never in my wildest dreams would I have believed that this wine would have lasted as well as it did. I drank this bottle back in October of 2011, but have not had an opportunity to post the note in the interim, and based on how crisp and vibrant it was at that point in time, I have little doubt that it is still drinking beautifully today. The complex and classy nose offers up a lovely blend of apple, pineapple, candied lemon, petrol, a dollop of honeycomb and a nice topnote of damp grass. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and impressively fresh for a twenty-seven year-old bottle of California sauvignon blanc (that does not sport a Kalin Cellars label!), with fine focus and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. A shockingly fine bottle at its age. 2011-2020+. **90.**

***Riesling, Gewurztraminer, Viognier and Trousseau Gris***

**2012 Wind Gap “Fannuchi-Wood Road Vineyard” Trousseau Gris (Russian River)**

I understand this wine has sort of a cult following from the low octane fans of California wine (which I guess makes this the anti-cult wine cult wine!) and 12.3 percent alcohol, it shows that one can really make lovely wine without crazy sugar levels. The 2012 Trousseau Gris from Wind Gap offers up a complex and gently leesy nose of bread fruit, tart orange, a lovely and quite complex base of soil, Muscadet-like leesy tones, a touch of smokiness and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and beautifully transparent, with a lovely core, crisp acids and fine complexity on the long and zesty finish. This is good juice, and though I have no experience with how this wine ages, it seems like all of the constituent components are here for it to keep nicely for at least a decade! 2013-2023+? **91+.**

**2011 Porter Creek Vineyards “Timbervine Ranch” Viognier (Russian River Valley)**

Viognier is always a grape these days that seems to be harvested at too high an octane level for my sensitive palate, and the 2011 Porter Creek bottling is true to course and comes in at 14.7 percent alcohol. I am sure it is a very well made wine in its style, but it is a bit too heady for me on the palate, despite its interesting nose of pear, apple, leesy tones, a potpourri of spring flowers and a touch of almond butter. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripe, with a good core, rather a blurry palate impression from the octane and a distinct touch of backend heat on the long and tangy finish. I am

sure there are folks out there that would love this wine, but try as I may, I am emphatically not one of them! 2013-2015+? **84.**

**2011 Stony Hill Vineyards Gewurztraminer (Napa)**

The 2011 Stony Hill Vineyards Gewurztraminer is a very light on its feet version of this varietal, coming in at 11.5 percent alcohol in this cool and classic vintage. Sadly, it is a very short crop as well for this variety at Stony Hill and there will only be eighty-three cases of this lovely wine released. The very pretty and high-toned nose offers up a mélange of rosewater, oranges, a touch of lychee nut and a very pretty base of white soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and stylish, with good, but not great depth at the core, sound framing acids and very nice length and grip on the focused finish. 2016-2030. **88.**

**2011 Stony Hill Vineyards Riesling (Napa)**

The 2011 Stony Hill riesling is done in a quite dry style, coming in at twelve percent alcohol, but also with just a whisper of botrytis evident on the nose and palate which heightens the aromatics. The lovely bouquet is a blend of peach, apple, musky floral tones, white soils and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, young and vibrant, with a fine core, bright acids and lovely lift on the youthful and very fresh, long finish. Like all Stony Hill wines, this will need some bottle age to fully blossom, but it will be a lovely and long-lived wine. 2018-2040. **90+.**

**1989 Calera Viognier**

1989 was the first commercial release of the Calera Viognier, as the vines had only been planted in 1984. As is still the case with this varietal in California, the 1989 Calera Viognier is a bit more interesting on its beautiful nose than it is on its slightly hot palate, as the bouquet is a superb blend of pear, a cornucopia of various citrus zests, coriander, lovely, soil tones and nice touch of dried flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and complex, with fine focus and a nice closing note of citrus peel on the slightly heady finish. If it were not for the bit of excessive alcohol on the finish, this wine would merit a score several points higher, as the aromatics and flavors are lovely. 2013-2020+. **86.**

***Pinot Noir***

**2011 Alesia “Alder Springs Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Mendocino)**

Rhys Vineyards’ second label, Alesia, is home to a very fine pinot noir made from purchased grapes from the Alder Springs Vineyard in the 2011 vintage. I love the octane level on this wine- 12.5 percent- which gives the wine impressive vibrancy and bounce on the palate. The bouquet is a complex and very appealing blend of red and black cherries, beetroot, Mendocino herb tones, a nice touch of cola and a fine base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, suave and balanced, with a fine core, nice complexity, very moderate tannins and a long, tangy finish. The wine closes with a nice touch of *herbacité* that should morph into lovely savory tones with a few years bottle age. It is not quite as soil-driven as the estate bottled pinots from Rhys, but it shares the same suave personality traits that underscore how well the team at Rhys really understands this varietal. This wine is quite drinkable out of the blocks, but I would give it a handful of years in the cellar to allow its tannins to fall away a bit more and its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Good juice. 2015-2032+. **89+.**

**2011 Bacio Divino Cellars “Lucie” Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)**

The 2011 Bacio Divino Cellars “Lucie” Pinot Noir is a pretty jammy and straightforward example of the vintage, with its 14.5 percent alcohol level contributing to its ripe simplicity on the nose, which offers up notes of strawberry jam, coffee, Humboldt County herb tones, menthol and new oak. On the palate the wine is plump, full-bodied and well-balanced, with a sappy core, a fruit-driven and slightly herbal personality, just a touch of tannin and a fairly long, velvety and easy-going finish. This is well-done in its style, with its alcohol level fairly well-managed, but the wine is really quite short on complexity. 2013-2020. **86.**

**2011 Bravium “Sonoma Coast” Pinot Noir (Sonoma)**

The 2011 Bravium Sonoma Coast pinot is whisper riper than their bottlings from Mendocino, coming in at 14.4 percent alcohol in this lovely vintage, but it shares the fine sense of restraint of all the Bravium pinots that I tasted for this article. The nose on the Sonoma Coast is pure and classy, offering up scents of black cherries, dark berries, a bit of cola, a dollop of fresh herb tones, a bit of cigar smoke and a deft touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and tangy, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and balance, a bit of tannin and a long, bouncy and youthful finish. Give this a year to blossom- it should age quite gracefully and really is a lovely bottle of pinot. 2014-2030. **90.**

**2011 Bravium “Signal Ridge Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Mendocino Ridge)**

The 2011 Bravium “Signal Ridge Vineyard” Pinot Noir is a fine, plush and well-balanced example of the vintage, offering up a deep and complex nose of cherries, beetroot, Mendocino fresh herb tones, coffee, woodsmoke, a nice base of dark soil tones and a bit of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved, with a good core of fruit, a bit of tannin, sound acids and fine length and grip on the youthful and nascently complex finish. This will develop a nice note of *sous bois* with further bottle age. I would opt for giving it a few years of bottle age to fully blossom, as today it still has a touch of youthful backend bitterness from the tannins. 2015-2030. **88+.**

**2011 Bravium “Signal Ridge Vineyard- Dragonfly Block” Pinot Noir (Mendocino)**

I had never tasted any wines from Bravium, and the range that I tasted through was quite impressive. The 2011 Dragonfly Block comes in at 14.2 percent alcohol and shows a pretty ripe blend of black cherries, dark plums, cola, a nice mix of fresh herbs, a nice dollop of soil and a judicious base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core of fruit, moderate tannins and very good length and grip on the ripe, but pure finish. I am not sure why, as this is one of the lowest octane bottlings I tasted from Bravium, but I detect just a trace of backend heat on this cuvée, which is not evident in any of the other wines that I tried in preparation for this article. But that said, this is only a minor footnote on what is a very lovely wine. The 2011 Dragonfly Block is a very fine bottle that is approachable now, but will certainly develop lovely secondary nuances with some bottle age. 2015-2035. **91+.**

**2011 Bravium “Signal Ridge Vineyard- Sundance Block” Pinot Noir (Mendocino)**

As I worked my way through the fine lineup of 2011 pinot noir cuvées from Bravium, I noticed that their Mendocino bottlings were a touch lighter in color than their Sonoma Coast bottlings- though in the case of the Sundance Block pinot, it is a touch riper than some of the Sonoma wines at 14.4 percent alcohol. Not that this detracts from the purity of this wine- which is excellent- as the wine offers up a superb bouquet of

cherries, beetroot, a lovely base of soil, gentle herb tones, a bit of cola, a nice touch of new oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep and complex, with its full-bodied format quite elegant and detailed. The core is full of pure fruit, the tannins are moderate and beautifully integrated and the wine is long, complex and still fairly unevolved. This is going to be a really lovely bottle of pinot with a few years' worth of bottle age! 2015-2035. **92.**

**2011 Bravium "Volamus Vineyard" Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast)**

Bravium's 2011 "Volamus Vineyard" pinot noir was one of the finest of a very good range of bottlings of this varietal that I tasted from this winery. This is one of the lowest octane of their 2011s, coming in at 14.2 percent alcohol and the wine is fresh, pure and complex on both the nose and palate. The fine bouquet is a blend of black cherries, plums, dark chocolate, a lovely base of soil, cola, woodsmoke and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant, with a sappy core of fruit, excellent balance, moderate tannins, tangy acids and lovely length and grip on the young and promising finish. I really like the suave palate impression of this wine, but it will need a few years of cellaring to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Lovely juice in the making. 2015-2035. **92.**

**2011 Poe Vineyards "Angel Camp Vineyard" Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

After having been so impressed with the quality of the 2010 pinot noir from Poe Vineyards, I reached out to the winery to see if I could get samples of the 2011s for this article as well and was delighted to have their chardonnay and pinot noir arrive at my doorstep towards the end of June. Not surprisingly, given the cool vintage character of 2011, this wine comes in a tad lower on the alcohol scale than the very well-made 2010 version (13.6 percent versus 14.1 percent for the previous year) and the wine is exceptional. The fine bouquet is quite transparent in its blend of cherries, blood orange, a touch of beetroot, woodsmoke, fresh thyme, mustard seed, a dollop of new wood and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and full-bodied, with a fine core of fruit, lovely intensity of flavor, fine focus, modest tannins and outstanding length and grip on the complex and classy finish. This wine is really light on its feet and most impressive! 2013-2030. **93.**

**2011 Porter Creek Vineyards Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)**

The 2011 Russian River bottling of pinot noir from Porter Creek is really a lovely example of the vintage, with impressive ripeness for this cooler year, as the wine comes in at 13.9 percent alcohol. The pure and classy nose offers up a fine blend of cherries, strawberries, a bit of beetroot, fresh herb tones, a dollop of cocoa powder and a classy base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, suave and complex, with a sappy core of fruit, well-measured tannins and very good length and grip on the bright and vibrant finish. There is still a touch of youthful reserve on the backend that suggests a year or two of bottle age will really pay dividends, though it is certainly quite drinkable today. This wine manages its ripeness flawlessly and stays light on its feet and beautifully delineated. Very fine juice. 2014-2030. **90+.**

**2011 Porter Creek Vineyards "Fiona Vineyard" Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)**

I love the 2011 pinot noir from the Fiona Vineyard from Alex Smith, as the wine delivers great precision on both the nose and palate and a lovely base of soil. The bouquet is deep, pure and very classy in its mélange of red and black cherries, a touch of fresh herbs, cola, superb soil tones, woodsmoke, incipient notes of gamebird and a nice base of

nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nicely plush on the attack, with a fine core, suave tannins and a long, tangy and nicely soil-driven finish. This is fine juice and at 13.8 percent alcohol, nicely cool in the mouth and very nicely delineated. 2016-2035+. **92+**.

**2011 Rhys Vineyards “Bearwallow Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

As the Bearwallow bottling is made from purchased grapes in Mendocino, it is usually a touch riper than the wines from the estate’s own vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains, and this is certainly the case with the 2011, which comes in at a fairly ripe 13.5 percent alcohol in this low octane vintage. Of course, 13.5 percent is still quite low by contemporary standards and the wine is absolutely stellar, soaring from the glass in a beautifully pure and ripe nose of black cherries, a touch of plum, gentle herb tones, espresso, dark soil nuances and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with very good depth at the core, moderate tannins and lovely length and grip on the youthful finish. A very well-balanced and classy wine, the 2011 Bearwallow will age long and gracefully. This is a really superb bottle of pinot noir, but it does not possess quite the same brilliant inner core of the very best 2011 Rhys pinots. 2016-2035+. **91+**.

**2011 Rhys Vineyards “Home Vineyard” Pinot Noir (San Mateo County)**

I am not sure if the new plantations at the Home Vineyard (planted in 2007) have made it into this lovely 2011 pinot noir, or if there remains a solitary single barrel of this wine produced, but I am hoping that there is more, as this wine is outstanding. The stunning nose wafts from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, a touch of beetroot, mustard seed, fresh thyme, a beautiful base of soil and a nice touch of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully complex out of the blocks, with a superb core of fruit, fine-grained tannins and absolutely stellar length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. Great juice! 2018-2040. **93**.

**2011 Rhys Vineyards “Family Farm Vineyard” Pinot Noir (San Mateo County)**

The 2011 Family Farm bottling has come in a tad less ripe than the Home Vineyard (12.8 percent alcohol versus 13-2 percent- both very, very civilized octane numbers in my book!) and as a result the wine is even a touch more red fruity and soil-driven in this vintage. The gorgeously complex nose offers up scents of cherries, beetroot, pomegranate, a great, complex base of soil, vinesmoke, a touch of nutskin, fresh herbs and a lovely, discreet framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and very transparent, with a fine core of fruit, suave tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and dancing finish. High class pinot. 2017-2040. **93+**.

**2011 Rhys Vineyards “Skyline Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The Skyline Vineyard pinot noir from Kevin Harvey and his team at Rhys is just stellar in 2011, with its low octane personality (12.6 percent ABV!) delivering great minerality and nascent complexity on both the nose and palate. The wonderfully complex nose offers up a “cool fruit” profile of cherries, beetroot, stony minerality, a touch of menthol, thyme, a bit of mustard seed, vinesmoke and a gentle base of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very intensely flavored, with a fine core of fruit, suave, seamless tannins, tangy acids and a very, very long and transparent finish. This is great wine in the making and a very grown up bottle of California pinot noir! 2018-2040. **94+**.



### **2011 Rhys Vineyards “Horseshoe Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

These Santa Cruz Mountain vineyards have produced a beautiful triad of low octane and extremely promising pinot noirs in this lovely vintage. The 2011 Horseshoe tips the scales at 12.4 percent alcohol (how nicely these wines are going to fit into blind tastings of equally low octane 2011 red Burgundies a decade down the road!) and offers up a superbly complex and pure bouquet of red berries, beetroot, wild strawberries, vinesmoke, fresh herbs, a touch of lavender, stony minerality, mustard seed and just a hint of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and very, very soil-driven, with a sappy core of fruit, great lightness of step, modest tannins and simply great length and grip on the focused and tangy finish. Great, great juice! 2018-2040. **94+**.

### **2011 Rhys Vineyards “Alpine Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2011 Alpine Vineyard pinot noir from Rhys Vineyards is another low alcohol beauty, coming in at 12.3 percent and offering up a stunning bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, dried eucalyptus, tea-smoked duck, gorgeous minerality, vinesmoke, fresh herbs and a dollop of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, fullish and very intensely flavored, with a fine core, stunning transparency, great, nascent complexity, moderate tannins and magical length and grip on the focused and utterly classic young finish. Another absolutely great wine and probably the pick of the litter in this stunning lineup of 2011 Rhys pinot noirs. 2018-2040. **95+**.

### **2011 Wind Gap “Sonoma Coast” Pinot Noir (Sonoma)**

The 2011 Wind Gap Sonoma Coast pinot is a lovely and classic, low octane example of the vintage, weighing in at a very cool 12.4 percent. The wine sees no new oak, as it is fermented in a combination of older barrels and cement “eggs” and then finishes up its *elevage* in stainless steel tanks. The bouquet is really lovely, wafting from the glass in a cool fruit blend of black cherries, dark berries, espresso, herb tones, incipient notes of cinnamon (from the forty percent whole clusters used) and a topnote of vinesmoke. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and complex, with lovely intensity of flavor, a good core, modest tannins and a long, bright and classy finish. This is already starting to show the first vestiges of its autumnal personality that will come with a bit more bottle age. High class juice. 2013-2030+. **92**.

### **2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Les Voisins” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

The 2010 Les Voisins bottling from Copain is a lovely and beautifully light colored pinot noir, offering up a youthful and classy mélange of cherries, strawberries, beetroot, fresh herb tones, coffee, soil and a hint of new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and beautifully transparent, with lovely intensity of flavor, bright acids, just a whisper of tannin and a long, pure and complex finish. This really smells and tastes a lot like some of Jacky Truchot’s premier crus from the top vintages of the 1980s! Lovely juice that is approachable today, the 2010 Les Voisins from Wells Guthrie will clearly be better with a few years bottle age to allow the secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Fine, dancing juice. 2015-2035. **90+**.

### **2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Monument Tree” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

The 2010 Monument Tree pinot noir from Wells Guthrie is pretty ripe by his standards, weighing in at 13.6 percent alcohol, but the wine is beautifully poised and balanced and is as pure and soil-driven as any purist could ask for in an Anderson Valley pinot. The deep and complex nose jumps from the glass in a vibrant blend of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, a touch of mustard seed, woodsmoke, a beautiful base of soil, a

bit of cola and a delicate framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very light on its feet, with a sappy core of fruit, beautiful focus and balance and a very long, gently tannic and still quite primary finish. This is a lovely wine that is totally accessible today- in terms of structure- but, is still very youthful and it would be tantamount to a crime to open a bottle before the wine has had four to five years of bottle age to allow some of the secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Superb juice. 2018-2035+. **92+**.



*Wells Guthrie of Copain Wine Cellars in the winery's tasting room.*

### **2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Kaiser En Bas” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

The 2010 Copain Kaiser “En Bas” (from the lower section of this outstanding vineyard) is a wonderfully low octane and very promising bottle in the making, as it weighs in at a cool 12.4 percent alcohol and is tightly-knit and beautifully balanced. The pure and youthful bouquet offers up scents of Bing cherries, pomegranate, a touch of blood orange, gentle notes of woodsmoke and nutskin, a superb base of soil, fresh herbs, rose petals and a hint of oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tight and primary, with a sappy core, a very reticent personality, bright acids, modest tannins and excellent length and grip on the still very primary finish. There is a lovely sense of sappiness and reserve here that augurs well for the future, but despite this wine’s fairly accessible structure, I would not touch a bottle for another five or six years to allow its buried complexity to start to emerge. It will be a lovely wine with bottle age and really is impressive for fairly young vines. 2018-2035+. **92.**

**2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Kaiser En Haut” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

The 2010 Kaiser En Haut pinot noir from Copain Cellars is a touch riper than the En Bas version (12.8 percent versus 12.4 percent) and the wine is notably deeper and more sappy at the core as a result. This is really smoking pinot noir in the making, jumping from the glass in a still quite primary bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of cocoa, a bit of fresh thyme, nutskin, mustard seed, a beautifully complex base of soil, a touch of gamebird, woodsmoke and a hint of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with a sappy core, superb, nascent complexity, moderate tannins and outstanding focus and balance on the very long, tangy and refined finish. This too needs time, but due to its greater mid-palate depth, it will probably be accessible a bit sooner than the Kaiser En Haut bottling. This is great juice in the making! 2017-2035+. **93+**.

**2010 Cornerstone “Willamette Valley” Pinot Noir (Oregon)**

The 2010 Cornerstone pinot noir is very nicely ripe, tipping the scales at a judicious 13.5 percent and offering up a deep and complex nose of black cherries, beetroot, a touch of pomegranate, a lovely base of soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh thyme, a bit of mustard seed, coffee and a very stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and beautifully focused, with its full-bodied format quite transparent and light on its feet. The wine shows off a sappy core, ripe, well-integrated tannins, good acids and a very long, nascently complex and most impressive finish. It is still very early days for this lovely bottle of pinot noir, but it seems to have all of the requisite components to age long and gracefully. This was my first taste of a Cornerstone pinot noir and I was very, very impressed. 2020-2045+. **92**.

**2010 Knez Winery “Anderson Valley” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

I really liked this 2009 pinot noir from Knez Winery, which is only 13.4 percent in alcohol and really light in color (as well as a bit hazy, probably from no filtration and my unwillingness to delay my curiosity a month longer after its shipping from the west coast). The pure, complex and high-toned nose offers up a lovely mélange of cherries, beetroot, fresh herb tones, a touch of cola, raspberries, pretty soil tones, a bit of bonfire and a dollop of new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with excellent complexity, a good core of fruit, tangy acids, very minimal tannins and very good length and grip on the light on its feet finish. A lovely bottle of pinot from the “new school of neo-classicism” in California. 2014-2025+. **90**.

**2010 Poe Vineyards “Angel Camp Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley)**

This was the first pinot noir that I have tasted from Poe Vineyards and I was very, very impressed with both the quality and the fine, “old school” style of the wine. The 2010 Angel Camp Vineyard pinot tips the scales at a very civilized 14.1 percent alcohol and offers up a pure and classy bouquet of black cherries, woodsmoke, fresh rosemary, dark soil tones, a nice dollop of Mendocino herb tones and a very judicious framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully light on its feet, with a fine core, lovely focus and balance and just a touch of tannin perking up the long and tangy finish. High class pinot! 2013-2025+. **92+**.

**2010 Porter Creek “Estate” Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)**

The 2010 Russian River Valley bottling of Pinot from Porter Creek is a lovely wine that jumps from the glass in a sappy aromatic mélange of cherries, beetroot, woodsmoke, fresh herbs, a touch of cedar and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the

wine is medium-full, complex and nicely transparent, with good focus and balance, a sound core and just a touch of backend ripeness poking out on the backend from the wine's 13.5 percent alcohol. To be fair to the wine, I tasted this just after tackling three weeks' worth of 2011 Burgundies (and their dramatically lower alcohol levels) and I may have been a tad over-sensitive to the ripeness here, as the wine is really quite beautifully balanced. 2013-2025+. **90.**

**2010 Porter Creek "Hillside Vineyard- Old Vine" Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)**

The 2010 Porter Creek Hillside Vineyard bottling is a beautiful bottle of young pinot noir in the making, soaring from the glass in a very refined and vibrant bouquet of cherries, red plums, cardamom, a touch of nutmeg, orange peel, a beautiful base of alluvial soil tones and a deft touch of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very light on its feet, with stunning intensity of flavor, great focus and bounce, moderate tannins and stunning length and grip on the focused and very Vosne-like finish. Great juice and really my kind of pinot noir, as it tips the scales at an even thirteen percent alcohol! Russian River pinot noir at its best. 2017-2040. **94+.**

**2010 Porter Creek "Winegrower's Reserve" Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley)**

The 2010 Winegrower's Reserve is another very pretty bottle of pinot noir, but this is quite a bit riper than the Hillside Vineyard bottling and consequently does not possess the same great signature of soil to drive the wine on both the nose and palate. The ripe and pretty nose is a blend of cherries, pomegranate, fresh nutmeg, a touch of cocoa powder, herbs and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, plush and tangy, with a sappy core of fruit, a bit of tannin and just a whisper of heat poking out on the long, fruit-driven finish. This is a very good bottle, but it is not quite in the league with the Hillside Vineyard in this vintage. 2015-2025. **90.**

**2010 Sabina Vineyards Pinot Noir (Oregon)**

I had previously tasted a few cabernet and merlot-based wines from Sabina, but I had no idea that they were producing a pinot noir from fruit purchased in Oregon until this bottle was presented to me blind at a recent tasting. This is really a lovely bottle, with its ripeness beautifully managed at 13.8 percent and the wine offering up a classy and pure nose of strawberries, cherries, herb tones, a touch of nutskin, orange zest, chocolate and a nice base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, tangy and very well-balanced, with a good core, bright acids and lovely length and grip on the suavely tannic finish. This is a very elegant wine that just misses out on being outstanding, as it is not the most complex bottle of pinot out there, but it brings plenty heart and soul. Fine juice. 2013-2025+. **89.**

**2010 Stepping Stone "Willamette Valley" Pinot Noir (Oregon)**

The 2010 Stepping Stone pinot noir is a very pretty bottle, with lightness of step and a nice juicy succulence to the palate. The color is happily a light ruby red and the wine offers up a pretty nose of strawberries, cherries, woodsmoke, fresh thyme and lavender, a nice base of soil and a framing of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, bright and still quite primary, with a good core of fruit, tangy acids, a fair bit of tannin and very good length and grip on the slightly jammy finish. At 13.5 percent alcohol, I expected a bit "cooler" palate impression, but otherwise, this is a fairly well-made wine that needs a couple of years to blossom and develop some secondary layers of complexity on the palate. Good juice. 2016-2035. **88+.**

**2009 El Molinõ Winery “Rutherford” Pinot Noir (Napa)**

The 2009 El Molinõ “Rutherford” pinot noir is one of the best bottlings of this varietal that I have had from Napa in years. The wine is pretty ripe by pinot noir standards, coming in at 14.4 percent alcohol, but really is quite fresh for its octane and offers up impressive nascent complexity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a blend of black cherries, dark plums, espresso, herb tones, a bit of charred wood, soil and a gentle touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly fruit-driven in personality, but with good complexity, a fine core, moderate tannins and very good length and grip on the classy finish. This is a slightly more muscular style of pinot, but it manages its ripeness extremely well and I have little doubt that it will age very well. 2015-2035. **89+**.

**2009 El Molinõ Winery “Sonoma Coast” Pinot Noir (Napa)**

The 2009 El Molinõ “Sonoma Coast” pinot noir is an extremely small production bottling, as the winery only produced ninety-six cases of this wine in this vintage! The wine is extremely lovely on both the nose and palate, offering up a pure and youthful bouquet of black cherries, dark berries, fresh herb tones, woodsmoke, a beautiful base of soil, just a touch of cinnamon, incipient notes of forest floor and a whisper of new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and youthfully structured, with excellent mid-palate depth, ripe, well-integrated tannins, good acids, superb balance and excellent length and grip on the still quite primary finish. This is really a fine bottle of pinot noir in the making, but I would tuck it away in the cellar for several years to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. 2018-2040. **91+**.

**2009 Inman Family “Russian River” Pinot Noir (Sonoma) screwcap**

I was impressed with the statement from the winery on the back label that the family is working diligently to reduce their carbon footprint of their wine production- witness the old school, lighter-gauged bottle (that is most welcome!), but one has to factor the use of screwcaps into one’s carbon footprint, and natural cork would really work better in the Inman Family’s equation- and make the wines better to boot! This 2009 Russian River pinot was already a bit reduced when I opened it, which was too bad, as there is a really good wine underneath. The alcohol level here is a very sane 13.6 percent and, once one gives it an hour in decanter, there are lovely notes of cherries, red plums, fresh herbs, coffee, a lovely base of soil and just a whisper of new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and intensely flavored, with a good core, modest tannins and a long, tangy finish. The wine never quite loses the slightly “clenched” quality on the backend that it showed immediately upon opening (from the reduction to come), but it is still an eminently drinkable wine for the near-term. Under natural cork, this would be excellent, rather than merely quite good for drinking over the short term! 2013-2015+? **88**.

**2009 Inman Family “Olivet Grange Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Sonoma) screwcap**

The 2009 Olivet Grange Vineyard bottling of pinot noir from the Inman Family is really quite lovely, once it has spent its hour in decanter shaking off the first vestiges of permanent reduction (it was stinky when first poured, so make sure to decant it). The deep and complex nose offers up notes of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee, a touch of gamebird, fresh herb tones, soil and a dollop of new wood. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and nicely transparent, with a bit of reduction stubbornly clinging to the backend and making the wine a bit bitter and vegetal already, but with a

lovely core, moderate, fine-grained tannins and lovely length and grip on the tangy and quite elegant finish. It is really a pity this closure is ruining this wine, as there is a lot to really get excited about under the threat of reduction, but today, this particular bottle is already further along the path of no return than the Russian River bottling. What a waste of serious wine! 2013-2014+? **85** (with 92 point raw materials under the screw).

**2009 Kendric Vineyards “Marin County” Pinot Noir (Marin County)**

I really liked the wines I tasted from this new winery in Marin County. Stewart Johnson is the proprietor at Kendric and he is clearly aiming for a very pure and dancing style of pinot noir. The vineyard here was only planted in 2002, and with its east-northeast exposition, it is clearly aiming to benefit from the cooler climate of Marin to maintain freshness in the resulting pinot noirs. The 2009 was aged in forty percent new wood and comes in at 13.5 percent alcohol. The wine is fairly light in color and offers up a lovely and very transparent nose of strawberries, cola, cherries, woodsmoke, fresh herb tones, a bit of orange zest and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and very intensely flavored, with youthful complexity, lovely texture, and lovely length and grip on the focused and classy finish. I suspect that this bottling will gain in complexity as the vines get older, but this is a very auspicious effort for relatively young vines and this is a very good source for pure and transparent pinot noir today- and with a future that can only get brighter as the vineyard gets a bit older. Good juice. 2013-2025+. **91.**

**2008 Kendric Vineyards “Marin County” Pinot Noir (Marin County)**

The 2008 Kendric pinot noir is a touch riper than the 2009 (13.9 percent versus 13.5 percent), but it is every bit as pure and transparent on both the nose and palate. The bouquet on this light-colored pinot is really gorgeous, as it jumps from the glass in a superb blend of strawberries, baked cherries, cinnamon, a touch of chocolate, a beautiful base of soil tones, an exotic touch of root beer and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and beautifully pure and soil-driven, with a sappy core of fruit, melting tannins, bright acids and simply superb length and grip on the complex and dancing finish. This is a beautiful bottle of pinot noir! 2013-2025+. **92+.**

**2006 Domaine Drouhin Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley- Oregon)**

The 2006 Domaine Drouhin regular bottling of pinot noir is one of the riper that I can recall, tipping the scales at fully 14.5 percent alcohol and it does show just a touch of heat on the backend as a result. The bouquet is deep, complex and quite attractive in its ripe mélange of cherries, plums, a touch of chocolate, gentle notes of vinesmoke and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and nicely focused, with a svelte attack, good core and just a whisper of backend heat on the long and complex finish. I may be overly sensitive here to the ripeness and others may take no issue with 14.5 percent alcohol, but to my palate it is just a touch too ripe to really be outstanding. 2013-2020+. **87.**

**2006 Domaine Drouhin “Cuvée Laurène” Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley- Oregon)**

The 2006 Domaine Drouhin “Cuvée Laurène” is just a touch lower in alcohol than the regular bottling (14 percent versus 14.5 percent) and the wine shows greater precision on both the nose and palate as a result (and no whisper of backend heat as is found in the regular bottling). The deep and very classy bouquet offers up scents of black cherries, plums, a nice touch of fresh herbs, chocolate, complex soil tones and a deft



framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core, excellent focus, fine-grained tannins, and impressive grip on the poised and still fairly youthful finish. This is already a good drink, but it really has not yet reached its apogee of peak maturity and more complexity will emerge with further bottle age. Fine juice. 2015-2030+. **91+**.

**2001 Arcadian “Sleepy Hollow Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Monterey)**

The 2001 Arcadian pinot noir from the Sleepy Hollow Vineyard is a tad riper than the 2000 from Pisoni Vineyard (13.8 percent versus 13.4 percent), but the wine remains cool in the mouth and nicely focused. This is done in a more black fruity, Gevrey-Chambertin-like style (if you will allow the comparison) and is a ripe and complex wine on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is a blend of black cherries, beetroot, Monterey herb tones (more dill than thyme), a bit of bonfire, gentle notes of venison, cola, a dollop of celery seed and a very discreet base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core of fruit, a bit of overt Monterey herbaceousness on the backend, but lovely focus, length and grip on the still slightly chewy finish. This is a really well-made style of pinot in a more muscular profile, but with impressive complexity and plenty of stuffing for further evolution with bottle age. In fact, even though the wine is now twelve years of age, it strikes me as still on the young side and in need of a bit more cellaring before it will really blossom. Good juice. 2017-2040. **90+**.

**2000 Arcadian “Pisoni Vineyard” Pinot Noir (Monterey)**

With just a touch less ripeness, the 2000 Arcadian pinot noir from the Pisoni Vineyard is really quite soil-driven and elegant in profile on both the nose and palate. The superb bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of cherries, red plums, a touch of meatiness, woodsmoke, a touch of cardamom, lovely, incipient notes of forest floor, fresh herb tones and a touch of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely light on its feet, with a fine core, a vein of herbaceousness, moderate tannins, good acids and excellent length and grip on the complex and very classy, albeit, still young finish. Today, the palate cannot keep pace with the superb aromatic constellation of the nose, but perhaps it is still on the young side and further bottle age will allow it to catch up. Impressive juice. 2015-2040. **91+**.

**1999 El Molinõ Winery “Napa Valley” Pinot Noir (Rutherford and Carneros)**

The 1999 El Molinõ “Napa Valley” bottling of pinot noir was comprised of a blend of the winery’s traditional home vineyard in Rutherford (the Star Vineyard) and grapes sourced from two different small parcels in Carneros. The wine is lovely, but certainly an old school example of Napa pinot noir that is a bit more muscular in style than those from Sonoma or Mendocino. The nose is a deep and complex blend of black cherries, dried eucalyptus, a bit of game, chicory, coffee grounds, dark soil tones, blossoming notes of *sous bois* and a bit of cola in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite plush on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, very good focus and balance, still a bit of tannin and a long, plump and well-balanced finish. This is not the most transparent example of pinot and it is not as light on its feet as some examples, but it is aging very nicely and developing nice secondary layers of complexity and is a highly satisfying drink. 2013-2030+. **89**.



### **1999 Littorai “Hirsch Vineyard” Pinot Noir**

I love Ted Lemon’s wines from Littorai, and I was absolutely delighted to cross paths with this superb bottle at a blind tasting only a few months after visiting the estate out in Sonoma (which certainly helped with the guessing of the wine). The 1999 Littorai from the Hirsch Vineyard is at its apogee and drinking beautifully well, as it offers up a complex and classy bouquet of black cherries, cola, woodsmoke, fresh herb tones, a fine base of soil, hints of both cinnamon and grilled meats and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely soil-driven, with modest tannins, good acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and generous finish. This is a riper vintage of Hirsch, which gives a touch of sumptuousness to the palate that is most inviting. A lovely wine. 2011-2030+. **92+**.

### **1995 El Molinõ Winery “Napa Valley” Pinot Noir (Rutherford and Carneros)**

The 1995 El Molinõ “Napa Valley” pinot hails from these same vineyard sources in Rutherford and Carneros, but it is a bit less ripe than the fine 1999, coming in at 13.6 percent alcohol (in contrast to the 14.4 percent for the ’99) and is consequently a bit more soil-driven in personality as a result. The nose is deep, complex and quite similar to the ’99 in its mix of black cherries, dried eucalyptus, chicory, a bit of heather, coffee bean, autumnal soil tones, woodsmoke and a lovely base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively complex, with a fine core of fruit, melting tannins, good acids and excellent length and grip on the poised and nicely transparent finish. This is still not as light on its feet as a comparably aged bottle of pinot from the Russian River Valley for instance, but it is a very well-balanced pinot that is aging

admirably and at age eighteen is at its plateau of peak drinkability. Fine, fine juice. 2013-2025+. **91.**

**1994 El Molinõ Winery “Napa Valley” Pinot Noir (Rutherford and Carneros)**

The 1994 El Molinõ “Napa Valley” pinot is again from the vineyard sources in Rutherford and Carneros, and like the 1995 version, it weighs in at 13.6 percent alcohol. The wine is really quite fine, wafting from the glass in a complex and tertiary blend of dried cherries and dark berries, heather, forest floor, roasted game, dark soil tones, dried eucalyptus, fallen oak leaves and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit more evolved than the 1995, with a plush attack, lovely, tertiary layers of complexity, good mid-palate depth and a long, mature and still beautifully balanced finish. This a bit more advanced in its evolutionary arc than the 1995, but still retains a bit of backend tannin and will continue to drink well for many years to come. Another fine bottle, but I have to give a very slight edge to the more precise 1995 over this lovely wine. 2013-2023+. **90.**

**1991 El Molinõ Winery “Napa Valley” Pinot Noir (Rutherford and Carneros)**

The 1991 El Molinõ “Napa Valley” pinot is the most “Burgundian” in aromatic profile of all these lovely, mature wines, offering up a really lovely and complex nose of red and black cherries, gamebirds, *sous bois*, coffee, autumnal overtones, just a whisper of cinnamon stick, woodsmoke and a beautiful topnote of dried eucalyptus, sage and gentle notes of lavender. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and the most soil-driven of this series, with a fine core of fruit, melting tannins, lovely acids and fine length and grip on the transparent, autumnal and impressively poised finish. This is really a lovely wine to drink today, and though it is uniquely Californian in its aromatic and flavor profile, it is light on its feet and quite Burgundian in its stylistic sensibilities. I should mention that it is a full half degree lower in alcohol than the fine 1995 and 1994 versions, and this may account for its superior soil inflection. Lovely juice. 2013-2023. **92.**

**1988 Adelsheim Vineyard Pinot Noir**

Adelsheim Vineyard was one of the early Oregon producers who I followed for many years, but it had been ages since I last had a bottle of their wine. The 1988 pinot noir has aged beautifully (I once had this wine in my cellar, but drank it up a decade ago) and continues to cruise along as if time has not touched it, offering up a lovely and mature bouquet of cherries, a touch of beetroot, gentle meatiness, a dollop of chocolate and a lovely base of forest floor. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully resolved, with superb balance, still a touch of backend tannin and a long, tangy and classy finish. This lovely wine still has years of life in it. Fine juice. 2013-2025+. **92.**

***Gamay (Sort Of)***

**1970 Joseph Swan Gamay**

I am not sure if I have the spelling correct, but this legendary wine from Joseph Swan was actually not made out of gamay, but out of a grape called Valdiguié which is indigenous to the Languedoc and Roussillon regions of France. I have no idea how it found its way to California, but Joseph Swan made a great wine out of it in the 1970 vintage and it is still plenty alive and kicking. The deep and beautifully fresh nose jumps from the glass in a very complex mix of black cherries, dark berries, eucalyptus, dark

chocolate, lovely soil tones, smoke, a touch of licorice and gentle notes of chipotle peppers with air. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and tangy, with a great core of fruit, bright acids and still a wisp of remaining tannin perking up the long and complex finish. A great and utterly singular wine from the annals of California wine lore. 2011-2030+. **94.**

### ***Merlot and Cabernet Franc***

#### **2011 Andrew Will Cellars Cabernet Franc (Columbia Valley)**

The 2011 Andrew Will cabernet franc is one of the lowest octane bottlings I have tasted from this fine winery in several vintages, as it comes in at a svelte 12.8 percent alcohol. I am not sure if unsettled *fin de saison* weather forced the hands of *vignerons* in the Columbia Valley, as it did further south in northern California, or if Chris Camarda is just fine-tuning his approach here at Andrew Will. In any case, the wine is excellent, offering up a young and classy nose of dark berries, a nice touch of bell pepper, espresso, chicory, lovely soil tones and a nice touch of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, lovely, nascent complexity and excellent length and grip on the modestly tannic and tangy finish. The varietal character really jumps through here, as the wine shows a lot of Chinon-like aromatics and flavors that I find absolutely enticing. A lovely wine and a fine value. 2014-2025. **89+.**

#### **2010 Calluna Vineyards “aux Raynauds” Merlot (Chalk Hill)**

Calluna Vineyards is a relatively new project started by proprietor and winemaker David Jeffrey, and his 2010 “aux Raynauds” Merlot is quite a lovely example of just how serious this varietal can be in the right hands. This is a blend of eighty-three percent merlot and seventeen percent cabernet franc. David spent some time working on the Right Bank in Bordeaux prior to starting Calluna Vineyards and these sensibilities show here in the lovey nose of cherries, raspberries, cocoa, a touch of fresh herbs and tobacco and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely light on its feet (reflecting its very measured 14.2 percent alcohol), with a good core, lovely focus and a fair bit of tannin to resolve on the long, nascently complex and classy finish. This is a grown-up’s bottle of merlot that will need some time in the cellar to blossom, but it is quite well-balanced and should be lovely with five or six years of bottle age. These are still young vines (having only been planted in 2005), and though the wine was raised in only twenty-five percent new wood, it might be a candidate for the next few vintages for all used barrels for the *elevage*. Good juice. 2018-2035. **91.**

#### **2010 Stepping Stone Cabernet Franc (Napa Valley)**

The 2010 Stepping Stone cabernet franc is pretty ripe for my palate at 14.6 percent, but it really manages its ripeness very well indeed and I do not find any trace of jamminess and very little backend heat in this wine. The bouquet is a ripe, but complex nose of cassis, cigar smoke, dark soil tones, a nice touch of bell pepper, fresh herbs and a judicious base of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and velvety on the attack, with a good core and focus, modest tannins and excellent length and grip on the ripe, but balanced finish. There is just a whisper of alcohol at the tail-end of the wine that suggests that this wine will drink better in its youth than it will with bottle age, but this is very well done and if one can get 14.6 percent alcohol past my sensitive palate without indignation, one has done a nice job with the wine. 2013-2018. **89.**

### ***Primarily Cabernet Sauvignon-Based Wines***

#### **2011 Andrew Will Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon (Columbia Valley)**

The Andrew Will Columbia Valley cabernet sauvignon from the 2011 vintage is also quite low in alcohol by recent standards here, coming in under thirteen percent and exuding a lovely sense of complexity in reserve that is quite reminiscent of the 1983 claret vintage when it was released. The first class nose wafts from the glass in a mix of cassis, dark berries, cigar smoke, a nice base of dark soil tones, French roast, a bit of tobacco leaf and a judicious framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, nascently complex and nicely structured, with a good, solid core of fruit, ripe tannins, bright acidity and fine length and grip on the youthful and chewy finish. This will need several years in the cellar to fully blossom, but it will be a superb wine in the due course. 2019-2045. **90+**.

#### **2011 Snowden Vineyards “The Ranch” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2011 Snowden Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon is a beautiful young bottle of cabernet, coming in at a very civilized 13.9 percent alcohol and offering up lovely purity and nascent complexity on both the nose and palate. The first class bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, “Rutherford Dust” spice tones, cigar smoke, a lovely signature of soil, incipient notes of the chipotles to come and a deft framing of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and intensely flavored, with lovely transparency, a fine core, a fine chassis of tannin and a very long, poised and focused finish. This is a young wine that will need a good six to ten years in the cellar to really blossom, but it has stellar constituent components and will be a cellar treasure if given sufficient bottle age. A very grown up style of Napa cabernet that has outstanding potential. 2020-2050. **93**.

#### **2011 Snowden Vineyards “Reserve” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2011 Snowden Reserve cabernet is a touch riper than their excellent regular bottling (14.2 percent versus 13.9 percent), but still quite restrained by contemporary Napa standards. The bouquet is a fine blend of black cherries, pomegranate, allspice, a touch of chocolate, tobacco smoke, Rutherford bench soil tones and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a fine core of fruit, a more reserved personality than the regular bottling, good focus and mid-palate depth and a long, chewy and slightly hot finish. The slightly higher octane level takes away a bit of the purity and all of the transparency found in the regular bottling, and though this should also age quite well, I have to give a significant nod to the regular bottling in this vintage for its superior complexity today and its potential for longer-term aging. This is still a very well made bottle of cabernet, the touch of backend alcohol keeps its score down a bit. 2020-2035+? **88+?**

#### **2010 Andrew Will Cellars “Mays’ Discovery Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon**

The 2010 Mays’ Discovery Vineyard cabernet sauvignon from Chris Camarda at Andrew Will Cellars is another of these lower octane wines from the vintage, coming in at an even thirteen percent and showing lovely potential on both the nose and palate. The young and pure nose wafts from the glass in a mix of cassis, black cherries, Cuban cigars, a fine base of soil, a touch of fresh herbs, espresso and a nice framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully delineated, with lovely mid-palate depth, ripe, fine-grained tannins, excellent focus and balance and a very long, nascently

complex and very classy finish. This is going to age into a superb bottle of svelte cabernet sauvignon in eight to ten years! 2021-2055+. **93.**

**2010 Calluna Vineyards “The Colonel’s Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma)**

The Colonel’s Vineyard block of cabernet at Calluna Vineyards is located at the top of this Chalk Hill property and benefits from the cooler microclimate found in this corner of Sonoma. Though the vines are still young (having been planted in 2005), David Jeffrey has obviously done a fine job in restraining their vigor and has produced a wine with plenty of depth and intensity in the very elegant and adult style of Calluna’s wines. The bouquet on the 2010 Colonel’s Vineyard cabernet is a superb blend of black cherries, sweet cassis, tobacco smoke, gentle herb tones, a superb base of soil and a fairly generous dose of well-done new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very svelte, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, plenty of ripe, youthful tannins and excellent length and grip on the classy and soil-driven finish. This is a chewy young wine that will need plenty of bottle age to allow the tannins to fall away, but its inherent elegance are already very much in evidence and this will be a lovely wine in the fullness of time. Like the estate’s merlot, I would love to see even less new wood used here, as the vines are still young and it seems to me that even more *terroir* would show here with less new wood and there is no good reason not to re-use the barrels that this wine was raised in for a few more years! This is very fine juice that reminds me stylistically very much of the beautiful wines of Cathy Corison, with the differences of *terroir* between the Rutherford Bench and Chalk Hill of course, very much in evidence. A lovely young wine. 2021-2050. **93.**

**2010 Continuum Proprietary Red Wine (Napa Valley)**

This was my first taste of Tim Mondavi’s new project, and the 2010 was pretty well-balanced for its rather substantial 14.7 percent alcohol. The wine is a blend of seventy-one percent cabernet sauvignon, fourteen percent cabernet franc, eleven percent petit verdot and four percent merlot, with the malo conducted in small barrels and the wine raised in eighty percent new oak. The nose is deep and ripe, offering up scents of cassis, black cherries, a touch of balsamic vinegar, cigar smoke and plenty of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and pretty anonymous from its ripeness, with firm, well-integrated tannins, quite modest complexity and a long, slightly hot finish. The alcohol is fairly well-managed here, but the wine really tastes like every other ripe, modern, cabernet-based wine made all around the globe, and its \$169 price tag per bottle seems utterly out of synch with the quality of the wine lurking under the cork. Tim Mondavi made some really stunning, supremely elegant wines back at the family winery in the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, and a Continuum that harkened back to those superb wines (which have aged brilliantly and continue to drink with great style) would be most welcome, but this wine is a far cry from those wines. 2016-2030. **83.**

**2010 Cornerstone Cellars “Napa Valley” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2010 Cornerstone Cellars “Napa Valley” bottling of cabernet is a ripe and reasonably well-made bottle, but it is not my style of cabernet sauvignon. The nose is a buxom and fairly simple blend of black cherries, cassis, a touch of currant leaf, chocolate and nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit heady, with a fairly jammy palate impression, moderate tannins and a long, slightly hot and pretty straightforward finish. At 14.5 percent purported alcohol, this wine is at a ripeness where



it lacks delineation and complexity. The wine manages to stay pretty elegant for its octane, but it is ultimately a wine that lacks complexity and focus. 2017-2025+? **84.**

**2010 Cornerstone Cellars “Howell Mountain” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

One would think, with Howell Mountain-sourced cabernet, with its superior elevation to the Napa Valley floor, would be lower in alcohol than the previous wine, but it actually comes in at 14.7 percent (versus 14.5 percent) in this vintage. The wine is ripe and a bit heady on the nose, offering up jammy scents of cassis, black raspberry, a bit of tariness, cigar ash and plenty of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and simple, with a good core, tough, dry-edged tannins (some from the high percentage of new oak, which has seen its tannins leached out of it briskly at this octane level) and a long, bitter and astringent finish that is really pretty unpleasant. I see no hope for this wine, which is decidedly less interesting than the Napa Valley bottling. ??? **71.**

**2010 Napanook- Dominus Estate (Napa Valley)**

The 2010 Napanook bottling from Dominus Estate is comprised of ninety-eight percent cabernet sauvignon and two percent petit verdot, as the scorching heat wave of August 2010 raised havoc with the cabernet franc and merlot in the vineyards. This vintage of Napanook tips the scales at 14.5 percent, was raised in twenty percent new oak and offers up a bouquet of baked black cherries, Cuban tobacco, a hint of menthol, a nice touch of Rutherford Dust soil tones, cigar ash and a bit of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with the fruit slightly stewy from its octane, but also with good acids and a firm spine of tannins to give shape and detail. The finish is long, chewy and manages its octane level very well, with only moderate signs of heat on the backend, but it has sacrificed both freshness and precision to the scorching *fin de saison*. Not bad out of the blocks, but I have very little positive experience with wines at 14.5 percent alcohol finding elegance and complexity with extended bottle aging-which this chewy wine definitely will demand. 2022-2042+? **87+?**

**2010 Stepping Stone Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

Given that 2010 has such a scorching *fin de saison* in northern California, it is hard to imagine how the Stepping Stone cabernet sauvignon from this vintage managed to come in at 13.9 percent alcohol with its Napa Valley origins without the help of de-alcoholization or watering back. However it got here, its nose is not bad, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of sappy black cherries, a touch of mint, chocolate, cigar smoke, just a bit of Rutherford Dust and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and suave on the attack, with a good core, but a rather coarse backend of chewy tannins, a bit of heat and some bitterness on the finish. This is simple and slightly out of balance juice, and I have to believe that it will get more out of balance with bottle age, rather than harmonize, so I would opt to chew through it now, rather than wait and hope. 2013-2018? **84.**

**2009 Corison “Napa Valley” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

One wishes that there were more cabernet producers in Napa that think along the lines of Cathy Corison, as her 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon comes in at a very cool and classy 13.6 percent alcohol and has the purity and complexity to prove that lower octane is where true quality is found in Napa. The resulting wine is really superb, offering up a deep and very classy bouquet of red and black cherries, allspice, tobacco leaf, a touch of red plum, lovely, Rutherford soil tones, fresh thyme and a deft framing of spicy new oak.

On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and potentially quite velvety in texture, with excellent focus and nascent complexity, fine-grained tannins, good acids and really exceptional length and grip on the perfectly balanced and elegant finish. This will need a good decade (at least) to really blossom and realize all of its potential, but it is going to be a superb bottle of cabernet in the fullness of time. Kudos to Cathy Corison for making such old school, classy and ageworthy cabernet in today's crazy world of Napa Valley! 2023-2055. **94.**

**2009 Janzen “Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

I have had so many great cabernets down through the years from the To Kalon Vineyard that I have great respect for this piece of real estate, but in the last few years I have mostly had overripe, high octane wines from this source and I wonder if its halcyon days have now fallen victim to global warming. The 2009 Janzen To Kalon is fairly heady at 15.1 percent alcohol, offering up a ripe and jammy nose of black cherries, chocolate, a bit of cigar smoke and spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and fairly shapely for its ripeness, with a good core, not much complexity and a coarsely tannic, hot finish that turns a bit bitter from alcohol at the close. I know 15.1 percent is pretty low in alcohol by today's “modern school” standards in Napa, but if one is going to bother to buy grapes from such a famous (and pricy) vineyard source, it might make sense to insist on their being harvested early enough that one can actually taste some of the lovely soil signature that one used to find routinely from To Kalon fruit back in the day. 2015-2022+? **82.**

**2009 Stony Hill Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

Mike Chelini and the McCrea family have finally gotten around to labeling their superb new cabernet sauvignon by its varietal name, as the first vintage was sold simply as “Red Table Wine”. The 2009 vintage, which tips the scales at 13.5 percent alcohol, is the finest yet from this great site, as the vines are starting to get a bit older and the wine is showing more mid-palate depth as a result. The deep, young and outstanding bouquet offers up a fine mélange of cassis, black cherries, tobacco leaf, a beautifully complex base of soil, woodsmoke and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a pure and sappy core of fruit, ripe tannins, outstanding balance and delineation and excellent length and grip on the youthful finish. This is going to be a great bottle of old school cabernet with fifteen years or bottle age. 2028-2075. **94+.**

**2008 Bacio Divino “Divine Kiss” Napa Red Table Wine (Napa Valley)**

Much of the blend of this cabernet-based wine hails from the famed To Kalon vineyard in Oakville that was made famous first by the Charles Krug winery in its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s and later by the Robert Mondavi Winery. The wine tips the scales at 14.5 percent alcohol, but seems a tad riper in its aromatic spectrum. The bouquet is a blend of baked black cherries, prunes, a bit of pine tar and plenty of resinous new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, four-square and hot, with a good core, some chewy, slightly coarse tannins (from the oak) and a long, slightly alcoholic finish. This is pretty restrained for its genre, but lacks finesse and complexity and this combination of high alcohol and chewy tannins never seems to age well in my experience, so one probably has to look to drinking this wine in the first eight to ten years of its lifetime. I

am sure there is a market for these kind of wines (at least for now), but it is certainly not a wine made for a palate such as mine! 2015-2020+? **82.**

**2008 Corison “Napa Valley” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2008 Napa cabernet from Cathy Corison is another really beautiful young bottle of young wine. The alcohol content here tips the scales at a very respectable 13.8 percent, which keeps the wine cool on the palate and very light on its feet. The deep and youthfully complex nose wafts from the glass in a refined blend of black cherries, dark chocolate, a nice touch of Rutherford dust, woodsmoke, gentle notes of violet and a judicious framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and very suave on the attack, with a classy base of soil, lovely mid-palate depth, fine-grained tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and elegant finish. This is my kind of Napa cabernet! 2017-2040. **93.**



**2008 Raymond Vineyards “Generations” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

I was the “lucky” recipient of this bottle, when no one wanted to take it home from a dinner tasting where everyone attending brought a bottle or two and this wine did not “make the cut” and was not opened. Given how heavy the bottle is and how high the octane on the label (fully 15.6 percent alcohol), I really did not feel like schlepping it home from Manhattan, but having liked Raymond’s wines back in the day and having not tasted anything from the winery in many years, I felt duty-bound to do the heavy lifting. I really should not have bothered! The very simple nose is ripe and rather “cookie cutter” in its blend of jammy black cherries, cigar wrapper, a bit of prune and plenty of pricy,

spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is big, spit-polished into silkiness on the attack, fat at the core and hot, hot, hot on the pinched and moderately tannic finish. This is a stillborn wine that has no future and does not deliver a whole lot of pleasantness in the glass in its youth, so I really cannot see the point. At roughly \$75 per bottle it is a total rip-off and really a sad de-evolution for a winery that produced such lovely wines back in the 1970s and early 1980s. BTW, I paid \$20 at auction for the truly lovely 1979 Raymond cabernet reported on below- which is worlds away from this concoction. 2013-2017. **71.**

**2007 Janzen “Cloudy’s Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2007 Cloudy’s Vineyard cabernet is another ripe and modern wine from Janzen, tipping the scales at 15.1 percent alcohol. The nose is a blend of marinated black cherries, blackberry jam, coffee grounds, a bit of prune, cigar ash and new oak. On the palate the wine is big, ripe and formless, with a spit-polished, creamy attack, no focus, grainy, dry-edged tannins and a hot, tarry finish. This wine is so devoid of freshness on both the nose and palate that it tastes as if it were watered back to reach the 15.1 percent alcohol level. The high octane has leached out some real bitterness from the new wood on the backend, making for unpleasant finish. From proprietors who routinely drink great, Old World wines (particularly Burgundy), I really did not expect anything so sadly modern and soulless in style! The wine hints that this vineyard could really produce stellar cabernet (it is high in elevation and should stay relatively cool by Napa standards), but in this style there is really nothing to recommend, as I cannot imagine a window where this wine will provide a whole lot of pleasure. ??? **71.**

**2007 Ritchie Creek “Estate” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

One of my friends out in Petaluma mentioned to me that he really liked what Ritchie Creek was still doing these days with their cabernets and was kind enough to get the winery to send me samples. I must say that he was spot on with his comments about the “old school” wines still being made here and this was an excellent cabernet in the making. The 2007 Estate cab from Ritchie Creek comes in at a very civilized 13.8 percent ABV and offers up a classic, old school nose of cassis, black cherries, a touch of menthol, smoke, fresh herbs, gentle, youthful tariness, a nice base of soil and a stylish base of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely reserved, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins, lovely focus and balance and a very long, primary and most promising finish. This still needs several years of cellaring to fully blossom and should age very well indeed. Fine juice. 2018-2040+. **92+.**

**2007 Corison “Kronos Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2007 Kronos Vineyard cabernet from Cathy Corison is a lovely bottle that stays nicely under the fourteen percent threshold of alcohol, tipping the scales at 13.8 percent. The deep, complex and very pure nose offers up a classy mélange of black cherries, cigar smoke, a nice touch of fresh herbs, a beautiful base of Rutherford Bench soil tones, a dollop of dried eucalyptus and a stylish base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, suave and youthfully elegant, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins, excellent focus and superb length and grip on the pure and beautifully balanced finish. This is a fine, fine bottle in the making. 2015-2040. **93.**

### **2005 Bacio Divino Napa Red Table Wine**

The 2005 Bacio Divino is comprised of a rather unique blend of sixty percent cabernet sauvignon, seventeen percent merlot, eighteen percent sangiovese and five percent petit sirah and tips the scale at 14.3 percent alcohol on the label, though the wine certainly seems higher octane on both the nose and palate than that number. The jammy and very ripe nose offers up a blend of red and black cherries, chocolate, a bit of prune, Christmas Tree spice tones and plenty of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and hot, with a good core, firm, slightly wood-derived tannins and a reasonably long, chewy and alcoholic finish. The blend of grapes is frankly rather discordant on the palate, and with the added heat from its octane, it is not particularly impressive juice. 2013-2020? **80.**

### **2005 Ritchie Creek “Estate” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2005 Ritchie Creek cabernet is a pretty ripe wine at 13.8 percent alcohol, but manages to retain truly excellent structure and focus and I have no doubt that this wine will age very well indeed. The still quite youthful and promising nose offers up scents of sweet cassis, black cherries, a bit of eucalyptus, lovely spice tones, a bit of cigar smoke, a fine base of stony soil and plenty of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively vibrant and delineated, with a lovely core of fruit, firm, chewy and well-integrated tannins and fine length and grip on the young and tangy finish. This is going to be a lovely wine in a decade’s time, but despite its excellent structural integrity, it would still be even better with a touch less ripeness. 2020-2045. **90+.**

### **2004 Shafer “Hillside Select” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

I had been a long time since I crossed paths with a bottle of Shafer “Hillside Select”, which once upon a time used to be a very good wine. However, those days are long gone, and this 2004 version was an absolute abomination. The alcohol is a totally uncivilized 14.9 percent and the wine offers up a predictably overripe and syrupy blend of framboise, black raspberries, chocolate and a boatload of smoky new oak. The possibility of aromatic complexity here seems to be a very alien concept. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and confectionary in its syrupy format, with very low acids and plenty of backend heat on the finish that turns decidedly towards pickle juice flavors as the wine airs a bit. This is really utter crap and I cannot imagine a good time to ever drink this stuff. ??? **69.**

### **2000 Ritchie Creek “Estate” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 2000 Ritchie Creek cabernet sauvignon is truly and exceptional and absolutely classic example of Napa cabernet, offering up a complex and vibrant nose of black cherries, black raspberry, woodsmoke, allspice, a touch of fruitcake, lovely, volcanic soil tones, menthol and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still quite chewy, with a lovely core, superb focus and balance and a long, fairly tannic and youthful finish. This is old school cabernet in the best sense of the term and it still needs a good eight to ten years to really come into its own. Fine, fine juice. 2021-2050+. **92.**

### **1986 Monticello “Jefferson Cuvée” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

My, how times have changes in Napa Valley. The 1986 vintage was a good, ripe and structured vintage for north coast cabernet, and the Monticello “Jefferson Cuvée” (the estate’s regular bottling) tipped the scales back then at 12.5 percent alcohol! Not

surprisingly, it has aged very well and is drinking just fine at age twenty-seven, offering up a pure and vibrant nose of cassis, cigar smoke, black cherries, a nice base of soil tones, just a whisper of Barolo-like road tar, dried mint and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with a fine core, still a bit of tannin left to resolve and lovely length and grip on the finish. This is not the most complex cabernet out there, but it remains bright, balanced and capable of plenty more evolution in the bottle. It is a far cry from the more manipulated styles of wine so prevalent in Napa today, that tank before their tenth birthdays! Good, honest Napa cab. 2013-2035. **89.**

**1985 Dunn Vineyards “Napa” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 1985 Napa cabernet from Randy Dunn is still a fairly young wine, but it is starting to stir on both the nose and palate and is probably only about five years away from really beginning to drink well. The deep and impressively complex bouquet offers up scents of black cherries, a touch of red currant, cigar smoke, a bit of dried eucalyptus, orange peel, a superb, complex base of soil tones, gentle spice nuances and cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite pure on the attack, with a lovely signature of soil, a firm and still fairly youthful structure, a rock solid core, bright acids and a fair bit of tannin still to resolve on the long and nicely tangy finish. This was hermetically sealed for the first decade and a half of its life, but it is starting to turn the corner and there is going to be some superb long-term drinking in this wine’s not too distant future! 2018-2045+. **94.**



*Cabernet franc vines nearing picking ripeness in Ric Forman’s vineyards on Howell Mountain.*

### **1983 Joseph Phelps “Eisele Vineyard” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

1983 was a particularly difficult year for north coast cabernet sauvignon, but the '83 Phelps Eisele has done quite well in this tough vintage and the wine was drinking beautifully when I last crossed paths with it in October of 2011. The deep, complex and quite classic nose offers up scents of cassis, eucalyptus, woodsmoke, a touch of tariness, petroleum jelly, beautiful soil tones and a nice base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a touch of the tariness on the nose repeated here on the palate (no doubt a reflection of the difficulties getting cabernet ripe in '83), but also with excellent complexity and focus, and very good length and grip on the still slightly chewy finish. This is not a great vintage of Phelps Eisele, but it is a superb effort for a difficult year and a very, very tasty bottle of mature cabernet. 2011-2030+. **90.**

### **1981 William Hill “Gold Label” Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder)**

The 1981 William Hill “Gold Label” cabernet is an okay bottle, but it has some of the flaws that would figure prominently in this era of California wine, as this was a period when the mantra was to create “food wines” through “sculpting”. What this usually meant was slightly under-nourished wines that were overly acidified, and this is distinctly the impression give off by the '81 William Hill reserve bottling. The herbal and slightly tarry nose offers up scents of cassis, bell pepper, eucalyptus, tarry soil tones and cigar ash. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and a bit “pinched” from sloppy acidulation, with moderate tannins and not particularly great length on the finish. The wine is still alive and kicking, but it seems a bit stillborn to my palate- maybe more bottle age will help. 2011-2035. **86+.**

### **1980 Beaulieu Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon “Georges de Latour” Private Reserve**

I can still recall quite vividly how beautiful this wine was in the early 1990s, but it has now lost its luster and is no longer the wine that it was in its heyday. The nose is still reasonably fresh, offering up scents of black cherries, a touch of coconut, woodsmoke, dark chocolate and a hint of raisin. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite four-square today, with still a bit of remaining tannin and acceptable length and grip on the simple and four-square finish. This vintage of BV Reserve still has a bit of life in it, and has not succumbed to the tides of time in the same way that vintages such as 1968 and 1970 have done, but it has not evolved in the customarily positive manner than vintages of this wine from the decade of the 1970s did, and it is a bit disappointing in that context. 2012-2020+. **84.**

### **1980 Shafer Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 1980 Shafer cabernet sauvignon is another wine from the brief sculpting epoch in California, and the wine was downright weird when I tasted it in October of 2011. The over-worked nose gives off a strange blend of bell pepper, strawberry milkshakes, asparagus, tomato paste and road tar. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and fairly vegetal, with a distinct streak of bell pepper running through the middle of the wine. The finish is again pinched from sloppy acidulation, but the wine is surprisingly long and reasonably complex in its vegetal way. It still has life in it to go for quite some time, but it is not the most pleasant of examples of cabernet sauvignon. 2011-2030. **80.**

### **1979 Conn Creek Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 1979 Conn Creek cabernet is a lovely example of the vintage and a wine that is just now reaching its plateau of maturity. The deep and ripe nose shows a fine mix of



black cherries, a touch of mint, a blossoming base of Rutherford dust, woodsmoke and a dollop of petroleum jelly in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a fair bit of tannin still remaining, lovely focus and very fine length and grip on the finish. This is not the most complex wine today, but it is still fairly early on in its ultimate evolutionary arc and may gain more complexity with further bottle age. A very good, old school bottle of Napa cabernet with decades of life still ahead of it. 2012-2035+. **90+**.

**1979 Diamond Creek “Volcanic Hill” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

I have made a lot of notations about alcohol levels in my notes on many of the younger wines I have tasted from California, as I firmly believe that it is a key fundament in determining how well a wine will age over the long-term, and for wines such as cabernet sauvignon, I frankly just have little interest drinking them young. Here is a beautiful example on how a lower octane cabernet can age brilliantly, as the powerful style of Diamond Creek’s “mountain cabernets” found the ’79 Volcanic Hill tipping the scales at a cool and collected twelve percent alcohol! I find it highly unlikely that even the most strident fans of the over the top jam juice style of cabernet would find this wine “malnourished or green”, as it is a brilliant and utterly complete wine that is now at its apogee of peak drinkability. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a blaze of cassis, a bit of grilled meat, gentle tarry tones, a beautiful base of stony soil and a lovely topnote of cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, tangy and beautifully complex, with a rock solid core of fruit, outstanding focus, length and grip and still just a touch of backend tannin to carry this wine far into the future. An utterly classic and legendary bottle of California cabernet! 2011-2050. **94**.

**1979 Joseph Phelps Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley) served from magnum**

The 1979 Joseph Phelps “regular” cabernet is a bit on the underripe side and shows a distinctive streak of weediness on both the nose and palate, but underneath this is a deep and complex wine that is really not a bad drink. The bouquet is a blend of bell pepper, black cherries, cigar smoke, a lovely and complex base of soil, coffee and plenty of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still a touch chewy, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a very long, modestly tannic finish. One gets used to the weediness of this wine over time, but for those who do not want even a whiff of vegetality in their cabernet, this is hardly going to be a wine for you! But, if you can tolerate a bit of *herbacité*, there is a lot here to recommend in terms of balance, complexity and soil signature. Not a bad wine by any stretch, but not one of the great vintages at Phelps. 2012-2030+. **88**.

**1979 Raymond Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

I had some very good Raymond cabernets from back in this era and the 1979 is quite a fine example of the vintage. The deep and complex nose offers up a blend of black cherries, a touch of bell pepper, menthol, cigar smoke, a bit of tariness and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite succulent on the attack, with a good core of fruit, still a bit of remaining tannin to add backbone and fine length and grip on the complex and mature finish. This is really a very, very good bottle of mature Napa cabernet that still has plenty of life in it. 2012-2030+. **90**.



### **1978 Burgess Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon (Howell Mountain)**

Tom Burgess bought the old Souverain vineyards on Howell Mountain in the early 1970s, where Lee Stewart had fashioned some of California's greatest wines during the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, and made some outstanding wines during the decade of the 1970s and the early 1980s. Perhaps the good stretch continued at Burgess Cellars, but I lost track of the wines and have no idea how the remainder of the 1980s and beyond turned out here, but certainly at least as far as the 1984 vintage, this was still a very important address in Napa. The 1978 cabernet sauvignon is an absolutely superb example of this great vintage and drinking at its apogee at age thirty-five, offering up a deep and complex nose of cassis, cigar smoke, dark, stony soil tones, a touch of chipotle pepper and just a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully-balanced, with a fine core of sweet fruit, excellent soil signature, still a bit of tannin and outstanding length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. A superb wine in full bloom and with years of life still ahead of it! 2013-2035. **93.**

### **1978 Conn Creek "Lot One" Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 1978 Conn Creek "Lot One" cabernet sauvignon is really a lovely example of the vintage that is drinking very well at age thirty-five, but still has a bit of backend tannin and shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. The deep, pure and complex nose wafts from the glass in a fine blend of black cherries, cassis, cigar smoke, a nice touch of eucalyptus, a beautifully complex base of Rutherford Bench soil tones and incipient notes of the chipotle peppers to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with beautiful balance and delineation, a superb core, good acids and still a bit of backend tannin to carry this wine on the very long and classic finish. A beautiful bottle at its apogee, but with decades of life still ahead of it. 2013-2035. **93.**

### **1978 Diamond Creek "Gravelly Meadow" Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

I had previously tasted the 1978 Red Rock Terrace and the Volcanic Hill, but this was my first bottle (in recent times) of the '78 Gravelly Meadow from Diamond Creek. This is one of the greatest vintages in the long and storied history of this great estate, but all of the '78s here are still on the young side and it really is still a waste of bottles to be opening them today, as they are still climbing in quality and just a few more years patience is going to be rewarded with even more magical wine in the glass. The '78 Gravelly Meadow delivers a superb bouquet of cassis, dark berries, cigar box, lovely soil tones, incipient notes of chipotles, cigar smoke and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very complex, with a great core of fruit, superb soil signature, excellent focus and balance and a very long, still fairly tannic and chewy finish. Give this great wine at least until its fortieth birthday to snooze in the cellar, as it is getting very close to full bloom, but it is still not quite over the line! 2018-2060. **95.**

### **1978 Mayacamas Cabernet Sauvignon (Mount Veeder) 375 ml.**

I managed to find a single half bottle of the great 1978 Mayacamas cabernet sauvignon, and my will power lasted almost a full year before I just had to pull the cork and see how the wine was drinking. My thinking was that out of half bottle the wine should be in its prime, whereas it is still a tad on the young side in regular-sized format, but the half was also still a bit too young for primetime drinking and I really wish I had left it in my cellar for a few more years! In any case, the wine was showing brilliantly, offering up a deep, ripe and very pure bouquet of black cherries, cigar smoke, a beautiful

base of mountain soils, incipient notes of chipotles, just a whisper of petroleum jelly and a nice touch of dried eucalyptus in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still fairly young, with a rock solid core, great purity and focus, moderate tannins and great length and grip on the perfectly balanced and very soil-driven finish. A legend! 2012-2040+. **97.**

**1978 Mount Eden Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

I must be snake-bitten with the 1978 Mount Eden cabernet, as the last bottle of this I crossed paths with was absolutely in pristine condition- except for the cork taint! This bottle was free of TCA, but seemed just a touch “advanced” structurally in comparison to the previous bottle and I am convinced that I have still not seen all that this wine can offer in the glass! In any event, the bouquet is deep, complex and classy, offering up scents of black cherries, cassis, cigar ash, a touch of chipotles, lovely herb tones and a fine base of Santa Cruz soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and *à point* (or at least this particular bottle), with a good core, fading tannins and fine length and grip on the complex finish. My gut instincts just tell me that this wine should still have just a bit more structure (particularly from the very classic vintage of 1978), and I will continue my quest to find the Holy Grail of bottles of the '78 Mount Eden! That said, this was still a very tasty drink. 2011-2025+? **91+?**

**1977 Heitz Vineyard “Bella Oaks” Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

The 1977 Bella Oaks is a very good bottle of cabernet sauvignon from this second of two very serious drought years, but it is not in the same league as the stunning bottlings from Fay Vineyard and Martha’s Vineyard that Joe and David Heitz fashioned in this year. The Bella Oaks vineyard was probably planted with pretty young vines in 1977, so this is most likely the reason that this cuvée did not quite keep pace with its two more famous siblings. Nevertheless, the wine is still quite good, offering up a pretty nose of cherries, pomegranate, menthol, woodsmoke, Rutherford dust and a discreet base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and a bit bound up in its structure still today, with a solid core, nice complexity and very good length and grip on the still moderately tannic and tangy finish. I would love to see a bit more mid-palate sweetness and generosity in this wine, but the grapes may just not have fully ripened in the drought. 2013-2025+. **87+?**

**1974 Korbel Cabernet Sauvignon (Sonoma)**

How is this for an oddity? Prior to this very rare bottle showing up for a tasting at my home of older California wines in October of 2011, I had no idea that this bulk sparkling wine producer had ever produced any still wines. However, clearly they took the opportunity to at least produce a cabernet sauvignon bottling in the superb vintage of 1974, and though the wine was starting to get a little long in the tooth by 2011, it was really not too bad and probably was a pretty good example of the vintage in its prime. The nose is on the cusp now, with oxidation threatening in the very near future, but still offers up some interest in its ripe blend of black cherries, a bit of mint, woodsmoke, gentle soil tones and a bit of toasted marshmallow. On the palate the wine is fullish and starting to deteriorate a bit structurally, but still with solid depth and surprising length on the gentle finish. The wine is already really starting to descend over the far side of its plateau of maturity, but if one comes across a bottle, it is still worth trying for historical sake. 2011-2015+? **82.**

### **1973 Chappellet Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley)**

It had been a few years since I last tasted the 1973 Chappellet cabernet, and time seems not to have touched this lovely wine at all, as this remains one of the youngest of the handful of cabs I have tasted from this outstanding vintage. This bottle was even younger than the last bottle I crossed paths with back in 2009, but offered up the same superb quality on both the nose and palate. The fine bouquet is a pure blend of cassis, black cherries, chipotle peppers, a lovely base of dark soil tones, cigar ash and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with fine focus and grip and still a fair bit of youthful tannins to resolve on the long and classy finish. There were some absolutely great wines made at Chappellet back in the day, as this winery has been the home to some of the finest cabernet specialists in California throughout the years, including Kathy Corison and Philip Togni. 2011-2025+. **93.**



### ***Bordeaux-Inspired Blends***

#### **2010 Andrew Will Cellars “Champoux Vineyard” (Washington State)**

The 2010 Champoux Vineyard bottling from Andrew Will Cellars is comprised of a customary blend of merlot (forty-two percent), cabernet franc (thirty-two percent) and cabernet sauvignon (twenty-six percent), but with the merlot percentage elevated in this vintage and the cabernet sauvignon component fully twenty percent less than was the case in the 2008 vintage (for example). The wine is also quite a bit lower in octane than the 2008 version (13.1 percent versus 14.5 percent) and I really like the new, sleeker shape of this bottling. The wine is nowhere near as voluptuous out of the blocks as the

2008 was, with a more structured personality, but also it seems to me to be more complex and with superior balance for long-term cellaring. The deep and youthful nose is superb, offering up scents of dark berries, cassis, tobacco leaf, gravelly soil tones, a bit of woodsmoke and a lovely base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impressively soil-driven, with a fine core of fruit, firm, ripe tannins, excellent focus and grip and a very long, youthful and perfectly balanced finish. This is a beautiful bottle in the making, but it is properly structured out of the blocks and is going to need a good eight to ten years in the cellar to really blossom and start to drink at its apogee. It should prove to be very long-lived and a stellar vintage of this cuvée! 2021-2060. **93.**

**2010 Andrew Will Cellars “Ciel du Cheval Vineyard” (Washington State)**

Continuing the trend at Andrew Will Cellars, the 2010 Ciel du Cheval bottling is more than a full percentage point lower in alcohol in this vintage than it was in 2009 (13.2 percent versus 14.5 percent) and presents a more reserved and classic profile on both the nose and palate as a result. The *cépages* this year is forty-eight percent cabernet franc and fifty-two percent merlot and the wine offers up a superb bouquet of cassis, black cherries, espresso, dark soil tones, cigar smoke, fresh herb tones and a sophisticated base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely transparent, with fine mid-palate depth, ripe, well-integrated tannins, good acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long, nascently complex and elegant finish. This is going to be a terrific bottle of wine, but give it time in the cellar to blossom! 2020-2060. **93.**

**2010 Andrew Will Cellars “Two Blondes Vineyard” (Washington State)**

The 2010 Two Blondes Vineyard bottling from Chris Camarda is absolutely stunning young juice, tipping the scales at an “old school” octane of 12.8 percent and exuding purity and nascent complexity in spades! The superb nose offers up an aromatic constellation of cassis, dark berries, a touch of tree bark, tobacco smoke, French roast, gravelly soil tones (or at least what I perceive to be gravel- may not actually be any here in this vineyard), fresh herb tones, violets and cedar. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and light on its feet, with great transparency, superb intensity of flavor, well-integrated tannins and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex finish. For those keeping score at home, the 2010 vintage is made up of a blend of forty-three percent merlot, thirty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon, seventeen percent cabernet franc and two percent malbec. This is another properly reserved, new release from Andrew Will that is going to be absolutely smoking with sufficient bottle age! I am more than content to trade a bit of the early accessibility of the riper vintages of recent times for the greater breed, elegance and potential complexity to be found in wines like this stellar vintage of Two Blondes! 2020-2050. **93.**

**2010 Andrew Will Cellars Sorella (Washington State)**

The 2010 Sorella from Andrew Will Cellars is comprised of a mix of seventy-three percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty percent merlot and seven percent cabernet franc and tips the scales at a very civilized 13.2 percent alcohol. I have not noticed in past vintages that the wine is produced from the Champoux Vineyard, but in 2010 this appears on the label- was this always the case? In any event, this is a stunning young wine, offering up a deep, refined and complex bouquet of black cherries, dark berries, cigar wrappers, a touch of lead pencil, dark soil tones, a bit of current leaf and a lovely framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant, with a fine core of fruit, impeccable focus and balance, fine-grained tannins, good acidity and excellent

length and grip on the youthful and very classy finish. This is very, very high class juice in the making! 2020-2050. **94.**

**2010 Calluna Vineyards “Calluna Vineyard Cuvée” (Chalk Hill)**

The 2010 Calluna Vineyard Cuvée is comprised of a blend of forty-four percent merlot, thirty-six percent cabernet sauvignon, nine percent cabernet franc, six percent malbec and five percent petit verdot and comes in at a cool and classy 14.1 percent alcohol. The 2010 was raised in forty percent new wood. The wine is really quite lovely, showing a very complex, “cool fruit” nose of cassis, black cherries, tobacco leaf, lovely soil tones, a touch of violet and a very judicious base of new wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a fine core of fruit, impeccable focus and balance, fine-grained, but fairly substantial tannins and excellent length and grip on the young and very classy finish. This is going to be a terrific wine and should age very gracefully indeed. Impressive juice for the cellar! 2020-2050. **92+.**

**2010 Calluna Estate (Chalk Hill)**

The Calluna Estate bottling is the flagship wine from Calluna Vineyards, with the 2010 version made up of a blend of fifty-three percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty percent merlot, seventeen percent cabernet franc, eight percent petit verdot and two percent malbec. It was raised in a bit more new wood than the Calluna Vineyard Cuvée in this vintage, with sixty percent of the barrels new and the wine is just a touch riper at 14.3 percent alcohol. The 2010 Calluna Estate delivers an excellent nose of cassis, black cherries, cigar smoke, a fine base of dark soil tones, espresso, a bit of lead pencil and a judicious framing of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and seamless, with a young and very classy personality, a fine core of fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the bright and still very primary finish. I love the sense of inherent balance and restraint on this young, elegant and very complex wine, and it should be a cellar treasure in the fullness of time. This is a very high class bottle of Bordeaux-inspired Sonoma red wine that will need at least another decade to really start to come into its own, but which should firmly cement the reputation of Calluna Estate as one of the brightest new producers in the firmament of California wine. Fine, fine juice! 2023-2050+. **94.**

**2009 Andrew Will Cellars “Ciel du Cheval Vineyard” (Washington State)**

The 2009 Ciel du Cheval from the Andrew Will winery is a lovely wine that is just a touch past my threshold for backend finishing alcohol, as the touch of heat on the finish keeps its score down just a tad for my sensitive palate. The wine weighs in at 14.5 percent, ABV, which is the same as the other two 2009s that I sampled, but it comes across as a bit less cool in the mouth than the other two bottlings from this fine estate in this vintage. The blend is comprised of forty percent merlot, thirty-five percent cabernet sauvignon and twenty-five percent cabernet franc and the bouquet is a mix of ripe black cherries, raspberries, dark chocolate, a hint of menthol, woodsmoke and a suave base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and creamy on the attack, with a good core of fruit, fine complexity, ripe, fairly moderate tannins and bit of uncovered alcohol poking out on the long finish. For those who are less sensitive to backend ripeness than me, add three to four points to my score, as the complexity here is impressive. 2013-2025+. **89.**

**2009 Andrew Will Cellars “Two Blondes Vineyard” (Washington State)**

The 2009 Two Blondes Vineyard from Andrew Will is a blend of thirty-eight percent cabernet sauvignon, thirty-one percent merlot and thirty-four percent cabernet franc and tips the scales at 14.5 percent alcohol. The wine offers up a ripe, complex and classy bouquet of black cherries, a touch of eucalyptus, woodsmoke, fresh herbs, coffee, menthol and a deft framing of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and velvety on the attack, with a lovely core of fruit, fine balance, silky tannins and the long and classy finish. At 14.5 percent alcohol, this is pretty serious octane, but the wine does a beautiful job of managing its ripeness and there are absolutely no overt signs of heat on the backend. The only possible penalty the wine pays for its ripeness is a slight diminution of precision on the finish, but all in all, this is a very tasty and complex bottle. In a perfect world, I would love to see this bottling at fourteen percent or slightly lower in alcohol, but there is a lot to like here. 2013-2025. **90+**.

**2009 Andrew Will Cellars Sorella (Washington State)**

The 2009 Sorella bottling from the Andrew Will winery is a lovely wine, and despite its label claiming 14.5 percent alcohol, the perception on both the nose and palate is of a wine that is decidedly “cooler” in fruit tones than Two Blondes Vineyard bottling. The deep and complex nose offers up a very refined constellation of black cherries, red plums, cocoa powder, woodsmoke, a nice base of soil tones and a stylish framing of smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very suave on the attack, with a good core, fine-grained tannins and a long, ripe and classy finish. This is very good juice, but again, half a degree less alcohol could take this up into pretty rarefied company. I did not note what the blend is on the 2009 Sorella, but it sure tastes a lot like Cheval Blanc! 2014-2030+. **91+**.

**2008 Andrew Will Cellars “Champoux Vineyard” (Washington State)**

The 2008 Champoux Vineyard bottling from Chris Camarda of Andrew Will is comprised of a blend of forty-six percent cabernet sauvignon, twenty-six percent merlot, twenty-three percent cabernet franc and five percent petit verdot and comes in at 14.5 percent alcohol. The wine is deep and ripe on the both the nose and palate, offering up a fine bouquet of plums, mocha, cigar smoke, a lovely base of soil and a very suave base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and ripely tannic, with fine purity and focus, tangy acids and just a whisper of backend heat on the long and complex finish. If the alcohol is subsumed more fully into the body of the wine with bottle age, then my score will prove to be quite conservative, as there is a lot going on here that is most impressive! 2015-2045. **91+**.

**2008 Andrew Will Cellars “Ciel du Cheval Vineyard” (Washington State)**

The 2008 Ciel du Cheval from the Andrew Will winery offers up a bright and complex bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, menthol, coffee, a lovely base of soil, fresh herb tones and smoky new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and well-balanced, with a fine core of fruit, moderate tannins and a long, ripe and classy finish. I did not take note of the ABV on this vintage, but one can sense the ripeness a bit on the backend. The blend in this vintage was thirty-two percent each of cabernet sauvignon and cabernet franc and thirty-six percent merlot. Fine juice. 2013-2030+. **92+**.

### **1999 Château St. Jean “Cinq Cépages”**

The 1999 Château St. Jean “Cinq Cépages” is a perfectly acceptable, ripe and rather tarry wine that is pretty ham-fisted in style, but does possess a bit of complexity. The bouquet is a ripe and extroverted blend of black cherries, black raspberries, coffee, tarry tones, cigar ash and plenty of sawdust. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, tarry and pretty resinous, with surprisingly good length and grip on its still moderately chewy finish. This is a reasonably well-made wine that stylistically fails to excite, but shows every sign of continuing to age for many years to come. 2012-2030. **87.**

### **1984 Dominus**

The 1984 vintage of Dominus was the first ever to be released by the estate, as Christian Moueix properly judged that the tighter and more structured 1983, which was the first wine actually vinified at the estate, would do well with a bit more bottle age in the cellars prior to release, so the 1984 was the first to find its way to market. I have always loved this vintage of Dominus and this most recent bottle was absolutely singing, offering up a deep and classy bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of menthol, cigar smoke, a beautifully complex base of Rutherford soil, fresh herb tones and a judicious base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a fine core, still a fair bit of tannin left and superb complexity and grip on the very long and impressive finish. One of the finest vintages of Dominus from the first decade of the winery’s existence and still with tons and tons of life ahead of it. 2012-2050. **94.**

### ***Carignane***

#### **2011 Porter Creek “Old Vine” Carignane (Mendocino County)**

The 2011 Porter Creek Carignane is cooler than the fine 2010 version, coming in at an even thirteen percent alcohol in this old school vintage. The wine delivers a bit more red fruity personality as a result, with a bouquet of cherries, black raspberries, woodsmoke, a nice touch of mustard seed, a good base of soil, a hint of acorn and cedary new oak. On the palate the wine is focused, full-bodied and complex, with tangy acids, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the beautifully-balanced finish. With a bit of air, this is drinking very well already, but it should really hit its peak with a year or two of bottle age. Really lovely, low octane wine with personality to burn. 2013-2025+. **92.**

#### **2010 Porter Creek “Old Vine” Carignane (Mendocino County)**

I have been a big fan of the Porter Creek Carignane bottling since I first had the pleasure of tasting it with Alex Davis in the spring of 2011, where he opened the lovely 2009 for me to taste. The 2010 is a lovely follow-up to that fine bottling, offering up a deep and complex nose of black cherries, a touch of dark berry, a bit of gamebird, espresso, woodsmoke, cedar and dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with a fine core, excellent focus, just a bit of tannin and impressive balance for its 13.7 percent alcohol level, as it shows absolutely no signs of either heat or jamminess in its long and precise finish. Superb juice. 2013-2025. **91.**

### ***Syrah***

#### **2011 Copain Wine Cellars “Tous Ensemble” Syrah (Mendocino County)**

The 2011 Tous Ensemble Syrah from Wells Guthrie is still quite young and a bit youthfully anonymous at the present time, but with good raw materials that augur well

for a bit more personality with a bit of bottle age. The nose is still quite primary in its blend of cassis, a bit of white pepper, herb tones, incipient notes of venison, espresso and a solid base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, potentially complex and a bit youthfully weedy at the present time, with good intensity of flavor, moderate tannins and a long, soil-driven and tangy finish. There is not a lot of focus on display today, but the wine is balanced nicely and my gut instinct is all this cuvée needs is a bit of bottle age to start to sharpen up and drink well. Give it six months to a year to blossom, and then drink it over the next decade or so, as it is clearly a wine made for near-term consumption. Good solid juice that may be even better that it appears today with a bit more bottle age. 2014-2025+? **88+?**

**2010 Bacio Divino Cellars “Vagabond” Syrah (Napa Valley)**

The 2010 Vagabond syrah is pretty slickly modern in style, with any rough edges engineered away in the cellar, along with a lot of the wine’s theoretical personality and complexity. The wine is not too over the top in octane, coming in at 14.7 percent and does not show much heat on the backend, but the wine is really tame for syrah and only vaguely varietal. The bouquet is a blend of cassis, a touch of black pepper, dark chocolate and a fairly discreet base of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, suave and simple, with a modest core, a bit of chewy tannin and a reasonably long, slightly hot finish that is short on complexity. This seems like it was made by a focus group, with no overt flaws (other than very modest complexity), but not much sizzle either. 2013-2020+? **84.**

**2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Les Voisins” Syrah (Yorkville Highlands- Mendocino)**

The 2010 Les Voisins syrah from Copain Wine Cellars is a lovely wine in the making, wafting from the glass in a discreet, “cool fruit” blend of dark berries, cassis, black pepper, stony soil tones, woodsmoke, graphite and a bit of the gamebird to come with further bottle age. On the palate the wine is medium-full, nascently complex, with lovely intensity of flavor (rather than real weight), modest tannins and very good length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is a lovely, lower octane syrah (thirteen percent) that has the weight of good pinot noir and lovely varietal character and soil signature. It is a far cry from a blockbuster style, but there is a lot here to like for the attentive. 2017-2030+. **90.**

**2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Halcon Vineyard” Syrah (Yorkville Highlands)**

The 2010 Halcon Vineyard syrah from Wells Guthrie is superb young juice, with a decidedly pure personality tied to its very civilized 12.6 percent alcohol level. The lovely and youthful nose offers up a fine blend of cassis, black raspberries, black pepper, a touch of game, gravelly soil tones, woodsmoke and a deft framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and intensely flavored, with an excellent core and focus, impressive complexity, a fair bit of chewy, well-integrated tannin and a long, pure and soil-driven finish. This is excellent young syrah, but it will need several years in the cellar to really reach its apogee. 2019-2040+. **93.**

**2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Baker Ranch” Syrah (Anderson Valley)**

The 2010 Baker Ranch syrah from Copain is another low octane beauty, coming in at a lovely 12.4 percent alcohol. There is not a lot of syrah planted in Anderson Valley, which is really pinot noir territory these days, but the Baker Ranch bottling shows that this variety can excel here as well. The wine delivers a fine, youthful bouquet of black cherries, cassis, vinesmoke, a touch of gamebird, gentle herb tones and coffee. On the



palate the wine is medium-full, pure and beautifully light on its feet, with fine intensity, moderate tannins and a long, tangy and transparent finish. This is cut more along the lines of a good St. Joseph in style, with its soil elements less overtly mineral, but it shows no shortage of soil signature and is really a lovely bottle in the making. 2016-2035+. **91.**

**2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Hawks Butte” Syrah (Yorkville Highlands)**

The Copain Hawks Butte bottling is the ripest wine in this lineup of 2010 syrahs, coming in at 13.3 percent alcohol (still a far cry from jam juice) and offering up a very expressive and complex nose of black cherries, dark berries, a bit of eucalyptus, woodsmoke, incipient notes of game, dark soil tones, espresso and a touch of syrah’s medicinal overtones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and still quite light on its feet, with a lovely core of fruit, well-integrated tannins, fine focus and balance and a long, primary and very promising finish. This wine is raised in older oak barrels for ten months prior to bottling and really is a superb example of syrah. 2018-2040. **92.**

**2010 Copain Wine Cellars “Brousseau Vineyard” Syrah (Chalone)**

The 2010 Brousseau Vineyard syrah from Wells Guthrie’s Copain Wine Cellars is excellent, offering up a vibrant and pure bouquet of black cherries, black raspberries, a touch of bonfire, black pepper, incipient notes of game and a lovely base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite elegant in style, with a good core, lovely transparency, modest tannins and fine length and grip on the complex and quite accessible finish. Of all these Copain single vineyard syrahs, this is the most forward in style, but it has the balance to also age very well indeed. 2013-2035. **92.**

**2010 Porter Creek Vineyards “Timberline Ranch” Syrah (Russian River Valley)**

This is quite a ripe wine by Alex Davis’s standards, tipping the scales at 14.5 percent alcohol, but it does not show any signs of heat on either the nose or palate. The bouquet is outstanding, offering up a youthful and complex mélange of cassis, black raspberries, grilled meats, black pepper, lovely soil tones, espresso and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and powerfully styled in a Hermitage sort of way, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, firm tannins, tangy acids and excellent length and grip on the chewy finish. The ripeness here may show itself just a touch in a less precise backend than was the case in the 2008 Timberline Syrah (which is the only previous vintage of syrah I have tasted from Alex Davis), but this wine is very well-balanced and should blossom into a very serious bottle with sufficient bottle age. 2020-2045+. **91+.**

**2010 Rhys Vineyards “Horseshoe Ranch Vineyard” Syrah (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

These are still quite young vines, having only been planted in 2004, but it is quite clear that the Rhys team is keeping a tight rein on yields here and the 2010 Horseshoe syrah is outstanding. It is not quite as soil-driven as the 2010 Skyline syrah (this vineyard does not share the same limestone found at Skyline), but it is every bit as complex and impressive. I love its octane level of 12.8 percent. The superb nose offers up scents of cassis, grilled venison, black olive, pepper, a nice touch of syrah’s medicinal overtones, a bit of vinesmoke and just a hint of oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and nicely transparent, with a fine core, moderate tannins and excellent complexity on the long and impressive finish. Aromatically, this is more along the lines of Cornas (to Skyline’s Côte-Rôtie tilt), but it is lighter on its feet than most Cornas and relies more on intensity of flavor, rather than muscle. It is an excellent wine that is already approachable, but which will really be better with a handful of years in the cellar. Fine juice. 2013-2035. **92.**

### **2010 Rhys Vineyards “Skyline Vineyard” Syrah (Santa Cruz Mountains)**

The 2010 Skyline Vineyard Syrah from Rhys Vineyards is a stunning young bottle of wine, with great breed and complexity on both the nose and palate and exceptional potential for cellaring. The cool and classic nose wafts from the glass in a blend of cassis, black pepper, a touch of meatiness, incipient notes of black olive, a beautifully pure and complex base of stony soil, a touch of dried violets and discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a lovely core, a very soil-driven personality, ripe, well-measured tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and very classy finish. Low octane syrah in California can be pure magic (this weighs in at a very adult 12.8 percent alcohol) and the 2010 Skyline from Rhys Vineyards is a perfect example of just how great this varietal can be here if it is treated properly and picked in a timely manner. Great juice! 2015-2035. **93+**.

### **2010 Stepping Stone Syrah (Napa Valley)**

The 2010 Stepping Stone syrah, at 14.25 percent alcohol, was one of the riper examples I tasted of this varietal in preparation for this article, which in and of itself I take as a very good development for this grape variety on the west coast of the US. There is enough signs of borderline ripeness on the nose here to suggest that it has been watered back a bit, as it offers up a jammy nose of cassis, black pepper, chocolate, a bit of prune, hung game, bonfire and a bit of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and velvety on the attack, with a good core, low acids, not much structure and a long, ripely tannic and moderately jammy finish that shows just a bit of backend heat. This is okay, but if it had been picked at a lower Brix it might have been more interesting, as it still shows nice varietal character at its octane. 2013-2016. **86**.

### **2010 Wind Gap “Sonoma Coast” Syrah (Sonoma)**

I really liked the purity and aromatic complexity of the low octane Wind Gap 2010 Syrah, which tips the scales at 12.3 percent and offers up utterly classic, Northern Rhône aromatics and flavors to go along with a very transparent and light on its feet palate impression. The absolutely stellar bouquet offers up scents of cassis, black olives, black pepper, a touch of lavender, incipient notes of game and a beautifully complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very soil-driven, with a good core of fruit, fine intensity of flavor, moderate tannins and a long, classy and very well-balanced finish. This is a really lovely wine that really has more of a pinot noir-type weight to it, but with superb intensity and focus. Fine, fine juice. 2103-2030. **93**.

## ***Zinfandel***

### **2011 Nalle “Dry Creek Valley” Zinfandel**

The label on the Nalle 2011 Zinfandel does not actually proclaim that it is a varietal bottling, as the blend is prominently displayed as mix of eighty-three percent zinfandel, thirteen percent petit sirah and four percent carignane and the back label calls the wine a “traditional field blend”. The wine tips the scales at 13.7 percent alcohol, which is well down on the octane scale for zin-based wines these days, and it shows a touch of weedy, brambly character at this level that is quite attractive to my palate (but may not be to everyone’s tastes). The bright and red fruity nose jumps from the glass in a mix of raspberries, cherries, Oriental spices, pepper, a bit of meatiness, herb tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely transparent for zinfandel, with a good core, moderate tannins and fine length and grip on the ever so slightly hot

finish. This wine is fairly weedy when it is first opened and needs to breath for its fruit and spice tones to mount, but it is a very impressively complex and classy example of zinfandel (and friends) that should age very well and be at its best with three to five years of bottle age, but should have no troubles keeping twenty plus years. However, if the faintest signs of weediness puts you off, then this is probably not the wine for you, as even when it has had some air, there is a vein of *herbacité* that runs through the wine. But, for the less squeamish, this is really a lovely and complex bottle in the making. 2016-2035. **90+**.

**2011 Porter Creek Vineyards Sonoma County Zinfandel “Old Vine” (Sonoma)**

The 2011 Porter Creek Sonoma “Old Vine” zinfandel is a young and very promising bottle in the making. The deep and brambly nose offers up a youthful blend of cherries, raspberries, coffee, weedy herb tones, a lovely base of soil (that will go autumnal with a bit of bottle age), vinesmoke and a nice topnote of spice tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely focused, with an excellent core of fruit, fine soil inflection, firm chewy tannins, very good grip and a long, tangy finish that closes with a note of youthful *herbacité*. This is a grown up bottle of zinfandel that will need several years in the cellar to blossom from behind its firm structure, but should be outstanding with five to seven years of bottle age. Fans of the over the top, high octane and jammy style of zinfandel will often cite this grape’s propensity for its bunches to ripen unevenly as a compelling reason to leave the grapes out there on the vine until the alcohol level is dizzyingly high, and there is certainly a bit of youthful weediness here that I am sure is attributable to this characteristic of the grape. But, I would much rather trade this youthful *herbacité* (that will age into something far more interesting down the road) and this wine’s 13.5 percent alcohol for a completely fruit-driven and non-weedy zinfandel at 15.5 percent alcohol that will simply collapse from alcoholic exhaustion after a couple of years in the bottle! 2018-2035+. **90+**.

**1979 Burgess Cellars Zinfandel (Napa)**

The 1979 Burgess Cellars Zinfandel is just a touch riper than the 1978, coming in at 14.3 percent alcohol, and it has not aged quite as well as its older sibling. The wine is still a quite fine bottle of mature zin, offering up scents of roasted berries, dried currants, a touch of spiced meats, soil tones, a bit of coffee grounds and a gentle topnote of raisin. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely developed, with a good core, melting tannins and good length and grip on the fully mature finish. This is just a touch lacking in complexity, but otherwise a good drink and still with plenty of life ahead of it. 2012-2025. **87**.

**1978 Burgess Cellars Zinfandel (Napa)**

I have a very warm spot in my heart for this wine, as a re-release of this bottling at age five or six was the very first wine I ever spent more than ten dollars a bottle on back in my nascent wine drinking days at college. I was very curious to try a bottle when I saw one at auction last year and I think I only had to pay twenty dollars for the wine nearly thirty years after I sprung for it the first time back at the university! The wine has aged brilliantly, probably due to its very reasonable octane level of 14.1 percent, as it offers up a beautiful and mature nose of dried berries, a bit of fruit cake, cigar ash, coffee, a touch of mesquite, gentle notes of soil, meaty tones and a lovely topnote of zinfandel spices. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and impressively transparent, with tangy acids, melted tannins and just a whisper of backend heat now starting to poke

through as the fruit gets more delicate at its relatively advanced age. A beautiful bottle of mature zin that will want drinking up in the next several years, as the first signs of structural fraying are starting to show with the bit of alcohol poking out on the backend today. 2013-2020. **91.**

**1978 Caymus Vineyards Zinfandel (Napa)**

Ah, the old days at Caymus, when the wines were really exceptional and the prices were still very reasonable! This superb old zinfandel tipped the scales at a very suave thirteen percent alcohol, and it is probably this inherent sense of fine balance out of the blocks that has allowed it to age so gracefully and to really still be drinking beautifully at age thirty-five. The lovely and mature nose wafts from the glass in a classy blend of dried raspberries, coffee, charred wood, brambly overtones, cigar ash and a lovely topnote of zinfandel spiciness. On the palate the wine is medium-full, round and impressively complex, with lovely focus and balance, good acids and just a whisper of remaining tannin on the long and suave finish. This is a beautiful example of what this varietal could do before the modernists came along and turned zinfandel into Frankenstein's monster. 2013-2020+. **91.**

**1976 Ridge Vineyards "Lytton Springs" Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley)**

The '76 Ridge Lytton Springs Zinfandel clearly struggled with the drought of this year and the vines must have shut down for quite a bit of the growing season, as the wine only managed to crawl to an ABV level of 11.6 percent. Now, I am usually a pretty strident fan of lower octane wines, but this wine clearly never quite got over the hurdle of adequate ripeness and really is a pretty petite version of this great bottling. The nose still shows off pretty good depth and complexity after thirty-six years of bottle age, offering up notes of dried berries, coffee, heather, soil tones and cigar ash. On the palate the wine is medium-full and balanced, but really pretty short, with a respectable core of fruit and sound complexity, but rather minor intensity by the standards of this great wine. Not bad-particularly when viewed within the context of the challenging 1976 vintage, but not a great old vintage of Lytton Springs. 2012-2020+. **86.**

**1974 Ridge Vineyards "Lytton Springs" Zinfandel (Dry Creek Valley)**

The 1974 Lytton Springs zinfandel from Ridge is one of the greatest zins I have ever had the pleasure to taste. The wine has aged brilliantly and is drinking still at its absolute peak, soaring from the glass in a complex and captivating nose of black raspberries, cherries, pipe tobacco, delicate spice tones, a dollop of meatiness, a lovely base of soil and a topnote of aged leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and seamless, with excellent complexity, a fine core, outstanding focus and balance and a very long, meltingly tannic and utterly sophisticated finish. For those keeping score at home, the alcohol on this gem in the ripe vintage of 1974 was 13.3 percent. A brilliant zin with decades of life still ahead of it! 2012-2035+. **94.**

**1973 Ridge Vineyards "Geyserville" Zinfandel (Sonoma)**

The 1973 Ridge Geyserville was pretty ripe by the standards of this era in California, coming in at 14.3 percent alcohol, and the wine has not aged as well as many other Ridge zinfandels from this epoch. The 1973 was one hundred percent from this varietal (many Geyservilles are a blend that is predominantly zinfandel, but also includes carignane and other grapes) and offers up a complex and brambly nose of raspberries, coffee, spice cake, hickory smoke and fallen oak leaves. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and complex, but also a bit four-square, with a good core, low acids, little

remaining tannin and modest grip on the still pretty long finish. I had friends who were great Ridge aficionados back in the 1980s, whose experience dated back to the very earliest days with this winery, and they always insisted that the Ridge zinfandels that really aged the best were the ones that stayed around the thirteen percent alcohol level! The '73 Geyserville obviously would not have been one of their candidates for long-term cellaring, and I suspect that this wine was far more impressive early on in its evolution. But, that said, it is still holding on nicely and is not dead yet. 2012-2020+? **86.**

### ***Rosé***

#### **2012 Bravium Rosé (screwcap)**

It is too bad that this wine is bottled under screwcap, as the wine seems like it would have aged pretty well, but that is not going to happen with this closure. But, at least for near-term drinking, there is a lot to like here in the pretty nose of cherries, a touch of orange peel, pomegranate, smoke and dried rose petals. On the palate the wine is medium-full and shows off nice mid-palate depth, with crisp acids and very nice length and grip. The wine is not overly complex, but quite tasty. The screwcap is already starting to mute the nose a touch and I would hustle to drink this wine up before full-scale reduction starts to knock at the door. 2013-2014. **87.**

#### **2012 Porter Creek Vineyards Rosé (Sonoma County)**

The Porter Creek rosé is a lovely, very pale melon color and offer up a bright and elegant nose of blood orange, melon, a touch of coriander seed, dried flowers and a nice base of dusty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a good core, moderate complexity, but lovely bounce and grip on the long and quite dry finish. This is not the most complex wine out there, but it is very well-made and really works well at the table. 2013-2015. **89.**

## THE ANNUAL LOIRE VALLEY REPORT THE 2011 VINTAGE AND OTHER RECENTLY TASTED GEMS



*The quilt-like mosaic of vineyards in Sancerre in high summer.*

It has been a bit longer than a year since I last did a report on the lovely wines from the Loire Valley, but tastings and other featured have piled up a bit over the course of this year and annual reports such as this have been pushed back a bit as a result. Consequently, this feature now straddles the gap between two vintages, as the 2011 vintage has been out for a while already and the very first wines of the 2012 vintage are already starting to be released. The two vintages both possess some lovely wines, but they are quite different in nature and neither one was what a *vigneron* along the Loire River would term “ideal”. I will, of course, be covering the 2012 vintage in far more detail in next year’s report, once the vintage’s wines more fully arrive on the market, but I will at least touch upon some of the characteristics of the year here, given that several 2012s are reviewed in the pages that follow. 2012 was a very tough year in some sections of the Loire, as the growing season was extremely difficult (as was also the case in Burgundy in this vintage), with growers constantly fighting against vineyard depredations during intermittent periods of rain and sun, and hail was also a major challenge in parts of the region- particularly in the central Touraine section in 2012. (As I write the finishing touches on this article, I also hear that the Touraine has again been ravaged by mid-summer hail in 2013, with hailstones the size of golf balls ripping through the vineyards

of Vouvray and surrounding areas and this is going to be another extremely difficult year for this section of the Loire.)

As is the case in Burgundy in 2012, yields are down across the board in the Loire Valley in the 2012 vintage, but this varies from region to region, with the far eastern end of the Loire around Sancerre and Pouilly-sur-Loire much less affected by the hail further west and yields down in the fifteen to twenty percent range. In the central Loire around Tours, hail damage was much more extensive, with some vineyards losing as much as eighty percent of their crop. Further west things were a bit better, but still with yields off dramatically as one moves through Savennières and Anjou out towards Muscadet. However, as is the case in Burgundy (where villages such as Meursault, Puligny and Volnay often lost up to eighty percent of their crop as well in 2012), what remains from the battering of Mother Nature during the flowering was actually very high quality and there will be a very short crop of very high quality wines at many addresses on the Loire in the 2012 vintage- even where the hail limited yields the most draconianly. However, it was not just hail during flowering that caused problems in the vineyards in 2012 on the Loire River, as powdery mildew, downy mildew and rot were also pervasive throughout this growing season, and with so many top estates in the Loire now *biodynamique* or organic, there was often a problem with how to combat the constant barrage of showers followed by warm, humid weather (which is ideal for spreading vineyard depredations such as these) and constant spraying was mandatory throughout the growing season. Of course, the challenges posed by the growing season were not exclusive to organic or *biodynamique* producers, as everyone had to spend their entire summer out in the vines trying to protect what was left of their crop from the earlier hail damage and bring in enough fruit to at least make some wine. As Emmanuella Chidaine reported about her husband, François, “he was spending nearly twenty hours a day out on the tractor and looked half dead from all of the work” required to salvage the grapes still out on the vine from the threats of rot and mildew. But, this was the unhappy lot dealt out to the *vignerons* in the Loire in 2012. Happily, what wine was produced in 2012 looks at this early date to have turned out very well indeed, which is at least some compensation for Mother Nature’s capricious mood during the summer of 2012, and though the year will be remembered early on for its very short crop levels, over time it will be the excellent quality of these wines that will mark the vintage in the history charts.

The 2011 vintage was no easy matter for producers on the Loire either, as it was generally a cool, grey and damp summer as well, with rain arriving at inopportune moments in early September and putting pressure on vineyards of potential rot spreading at a time when the *vignerons* really needed a bit of good, sunny weather to more completely finish the ripening of the grapes. As was the case elsewhere in France, the spring was hot and early in the Loire Valley and flowering was at least three weeks ahead of schedule and initial predictions were for a very early harvest. Then the weather turned cool and overcast and the early start brought about the warm weather of the early spring was quickly erased by unseasonable weather through much of the mid-summer, with both July and the first half of August particularly gloomy with rain and cold weather lording over the vineyards. A great Indian Summer would have been most welcome by the *vignerons* in 2011, but it was not to be, as rain in early September forced producers to

often start picking to protect their crop from potential devastations from rot and mold, so there was a lot of compromises that had to be made in terms of ripeness. The resulting wines- pretty much across the entire region- are a mixed bag, with some very successful wines often contrasted with wines that are modest in ripeness, decidedly low in acidity and not always clean. The good wines are very good and quite forward in style- plump, generous and often quite fruit-driven and ideal for early drinking. The less successful wines are often a bit unclean, dilute and lack cut and charm, with their relative ripeness often clearly boosted by a generous chapitalization. But, as the notes below will attest, despite the challenges of 2011, there are really some very well made wines to be found in this vintage- many of which will drink better sooner than their corresponding bottles from 2010 or 2012 and it is emphatically not a vintage to turn one's back upon in a wholesale fashion, as there are some lovely high water marks to be found in the 2011 vintage. In overall quality terms, though the two vintages are quite different stylistically, the 2011s are probably at about the same level as the 2004 vintage on the Loire, which did produce some lovely wines (many of which still grace my own personal cellar) that are quite enjoyable now and which, in the case of the red wines, still have plenty of life still ahead of them.

If one were to generalize a bit about the styles of the wines of 2011, one would say that it is a relatively forward year for the very best producers in Muscadet, Anjou, the Touraine and the great red wine appellations of Saumur-Champigny, Bourgueil and Chinon. Certainly the wines from top producers in Vouvray and Montlouis are quite forward out of the blocks (some seemed a bit soft when first released, but have firmed up nicely with a bit of bottle age and now show lovely balances), but with good underlying minerality and framing acidity and I would anticipate that they will drink very nicely for a decade or more- without going through any extended dumb period, which is so often the case with these wines in more firmly structured years. Further east in Pouilly-sur-Loire and the villages of Sancerre, the results are a bit more mixed, with some wines from top estates and *terroirs* quite complete, albeit more forward structurally than is typical for these bottlings, while others are absolutely transcendent of the struggles of the vintage and utterly complete wines of admirable depth, structure and precise expressions of their underlying *terroir*. It is not a vintage of great ripeness in Sancerre or Pouilly-Fumé, but the wines which I tasted are certainly all more than adequately ripe and it is not a vintage that is plagued by green flavors that one finds with sauvignon blanc that did not quite reach physiological maturity, and one generally has a choice between wide open and succulent wines for early consumption or more seriously structured wines from producers like Edmond Vatan or Gérard Boulay that are utterly classic in style, with great purity and soil signature, but structures that are not quite as racy and forbidding out of the blocks as these wines and their like can be in a snappier vintage such as 2010.

I should note that the report that follows does not include any current releases from some of my favorite US importers' Loire Valley portfolios- firms such as Louis-Dressner or Kermit Lynch- as I simply ran out of time to taste through their wines and still get this issue out remotely close to its original planned release date. Rather than push back the issue's release further still, I thought it made more sense to simply try and taste the Loire Valley current releases from these important importers in the coming weeks and



just include a second round of Loire Valley tasting notes in the next issue. So new vintages from many of my favorite producers are not profiled in the pages that follow below, but will be coming along with the release of Issue 46 at the end of August. That said, there is no shortage of material in the following pages on the two vintages of 2011 and 2012 and, as I noted at the outset, given the very extensive hail damage that ripped through the Touraine just a few weeks ago and has put in jeopardy not only 2013 here, but also cast a real doubt on whether the severe damage in the vines from this vicious round of hail will not also adversely affect the following vintage of 2014, it makes very good sense to look very closely at the two vintages of 2011 and 2012 in the Loire Valley. Neither year was as ideal as 2010, but neither one is unsuccessful and if one picks and chooses, there are a lot of good wines to be found from either year. In general terms, 2011 will produce more forward wines for near-term consumption and 2012 looks, at this early date, to have provided a lot of classic and very well-structured wines that will cellar very well. As I noted above, the big question with the 2012 vintage in the Loire will be finding the wines from the regions that were most severely affected in terms of yields.

### ***Muscadet***

*The Muscadet region has had a tough time since the extensive frosts of 2008 devastated so many vineyards, and many of the estates here are absolutely strapped for cash after the required replanting and a vintage such as 2011 or 2012 is hardly what they needed at this point in time, as constant vineyard treatments require cash flow that is not always available at many of these estates in the wake of the 2008 frost damage. In general, the 2012 vintage will be far superior to the 2011 vintage here in Muscadet, but that said, there are really some outstanding wines to be found from the most serious estates in 2011- who had the time and money to be able to aggressively select their fruit in the vineyards and at the cellar door and were able to capitalize on the best quality of the vintage's fruit to produce their wines. In every case, this was of course the producers who harvest by hand, as even the most sophisticated machine harvesters are not going to be able to duplicate the selection process made by the human hand in a vintage as challenging as 2011. But wines such as the superb lineup of 2011s from Jean-Jacques and Rémi Bonnet or Domaine de l'Écu clearly show that one could produce bright, tensile and wide open examples of Muscadet in 2011 and that the vintage is not a total write off in this region of the Loire. That said, I am sure that this is a vintage where it pays to steer clear of the bulk-styled examples of Muscadet made from machine harvesting and big, anonymous blends, as there would have been plenty of rot in these wines to try and scrub out with cellar techniques. Happily, I generally do not taste wines from that genre of Muscadet in any case...*

### **2012 Muscadet Côtes de Grandlieu Sur Lie- Domaine du Haut Bourg**

The 2012 Côtes de Grandlieu from Domaine du Haut Bourg was the first 2012 Muscadet that I had tasted and it confirms that this will be an excellent and classic vintage for the region. The beautiful nose is a blend of pear, lemon, sea salts, stony soil tones and a nice touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and complex, with a nice touch of brininess, a lovely core and very good *nervosité* on the long and zesty finish. Really a lovely bottle and a great value. 2013-2025. **90.**

**2011 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “le Levraudière”- Jean-Jacques et Rémi Bonnet**

The “le Levraudière” bottling from Jean-Jacques et Rémi Bonnet is their entry level Muscadet and this is the only wine in their portfolio that is produced from a combination of both hand-harvested and machine-harvested fruit, but like all of the brothers’ wines, it is produced with indigenous yeasts and the yields for this basic bottling are kept very reasonable at forty-five hectoliters per hectare. The 2011 is lovely, offering up a bright and stony nose of lemon, green apple, sea salts and a fine base of granite. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and focused, with fine backend cut and grip and a nice closing note of straw. Good juice and a fine value. 2013-2015. **88.**

**2011 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “les Dabinières”- Jean-Jacques et Rémi Bonnet**

The “les Dabinières” is a single vineyard bottling from Jean-Jacques et Rémi Bonnet is all hand-harvested and hails from a vineyard that is certified organic and on the way to *biodynamique* cultivation. The soils here are mica-schist and gneiss. The 2011 Dabinières is a superb bottle of Muscadet, delivering a fine bouquet of tart pear, bread fruit, gentle leesiness, straw and a beautifully complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and crisp, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and balance and excellent length and grip on the sea salty finish. This is a very elegant bottle of Muscadet with outstanding intensity of flavor and the potential to keep well for a dozen years or more. 2013-2025. **92.**

**2011 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “les Gautronnières”- Jean-Jacques et Rémi Bonnet**

As I noted last year, the les Gautronnières bottling from the Bonnet brothers hails from a new ten hectare parcel of vines from the Château les Gautronnières which the brothers purchased in the last couple of years. The soils here are amphibolite, which produces a very more stony personality in the resulting wine and the 2011 is excellent. The classy nose jumps from the glass in a fine blend of lemon, very complex, stone minerality, *fleur de sel*, a dollop of orange peel and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with bright acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and classically briny finish. This makes a lovely contrast with the more smoky and laid back soil complexity of the les Dabinières. Another simply outstanding bottle of Muscadet from the Bonnet brothers. 2013-2030. **93.**

**2011 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “les Laures”- Jean-Jacques et Rémi Bonnet**

The les Laures bottling from the Bonnet brothers hails from the single vineyard of “Granit de Vallet”, which is the same vineyard from which Marc Ollivier’s “Granit de Clisson” bottling is produced, and in fact the two parcels are contiguous. The Bonnets’ vines here are forty years of age and the vineyard is in the process to conversion to *biodynamique* cultivation. The 2011 has turned out splendidly, offering up a fine aromatic constellation of bread fruit, dried flowers, straw, a lovely base of complex soil tones and a topnote of gentle ocean breezes. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and very refined, with a fine core, bright, zesty acids and excellent length and grip on the elegant and classy finish. A very fine bottle of Muscadet. 2013-2025+. **93.**

### **2011 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “Gneiss”- Domaine de l’Écu**

This fine troika of 2011s from Domaine de l’Écu was my first experience with the wines of Guy Bossard, who is one of the seminal figures in the renaissance of high quality Muscadet in the last several decades. Monsieur Bossard’s first vintage at his family domaine was 1972, and he is now semi-retired and has sold his domaine to a long-time, passionate client of the estate, Fred Niger Van Herck, who came and apprenticed with Guy Bossard for several vintages prior to taking over the reins of the property in the 2010 vintage. However, Monsieur Bossard remains very much involved here (though officially retired) and will probably still be found in his beloved vines until the day he passes on from this world. The domaine is *biodynamique* (one of the very first estate in the Loire to adapt these principals) and makes stellar examples of Muscadet. The three bottlings that I tasted from 2011 are all aged fully fifteen months on the lees and are crafted by soil type, with the Gneiss hailing from micro-schist soils. The wine is outstanding, offering up a deep and complex nose of bread fruit, sea salts, lovely leesy tones, dried flowers and a gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and minerally, with lovely complexity, fine focus and excellent length and grip on the vibrant finish. This is delightful Muscadet and another revelation for the difficult 2011 vintage. 2013-2020. **89.**

### **2011 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “Orthogneiss”- Domaine de l’Écu**

The 2011 Orthogneiss bottling from Domaine de l’Écu hails from vineyards with metamorphosed rock that is far more granitic than the straight micro schist found in the vineyards that make up the Gneiss bottling. Like all three of these bottlings, the wine hails from vines that range from forty-five to fifty-five years of age, are all hand-harvested and fermented with indigenous yeasts. The 2011 Orthogneiss is excellent, offering up even a bit more soil signature in its bouquet of tart pear, ocean breeze, a beautifully complex base of soil tones, a touch of mossiness and a topnote of straw. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and rock solid at the core, with superb mineral drive on the backend, lovely cut and focus and a very long, vibrant and snappy finish. The energy here on the palate is really quite remarkable for the 2011 vintage! 2013-2023. **91+.**

### **2011 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “Granite”- Domaine de l’Écu**

The Granite bottling, as the name suggests, hails all from hard granite soil types and its vineyards are planted with equally old vines. This is the most minerally-defined of these three excellent bottlings, wafting from the glass in a classy aromatic blend of understated lemon, sea shells, complex, granitic minerality, lovely lees tones, dried flowers and a bit of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully focused, with a fine core, an impressive spine of minerality, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the snappy finish. A superb example of the vintage! 2013-2023. **92+.**

### **2010 Muscadet-sur-Lie-Sèvre-et-Maine “Goulaine” V. V.- Jean-Jacques et Rémi Bonnet**

The old vine bottling of Goulaine from Jean-Jacques and Rémi Bonnet is made from a parcel of sixty-five year-old vines and is aged two years *sur lies* before bottling. This vineyard is already certified *biodynamique* and the wine is of course made with indigenous yeasts. The 2010 is absolutely stunning, offering up a very deep and briny

nose of bread fruit, lemongrass, beautiful maritime notes, gentle, almost creamy lees tones from its two years on the lees and a refined topnote of fresh lime. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and utterly refined, with a great core of fruit, outstanding focus and cut and a very long, poised and racy finish. Stunning Muscadet. 2013-2030. **94+**.



**2002 Muscadet Côtes de Grandlieu Sur Lie “Origine”- Domaine du Haut Bourg**

This is a special late release bottling of the Côtes de Grandlieu that the domaine has aged on the lees for fully seven years prior to bottling and the lovely 2002 is the very first release of this new cuvée. The wine is outstanding, offering up a deep and complex mélange of tangerine, complex leesy tones, a touch of lilac, hints of fresh pineapple and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and very suave on the attack, with a fine core, lovely mature nuances, bright acids and very good length and grip on the leesy finish. A lovely, fully mature bottle of Muscadet, the 2002 Origine still has plenty of life ahead of it and is a terrific value. 2013-2020. **92+**.

***Coteaux du Layon***

**1981 Moulin Touchais**

The 1981 Moulin Touchais is the current release from this iconic producer and the wine is quite lovely, offering up a deep and complex nose of apricots, oranges, honey, a touch of beeswax, new leather, a touch of caramel corn and chalky soil tones. There was a touch of acetone in the first bottle of this wine I tasted, and the follow-up bottle showed this quality for the first few minutes it was opened, but it then dissipated briskly. On the

palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and zesty, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and complexity, vibrant acids and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and zesty finish. This is really a very precise and racy vintage of Moulin Touchais, with the acid backbone to age for many decades to come. Lovely juice. 20013-2050+. **94.**

### ***Bonnezeaux and Quarts de Chaume***

#### **1996 Bonnezeaux “le Malabé” Premier Trie- Domaine Godineau**

I had never tasted a wine from this estate and I was very impressed by their 1996 Premier Trie from the le Malabé vineyard. The lovely and mature nose wafts from the glass in a complex and tertiary blend of apricot, new leather, honey, orange peel, a touch of coffee and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and dancing, with fine complexity and a great core of fruit, very elegant and vibrant acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long and harmonious finish. A beautiful bottle in its prime. 2013-2040. **93.**

### ***Savennières and Neighbors***

*Savennières certainly had its struggles in both 2011 and 2012, from what I have heard, at least the reduction in yields here in 2012 were not anywhere near as draconian as was the case further east in the Touraine and most estates were down around twenty-five percent or so in quantity in this vintage, but with the quality of the grapes that were brought in excellent and this vintage should prove to be superb when more of the wines hit the market in the months to come. The 2011 vintage was more difficult here, as the rainy and cool weather pattern of mid-summer had ripeness lagging in the autumn and rainy weather arrived (with its attendant threat of rot and mildew) in September, forcing estates to bring in fruit that they would have preferred to have left out on the vine soaking up sun for a few more weeks, if Mother Nature had been a bit more gracious. Based on the few examples of Savennières that I have tasted from the 2011 vintage, this will be a vintage to drink right out of the blocks, as the wines are not as deep or structured as they normally are in a top vintage, but they are not without merit. Of course, there are still plenty of 2010s in the pipeline from this region and they are a classic vintage and well worth adding to the cellar if one comes across one of the top producers' wines.*

#### **2011 Savennières “Roche aux Moines”- Domaine aux Moines**

The Roche aux Moines is one of the top vineyards in Savennières, as tis 9.6 hectare hillside of vines lies right next door to Coulée de Serrant. The 2011 from Domaine aux Moines (which is currently run by the mother-daughter team of Monique and Tessa Laroche) is a lovely wine that is drinking very well out of the blocks, offering up a lovely nose of apple, lanolin, a touch of mossiness, chalky soil tones and a bit of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wide open structurally, with a sound core of fruit, nice framing acids and lovely length on the complex finish. Obviously, this does not have the same depth and grip of a top-flight vintage, but the wine is really well-made and is probably going to drink very well for the next six to eight years. It is a very well-made 2011 example of Savennières. 2013-2020. **89.**

**2010 Anjou “Litus” Blanc- Eric Morgat**

This is a lovely chenin blanc-based white from Monsieur Morgat, who also makes a fine lineup of Savennières bottlings. The soils for his Anjou Blanc bottling are volcanic schist and the wine is aged in older 450 liter *foudres*. The nose is deep, complex and gently leesy in its complex mélange of apple, quince, gentle notes of lanolin and a beautiful base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with crisp acids and outstanding length and grip on the complex and very classy finish. This is a lovely and very serious bottle of dry chenin that can certainly give most Savennières a run for their money. 2013-2025. **90+**.

**2010 Savennières “Roche aux Moines”- Domaine aux Moines**

The 2010 Savennières “Roche aux Moines” from Domaine aux Moines is a classic and absolutely outstanding bottle in the making, offering up a deep, ripe and classy bouquet of pear, peach, a touch of honeycomb, a superb base of chalky soil, orange peel and a gentle topnote of smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with crisp acids, excellent focus and balance and impressive length and grip on the still fairly youthful finish. A superb bottle! 2013-2030. **93**.

**1996 Savennières Roche aux Moines “Cuvée d’Avant” Doux- Château de Chamboureau**

The 1996 Savennières Roche aux Moines “Cuvée d’Avant” Doux from Château de Chamboureau is drinking beautifully at the present time, offering up a deep, ripe and fully mature nose of orange, apricot, new leather, a touch of honey and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and classy, with fine acids, lovely focus and very impressive length and grip on the poised and wide open finish. This is clearly a special sweet wine produced from the Roche aux Moines vineyard in 1996, and the wine has turned out lovely. 2012-2025. **91**.

***Saumur Blanc*****2012 Saumur “Arcane” Blanc- Château de Fosse-Seche**

This was my first taste of the wines from Château de Fosse-Seche, which is located on a seventeen hectare hill that was first cultivated by the Benedictine monks starting back in the ninth or tenth centuries! The hill is planted to seventy percent cabernet franc and thirty percent chenin blanc, and Château de Fosse-Seche produces single red and white cuvées from the estate. The soils here are a unique blend of classic Loire Silex flint fingered into iron oxides, which produce truly superb soil flavors in the underlying wines. The 2010 Blanc from Château de Fosse-Seche is a superb wine, offering up a deep and complex bouquet of lemon, pear, lanolin, orange zest and a wonderfully complex base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with excellent focus and grip, ripe acids, lovely balance and a very long, soil-driven finish. This is really superb juice! 2013-2030. **92+**.

### ***The Great Loire Red Wine Appellations***

*By all accounts, the cabernet franc has experienced success in the difficult vintage of 2011 that far outreaches any other varietal on the Loire River in this year and there are really a lot of fine 2011 reds waiting in the wings. The vintage is not as strong as either of its predecessors, 2010 or 2009, and probably harkens back both qualitatively and a bit stylistically to the vintage of 2008 for the reds from the central Loire. I have only tasted a handful of 2011 reds so far, but the ones I have tried have been quite good and should provide lovely drinking over the mid-term. Happily, there are still plenty of 2010s and 2009s also in the pipeline, with many estates just ushering out some of their higher end bottlings from these two exceptional vintages for cabernet franc. These wines continue to be some of the most startlingly great values to be found in the world of red wine, and for those who lament the brutal march up in prices over the last decade of the most toney bottlings from regions such as Burgundy or Bordeaux, it is crazy not to turn one's attention to the beautiful cabernet franc-based wines that have been rolling out of the best cellars in the central Loire over the last decade or two. Global warming may have helped things a bit here in terms of getting more even ripening on a year to year basis for the cabernet franc in the Loire, but I suspect that it has simply given many of these wines a more immediate appeal for those who do not want to cellar the wines, and there are plenty of top vintages from the decades of the 1960s and 1970s that were equally fine as what we have seen today- if one was willing to tuck the wines away in the cellar for a sufficient period of time before opening them. Beyond the superb and rightly renowned wines of Domaine Clos Rougeard, which are as pricey as red wines come in the Loire Valley these days, almost everything else produced from the cabernet franc grape in the great appellations of Saumur-Champigny, Bourgueil and Chinon remain absolute bargains in price, given the exceptional quality to be found these days at the top addresses, and I have to imagine that the opportunity that these wines present today (for folks looking to add superb, cellar-worthy wines that will age gracefully and improve immeasurably with bottle age) cannot last forever and it makes good sense to still focus on the remaining 2009s and 2010s that are out on the market for one's cellaring needs. The 2011s, like the 2008s before them, will be most useful as a mid-term vintage to allow the more structured years like 2009 and 2010 to hibernate happily in the cellar for another eight to ten years and really start to come into their own. When the 2012s start to arrive en masse to wine markets around the world, they are likely to be another top-notch vintage for the cellar, so this is indeed a great moment to be tucking away Loire reds.*

### ***Saumur-Champigny***

#### **2010 Saumur-Champigny "Tuffe"- Château de Hureau (Philippe Vatan)**

The 2010 Tuffe bottling from Philippe Vatan is an outstanding bottle of Saumur-Champigny and fully demonstrates that 2010 is every bit the quality equivalent (albeit different stylistically) of the superb 2009 vintage. This is the standard bottling from the domaine and offers up a complex and classy bouquet of cassis, dark berries, espresso, a beautiful base of soil, smoke and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite transparent, with a great core of fruit, ripe, seamless tannins and impressive elegance on the long and bouncy finish. Just a classic bottle of Saumur in the making and a terrific value. 2013-2030+. **92.**

**2010 Saumur-Champigny “Lisagathe”- Château de Hureau (Philippe Vatan)**

The Lisagathe bottling from Philippe Vatan is the estate’s old vine cuvée, with most of the vineyards used here over fifty-five years of age. The wine sees a bit of new wood during its *élevage* and is a deeper and sappier wine than the lovely 2010 Tuffe from the domaine. The superb and still quite primary nose delivers a blend of sappy black cherries, dark berries, French roast, a touch of eucalyptus, a great, complex base of soil and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid in the mid-palate, with ripe tannins, fine focus and balance and a very long, pure and still very youthful finish. This will demand some cellaring before its secondary layers of complexity start to emerge and the tannins fall away a bit, but it will be a stellar bottle once it has blossomed and I might give it a slight nod over the very, very fine 2009 Lisagathe bottling. 2018-2045. **94.**

**2009 Saumur Champigny- Domaine des Coutures**

Domaine des Coutures is owned by Vincent Nicolas, who is the fifth generation of his family to exploit the family vineyards in Saumur Champigny. Today the estate encompasses fifteen hectares of vines, all planted to cabernet franc. In addition to their fine Saumur Champigny bottling, the estate also produces an exotic Crémant de Loire produced entirely from cabernet franc as well. The 2009 Saumur Champigny is an excellent wine and an outstanding value, offering up a deep and classy nose of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of bell pepper, tree bark and a complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and sappy at the core, with lovely delineation, modest tannins and excellent length and grip on the impressively tangy (particularly for a 2009!) finish. This is very high class juice! 2012-2025. **90.**

**2009 Saumur-Champigny “Eolithe”- Château de Fosse-Seche**

The 2009 Saumur-Champigny “Eolithe” from Château de Fosse-Seche is an excellent wine, offering up a deep and classic nose of dark berries, cassis, cigar smoke, a fine base of dark soil tones, a touch of eucalyptus and a gentle topnote of tree bark. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and nicely soil-driven, with a fine core of fruit, lovely purity and focus, moderate tannins and good, tangy acids brightening up the very long and classic finish. This is a really lovely bottle of Saumur-Champigny. 2013-2030. **90.**

***Bourgueil and Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil***

**2012 Bourgueil “Cuvée Chesnaies”- Domaine des Chesnaies (Lamé Delisle Boucard)**

The 2012 Bourgueil “Cuvée des Chesnaies” from Domaine des Chesnaies is really a lovely bottle of Bourgueil and highlights just how fine this vintage is going to be for the red wines of the Loire. This bottling is raised entirely in stainless steel tank and offers up a fine, complex bouquet of dark berries, black cherries, espresso, a touch of tree bark, dark soil tones and a gentle smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and focused, with a fine core of vibrant fruit, lovely soil inflection and a nice dollop of tannin adding spine and grip on the long and tangy finish. This is a lovely bottle of Bourgueil and a superb value! 2013-2020+. **89.**

**2012 Bourgueil “Jour de Soif”- Domaine Pierre et Rodolphe Gautier**

The 2012 Bourgueil “Jour de Soif” from Domaine Gautier is really a lovely example of the vintage that is obviously produced to drink on the early side and really



delivers! The superb bouquet wafts from the glass in a classic mélange of dark berries, black cherries, lovely herb tones, a bit of tree bark, woodsmoke and a lovely base of gravelly soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and complex, with a good core, fine intensity of flavor, not much tannin, but lovely focus and bounce on the classy and really tasty finish. This is one of the best “Beaujolais-styled” Loire reds I have tasted in several years, and while it is made to drink right out of the blocks, it has fine enough balance to easily keep for six to eight years (and maybe longer). A lovely wine and a superb value. 2013-2020+. **89.**

**2011 Bourgueil “la Coudraye”- Domaine Yannick Amirault**

The la Coudraye bottling from Monsieur Amirault is a blend of the three major soil types of Bourgueil- *tuffeau*, gravel and flint, with the wine raised in older *foudres* and bottled unfiltered. The 2011 la Coudraye offers up a lovely nose of dark berries, black cherries, a touch of tree bark, woodsmoke, dark soil tones and a bit of espresso. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a nice core of sappy fruit, suave tannins and excellent length and grip on the complex finish. This wine will age beautifully, but with a bit of decanting, it is already quite accessible, due to its impeccable balance. I would still be inclined to give it at least a couple of years in the cellar to allow its secondary layers of complexity to emerge, but I would fully understand those who wanted to drink this wine in the bloom of youth. Very high class juice and a superb value- as always! 2015-2035. **90+.**

**2011 Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil “la Mine”- Domaine Yannick Amirault**

The Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil “la Mine” bottling from Yannick Amirault hails entirely from gravelly soils and is also raised in older *foudres* and bottled unfiltered. The 2011 is a fine bottle, wafting from the glass in a youthful aromatic constellation of black cherries, cassis, tree bark, a bit of game, a touch of pepper, gravelly soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully chewy, with a lovely core of fruit, superb soil inflection, tangy acids and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex and ripely tannic finish. Whereas the 2011 la Coudraye bottling from Bourgueil is quite approachable today, this serious wine is a bit more bound up in its structural elements out of the blocks and I would want to give it at least three or four years to really start to blossom before having at it in earnest. It has outstanding potential. 2016-2030+. **90+.**

**2010 Bourgueil “les Quartiers” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Yannick Amirault**

Les Quartiers is one of the very top vineyard sites in Bourgueil and Monsieur Amirault has a fine parcel of fifty year-old vines in this chalk and clay-based *terroir*. The wine is raised in *demi-muids* (a bit larger than the standard 228 liter barrel) that have all been previously used, so that the wine sees no new oak during its *elevage*. I had loved the outstanding 2009 version and this superb 2010 is a very worthy follow-up, as it offers up an utterly classic nose of pure black cherries and cassis, a bit of spit-roasted gamebird (which it would go great with in about five years’ time!), woodsmoke, espresso, a beautiful base of dark soil tones and gentle notes of tree bark. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with an excellent core of fruit, ripe, well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex finish. This is not quite as deep as the superb 2009 version, but this is an outstanding and utterly classic bottle of Bourgueil in the making. 2017-2040. **93.**

### 2010 Bourgueil “le Grand Clos”- Domaine Yannick Amirault

The Grand Clos bottling has a bit more limestone and flint in its soil composition than the les Quartiers, and it is also sees a bit of new wood during its *elevage* in *demi-muids*. The 2010 is an outstanding young bottle of Bourgueil, jumping from the glass in a classic mélange of dark berries, black cherries, a touch of new leather, tree bark, gravelly soil tones (even though there is no gravel here!), tobacco leaf, just a whisper of new wood and a topnote of cigar smoke. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully complex, with a rock solid core of sweet black fruit, bright acids, fine-grained tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and classy finish. Lovely juice. 2018-2040. **93+**.



### 2010 Bourgueil “la Petite Cave”- Domaine Yannick Amirault

This was the first vintage of La Petite Cave that I have had the pleasure to taste from Monsieur Amirault. The soils here are a blend of clay-limestone *tuffeau* and the parcel is planted with fifty year-old vines. The wine is raised entirely *demi-muids*, of which fifty percent are new for this bottling. The 2010 la Petite Cave is an absolutely superb wine in the making, offering up a pure and refined nose of black cherries, tobacco leaf, dark chocolate, a beautifully complex base of soil, just a touch of St. Émilion-like menthol tones, coffee bean and a judicious base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave on the attack, with a lovely core, fine focus and balance and a fair bit of well-integrated tannins on the long and very classy finish. This is a bit

more polished on the attack from its sojourn in some new wood, but also shows a bit of integrated wood tannins on the finish and will need a bit more time in the cellar to blossom, but it is another excellent bottle of Bourgueil in the making. 2020-2040+. **93.**

**2010 Bourgueil “Pavillon du Grand Clos”- Domaine Yannick Amirault**

Pavillon du Grand Clos is actually the official name of Domaine Amirault, but it also graces the label of their top bottling, which is made from their finest *terroir*. The vines here are still on the young side by the high standards of this domaine, but the vigor of these fifteen year-old cabernet franc vines is held in check by green harvesting and aggressive pruning. I do not have figures on how much new wood the wine is raised in, but it clearly sees some during its *elevage*. The 2010 Pavillon du Grand Clos is a young and outstanding bottle of Bourgueil, offering up a primary and very classy nose of dark berries, a bit of roasted meats, espresso, woodsmoke, tobacco leaf, dark soil tones, tree bark and a stylish base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, focused and rock solid at the core, with a very youthful personality, firm, chewy tannins and a very long, nascently complex finish that closes with superb grip and intensity of flavor. This is a great bottle of Bourgueil in the making, but it will need some time in the cellar to start to blossom. 2020-2045. **94.**

**2010 Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil “les Malganges”- Domaine Yannick Amirault**

The vineyard of les Malganges lies closest to the Loire River of all the Amirault parcels in Bourgueil or Saint-Nicolas de Bourgueil and consequently, this is a very gravelly *terroir*. The 2010 was raised entirely in *demi-muids*, of which half were new. The wine offers up an outstanding bouquet in this vintage, with scents of cassis, dark berries, French roast, tree bark, cigar ash, plenty of gravel, fresh herbs and a nice touch of cedary oak wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and soil-driven, with a lovely core of sweet black fruit, firm, chewy tannins, good acids and outstanding length and grip on the young and very promising finish. This is a bit chewier out of the blocks than the top cuvées of Bourgueil, but it has excellent potential. 2020-2045. **93.**

**2009 Bourgueil “Cuvée Prestige”- Domaine des Chesnaies (Lamé Delisle Boucard)**

Domaine des Chesnaies holds back a significant percentage of their top Bourgueil for later release, with these cuvées aged in a combination of older barrels, *foudres* and a bit in stainless steel tanks. The 2009 Cuvée Prestige is the youngest of their “reserve” bottlings currently on the market and it is a stellar bottle. The deep, pure and sappy nose offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, chocolate, a lovely base of dark soil tones, a bit of pepper, woodsmoke and just a whisper of tree bark in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, again with the lovely sappiness of this vintage quite in evidence. The wine is beautifully focused and balanced, with impressive complexity, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the poised and very classy finish. This is a superb bottle of Bourgueil that is just entering its plateau of peak drinkability and has decades of life ahead of it. Another absolutely stunning value from Domaine des Chesnaies and a wine to seek out for fans of great Loire Valley reds! 2013-2035. **93.**

**2004 Bourgueil “Cuvée Préstige”- Domaine des Chesnaies (Lamé Delisle Boucard)**

The 2004 Cuvée Prestige from Domaine des Chesnaies is not as sappy as the 2009 version and has moved into a lovely, autumnal and tertiary stage of development, where it is drinking at its apogee. The deep and complex nose offers up scents of dark berries, cigar ash, fresh herb tones, soil, espresso, tree bark and an exotic topnote of dried eucalyptus. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a good core, lovely focus and development and still just a touch of tannin perking up the long and fully mature finish. A lovely bottle of aged Bourgueil. 2013-2025. **90.**

***Chinon***

**2011 Chinon “La Cuisine de Ma Mere”- Domaine Nicolas Grosbois**

Nicolas Grosbois is a young *vigneron* who took over the family domaine here in 2005, after a few *stages* as far afield as New Zealand and Oregon and his first vintage at the family estate was in 2006. His cuvée “La Cuisine de Ma Mere” is his basic bottling, which is raised entirely in tank, though for the most part he prefers to raise all of his bottlings in stainless steel and is only dipping his toe in the water with a few experiments with older barrels for some of his older vine bottlings. The 2011 La Cuisine de Ma Mere is really quite a lovely example, offering up a fine nose of dark berries, a touch of bell pepper, woodsmoke, gravelly soil tones and a touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and shows off a fine core, with good focus, a touch backend tannin on the long and classy finish. This is a lovely wine that drinks well out of the blocks, but will be even better with another year or so of bottle age. 2013-2020+. **89.**

**2010 Chinon “la Rive Gauche”- Domaine Marc Plouzeau**

Marc Plouzeau really makes outstanding examples of Chinon and the two samples of his 2010s that I tasted were excellent. The 2010 Rive Gauche offers up a bright and classic nose of dark berries, coffee, tree bark, fresh herb tones, a lovely base of soil tones and a touch of new leather in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and still fairly young, with a fine core, ripe tannins and very fine length and grip on the focused finish. Give this a few years to really blossom. 2016-2030+. **90.**

**2010 Chinon “les Cornuelles”- Château de la Bonnelière (Marc Plouzeau)**

Monsieur Plouzeau has a fine parcel of fifty year-old vines in the superb vineyard of les Cornuelles. The wine is aged in four and five year-old, 450 liter barrels and it is an absolutely stellar bottle of young Chinon in the 2010 vintage. The beautifully complex bouquet wafts from the glass in a blend of cassis, black cherries, a beautiful base of dark soil tones, a touch of game, tobacco smoke and a dollop of new leather. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine, nascent complexity, fine soil drive, ripe, well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the pure and youthful finish. A classic bottle of Chinon in the making. 2017-2035+. **93.**

**2010 Les Pensées de Pallus Chinon**

Domaine de Pallus is located in the village of Cravant-les-Côteaux, which over the years has been home to some of my favorite Chinon producers. The current proprietor of Domaine de Pallus is Bertrand Sourdais, who rose to prominence early in his winemaking career as a winemaker in Spain and returned to the family estate in 2004. The 2010 Les Pensées de Pallus is a dynamite Chinon, offering up a very pure and superbly transparent bouquet of black cherries, cassis, gravelly soil tones, a touch of tree bark, woodsmoke and currant leaf. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and

beautifully defined by its fine base of soil, with superb intensity of flavor, a very good core, modest tannins and outstanding complexity and grip on the poised and beautifully balanced finish. At 12.5 percent alcohol, this is a superb bottle of Chinon that is relatively light on its feet and utterly classic in its aromatic and flavor profile. A superb bottle that is approachable today, the 2010 Les Pensées de Pallus will age beautifully and will be even better with a couple of years' worth of bottle age and age for a couple of decades. Fine juice. 2013-2030+. **91.**

**2010 Grand Vin de Pallus Chinon**

The Grand Vin de Pallus is the top cuvée from Domaine de Pallus and is a touch riper than the Les Pensées bottling, tipping the scales at a still very civilized thirteen percent alcohol. This bottling is aged entirely of new oak for eighteen months and it has always been my impression that it looks to the top bottlings from Clos Rougeard in Saumur for its inspiration. The 2010 is a stunning young bottle of Chinon, jumping from the glass in a youthfully complex and serious nose of black cherries, cassis, espresso, a classy base of dark soil tones, woodsmoke, a nice touch of lavender and a suave base of nutty, luxuriant new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, ripe, beautifully-integrated tannins, good acids and excellent length and grip on the focused and complex finish. This has a bit more stuffing than the regular bottling and more polish and elegance, but it is also a bit more structured and needs a few years in the cellar to fully blossom. It carries its new wood with great style and understatement, with the oak seamlessly integrated into the body of the wine. A superb wine. 2017-2035+. **94.**

**1996 Chinon “Cuvée des Tireaux” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Olek-Mery**

This wine is essentially Domaine Baudry's Croix Boissée, as the estate of Olek-Mery had a sharecropping agreement with Bernard Baudry at this time and this bottling was their portion of the production from this vineyard that would become the Croix Boissée from Domaine Baudry. The wine is outstanding in 1996 and just beginning to blossom beautifully on the nose, offering up a complex blend of dark berries, new leather, cherries, woodsmoke, gravelly soil tones and a nice touch of game. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still fairly tightly-knit, with a sound core of fruit, bright acids, melting tannins and a very long, complex and classy finish. This wine is just on the cusp of its plateau of peak maturity and is starting to drink very well, but it will offer even more generosity as it more fully blossoms over the coming years. Lovely juice. 2013-2035+. **91.**

**1989 Chinon “les Cornuelles”- Domaine Serge Sourdais**

I sold a lot of the wines from Serge Sourdais back in my retail days in the late 1980s and early 1990s, so I was delighted to have a friend suggest a bottle of this wine for a dinner together this spring- as, of course, I drank all my bottles from the domaine in this vintage years and years ago. The wine was absolutely stunning and clearly showed what a mistake I made drinking this wine in its youth, as it offers up now a deep, complex and beautifully aged nose of sweet dark berries, black cherries, a touch of barnyard, gravelly soil tones, tree bark and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very complex, with a sweet core of black fruit, superb soil signature, melting tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and suave finish. Just a beautifully mature bottle of Chinon from a top estate in a great vintage! 2013-2035. **93.**

### ***Chinon Rosé***

#### **2012 Chinon Rosé “Rive Gauche”- Domaine Marc Plouzeau**

The 2012 Chinon Rosé “Rive Gauche” from Marc Plouzeau is a fine bottle, offering up a pretty nose of white cherries, tangerine, a touch of nutskin and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, complex and just a touch gentle in its acids, but with fine depth and focus, good grip and sneaky length on the succulent finish. This will want to be drunk up on the young side, but it is a very pure and juicy glass of Chinon rosé that avoids any “candied” fruit tones, and though it is not the most complex glass of rosé, there is a lot of pleasure here to be had in the next few years. 2013-2015. **87.**

### ***Sparkling Wines From the Touraine and Coteaux du Vendômois***

#### **Domaine des Aubisières Vouvray Brut NV**

The current release of non-vintage Vouvray Brut from Domaine des Aubisières is comprised of thirty percent from the 2009 vintage and seventy percent from 2010 and is quite dry in style, seeing only a *dosage* of six grams per liter. The wine is really a lovely bottle of bubbly, offering up a stylish nose of apple, quince, a lovely base of chalk, bread dough and a nice topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and complex, with a fine core, frothy *mousse* and lovely length and grip on the vibrant and quite classy finish. A fine example. 2013-2016. **88+.**

#### **2012 Perles Gris Brut- Domaine Patrice Colin**

The 2012 Perles Gris Brut from Patrice Colin is made up entirely of pinot d’aunis and really is a lovely bottle of bubbly. The complex and very classy nose wafts from the glass in a mix of tart orange, white cherries, bread dough, a nice base of chalky soil and a gentle smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very well-balanced, with very refined *mousse*, bright acids and impressive length and grip on the complex finish. This is really a good bottle of sparkling wine and quite a bargain. 2013-2018. **88.**

#### **Marc Plouzeau “Perles Fines” Sparkling Rosé NV**

This is a lovely bottle of sparkling Rosé from Marc Plouzeau, showing that cabernet franc can also be a fine base for bubbly as well. The wine seems like a Brut to my palate, though there is no mention of this on the label. The color is a pale salmon and the bouquet is really bright and stylish, offering up scents of melon, white cherries, bread dough, a fine base of soil and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full frothy and nicely soil-driven, with good cut and bounce, fine focus and lovely length and grip on the finish. This is really an enjoyable bottle of bubbly and an excellent value! 2013-2018. **88.**

### ***Coteaux du Vendômois***

*The Coteaux du Vendômois is located due north of the city of Tours on the Loir River in what has traditionally been the real backwoods of the greater Loire Valley. The chenin blanc-based Jasnières is the closest well-known appellation up here, with the whites from the Coteaux du Vendômois also made from the chenin grape and the reds here usually fashioned from Pinot d’Aunis. Last year I tasted a couple of very good wines from the region- a dry rosé from the very good local cooperative here and a red from a*

*small estate. In the last feature on the region I had reported that reds from the Coteaux du Vendômois that wished to use the official AOC could not include cabernet franc or cabernet sauvignon, but this year I tasted a red from a new producer which had the AOC for its red, despite using cabernet franc in the blend, so I must have been incorrect about that regulation.*

**2012 Coteaux du Vendômois “Gris Bodin” (Rosé)- Domaine Patrice Colin**

This is really a lovely bottle of rosé made entirely from pinot d’aunis, but it is hard to know that it is a rosé, as the fact does not appear anywhere on the label and one just needs to know that “Gris Bodin” is rosé. However, the hurdles are well worth it, as the wine is lovely in 2012, offering up a lovely bouquet of melon, tangerine, chalky soil tones, a hint of white pepper and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and complex, with a good core, fine focus and impressive length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Good juice! 2013-2015. **88.**

**2010 Coteaux du Vendômois “Cuvée Pierre François”- Domaine Patrice Colin**

This is a lovely red wine blend of pinot d’aunis, pinot noir and cabernet franc that tips the scales at a cool and collected twelve percent alcohol and offers up lovely intensity of flavor without undue weight. The pretty nose offers up scents of dark berries, woodsmoke, a touch of tree bark, black pepper and a lovely base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and nicely balanced, with good focus and grip, just a touch of tannin and sneaky length on the bouncy finish. This is good juice and an ideal summer-weight red wine. 2013-2018. **87+.**

***Sauvignon-Based Wines From the Touraine***

**2012 Petit Bourgeois Sauvignon Blanc- Henri Bourgeois (Touraine)**

Most of the grapes for this lovely Touraine sauvignon blanc hail from vineyards just outside of the Sancerre appellation, and my only reservation with this wine is that it is bottled under screwcap and needs to be drunk over the first year after bottling- which most of it no doubt does with great frequency. The wine is really quite lovely, offering up a classic and vibrant nose of grapefruit, tart orange, fresh-cut grass, chalky soil tones and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and tangy, with good depth and a long, snappy finish. Good juice and a fine value. 2013-2014+? **87.**

**2012 Sauvignon Touraine- Clos de la Grange (François Chidaine)**

In recent years, François Chidaine has branched out from his fine Montlouis and Vouvray-based estate to produce a few wines from purchased grapes, and this is one of two different Touraine Sauvignon Blancs that he produced currently. The 2012 Clos de la Grange offers up an excellent bouquet, offering up scents of pink grapefruit, lime, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, a bit of petrol, citrus peel and a lovely topnote of fresh-cut grass. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and vibrant, with a good core, nice complexity and balance and a long, crisp and quite intensely flavored finish. This is high class sauvignon blanc that is a stunning value! 2013-2017. **88.**

**2012 Côteaux du Giennois Sauvignon Blanc-Domaine de Villargeau**

The Côteaux du Giennois is a small appellation just to the north of Pouilly-Fumé and the 2012 bottling of sauvignon blanc from Jean-Fernand and François Thibault’s Domaine de Villargeau is the first wine I have tasted from this small region. I was quite

impressed with their 2012, which offers up a lovely (and very Pouilly-Fumé) nose of gooseberry, flinty soil tones, a touch of white pepper, orange peel and a nice topnote of cut grass. On the palate the wine is medium-full, wide open and nicely complex, with good framing acids, fine focus and impressive length and grip on the well-balanced finish. Good juice for near-term drinking, with a lot of personality for its price point. 2013-2015. **87.**

**2012 Sauvignon Touraine- Marc Plouzeau**

Sauvignon blanc bottlings from the Touraine can be great values and that is exactly what this lovely wine from Marc Plouzeau represents. The bright and lively nose wafts from the glass in a fine blend of gooseberry, lime, cut grass, chalky soil tones and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, vibrant and nicely complex, with a good core, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the zesty finish. Good juice and an awful lot of wine for its price tag. 2013-2015. **87.**

**2012 Château de la Bonnelière Touraine “Cépage Sauvignon”- Marc Plouzeau**

This is a single vineyard bottling of sauvignon blanc from Marc Plouzeau that hails from a parcel adjacent to the appellation of Chinon, so this is from a very different, alluvial soil base than the typically chalky soils found in most sauvignons from the Touraine. The excellent nose offers up a bright blend of gooseberry, lime, fresh-cut grass, spring flowers and a complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and very intensely flavored, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and grip and excellent length on the snappy finish. This has the depth and flavor authority of a top Sancerre, but with a very interesting and completely unique base of soil to go along with the vibrant fruit and suave grassiness of the varietal. Impressive. 2013-2018. **89.**

***Vouvray and Montlouis***

*Is there a region of the Loire Valley that has been more battered and bruised in the last few vintages than Vouvray (unless it is neighboring Montlouis)? 2012 is a disaster here in terms of yields, as hail damage during flowering caused a ruthless reduction in yields, with most domaines losing at least eighty percent of their crop in this vintage. At least what survived the battle of 2012 will be outstanding in quality, but there is not going to be a lot to go around. 2013 has been even worse, as a vicious hail storm ripped through the vineyards here in the last week, devastating vines to the point that not only is production of any kind in jeopardy for 2013, but the vines may be so damaged from the hail that next year's production may also be very adversely affected! From what I understand, the hail damage of 2013 is more focused on Vouvray and Montlouis may end up being a bit better off in this regard, but my information is still rather incomplete and we will have to wait and see what next year brings from these regions. And of course, the 2011 vintage here was as complicated as it was anywhere else on the Loire, with cold and wet weather during the height of the summer retarding ripening, and late seasons rain putting a damper on the harvest. The 2011s that I have tasted from Vouvray and Montlouis are not bad wines at all (particularly given the vagaries of this difficult vintage), with a bit of mid-palate dilution sometimes in evidence, but often with the wines simply quite open-knit and ready for near-term drinking, but with admirable concentration and complexity. The wines seemed quite soft as a group early on, but have seemed to gain a bit in terms of structure and spine with a bit of bottle age and show a bit of framing acidity now to give them lift on the palate, and it is a vintage where the best*



*made wines are really quite delicious to drink today and surprisingly fine for the year. Do not make plans to tuck them away for the long haul, but for drinking over the next several years, many of the top 2011s from Vouvray and Montlouis are more interesting to drink than the wines from 2008, 2009 or 2010, which are quite closed at the present time.*

*I should also note that I have been experiencing my first instances of premox with my 2002 Domaine Huët wines, which I have in pretty good quantity in the cellar. Heretofore, I have had absolutely no issues with premox with any wines from either Vouvray or Montlouis and I am not sure if this issue is specific solely to my lots of 2002 Domaine Huët (which were all imported by Robert Chadderdon and purchased as closeouts from one of his distributors after they had spent several years in their storage facilities), or to lots only in the US, or if this is a precursor to premox rearing its ugly head in yet another region. I have heard reports from other American Domaine Huët collectors of problems with their 2002s as well- but again, these all might have been imported by the same firm and it may be specific to just a batch here in the states- but, to date, I have not heard any issues with bottles in Europe. I should also note that Noël Pinguet certainly experimented with a lower sulfur regimen in the 2002 vintage, which may be the reason that some of my bottles of the '02s (and others in the US) are showing signs of premox. My pile of 2002s affected have been mostly demi-sec bottlings, and I have not yet had any problems with 2002 Moelleux bottlings and above. I do not want to be alarmist, as I have no knowledge of the storage condition of my 2002s from the domaine prior to my purchasing them, but the bottles did look pristine when I put them in my cellar four or five years ago and they were drinking splendidly (as previous notes on the wines in past features on the Loire will attest) until very recently, so their rather sudden signs of fatigue are rather surprising and certainly mirror the behavior of wines that are premixing. In any case, there are enough mitigating factors with my bottles (and perhaps others in the US that have had similar issues) that it is certainly too early to be stating that premox has found its way to Vouvray, but it is certainly a bit disconcerting to see a goodly pile of a great vintage at Domaine Huët now getting cuspy all at once in my cellar. I throw out this observation simply so that others can be vigilant with their own 2002s- which when they are spot on are absolutely magical wines.*

### **2012 Vouvray “Cuvée Silex”- Domaine des Aubisières**

The 2012 Vouvray “Cuvée Silex” from Domaine des Aubisières is a Sec bottling, though this information does not appear on the label. It is an excellent wine, jumping from the glass in a very classy aromatic constellation of apple, quince, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, a dollop of lanolin and a fine topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and complex, with lovely balance and focus, a fine core and excellent length and grip on the zesty finish. As has been the case for the last several vintages, my only reservation with this wine is its choice of closure, which is (alas) sealed up under screwcap. I have shrunk the projected window of drinkability down quite a bit, as I have little faith in this closure beyond a few years- which is too bad in the case of this wine, for under cork, I am sure it would last ten to fifteen years. But, for drinking up over the near-term, the wine should not be overly marred by its closure for at least the next few years and there really is a lot to like here. 2013-2016. **90.**



### **2012 Vouvray “les Girardières”- Domaine des Aubisières**

The Vouvray “les Girardières” bottling from Domaine des Aubisières is their Demi-Sec, though again, it does not state this anywhere on the label. This too is sealed under screwcap, and it too is a very lovely wine under the screw. The superb bouquet is a blend of pear, honeycomb, acacia blossoms, a beautiful base of chalky soil, beeswax and gentle floral topnotes. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and absolutely beautiful in both balance and focus, with a fine core, crisp, zesty acids and superb length and grip on the classy finish. This is really a lovely bottle of Demi-Sec, with its vibrant acids seamlessly carrying its twenty-six grams per liter of residual sugar. I should note that for all of my dissatisfaction with the choice of screwcap for this and the Cuvée Silex bottlings from the domaine, I did also receive a sample of their Moelleux bottling, which is sealed up under natural cork, and that wine was corked! In any case, the 2012 Vouvray “les Girardières” from Domaine des Aubisières is really a lovely bottle. 2013-2016. **91.**

### **2012 Vouvray “Le Haut Lieu” Sec- Domaine Huët**

After the uncharacteristically forward and accessible 2011 Sec bottlings from Domaine Huët, the 2012s look to be absolutely classic in their cut and structural spines of acidity. The Le Haut Lieu Sec is a youthful and very promising wine, offering up a fine bouquet of lemon, quince, lanolin, spring flowers, a beautiful signature of soil and a gentle topnote of bee pollen. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully tight, with a superb core, lovely focus and balance, bright, well-integrated acids and excellent length and grip on the still quite primary finish. At 12.5 percent alcohol, this is

one of the lower octane Sec bottlings in several years. This will be a classic vintage for the Le Haut Lieu Sec. 2020-2050. **91+**.

**2012 Vouvray “Le Mont” Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 2012 Vouvray “Le Mont” Sec from Domaine Huët is just a touch riper than the Le Haut Lieu Sec, but at thirteen percent it is still cut from a classic cloth. The classy nose delivers an aromatic constellation of apple, tart orange, lanolin, incipient notes of honeycomb, a bit of citrus zest, a deep and complex base of white soil and a gently floral topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with zesty acids, outstanding balance and a very long, youthful and superbly focused finish. I would expect all of these 2012 Domaine Huët Sec bottlings to snap into even better focus in the next couple of months, offer up really lovely youthful drinking for a year to eighteen months and then shut down for a four to six year hibernation before starting to really come into their own. Superb wine. 2020-2050. **93**.

**2012 Vouvray “Clos du Bourg” Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 2012 Clos du Bourg Sec is a stunning young vintage of this iconic wine. The bouquet is pure, complex and youthfully vibrant, as it jumps from the glass in a mélange of apple, sweet quince, bee pollen, lanolin, the most profound minerality of these three superb Sec bottlings, incipient notes of honeycomb and a touch of orange blossoms in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and stunning to the core, with brisk, seamless acids, laser-like focus and absolutely stunning length and grip on the young and soil-driven finish. A great wine in the making. 2020-2050. **94+**.

**2011 Montlouis “Clos de Breuil” Sec- Domaine François Chidaine**

The 2011 Clos de Breuil from François Chidaine is really a beautifully elegant and refined wine, wafting from the glass in classy blend of pear, lilacs, a touch of bee pollen, beautiful chalky soil tones and a nice dollop of nectarine. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, suave and open-knit, with a lovely spine of minerality, fine framing acids and impressive length and grip on the complex and suave finish. I really like this wine for current drinking! 2013-2023. **90**.

**2011 Vouvray Sec “les Argiles”- Domaine François Chidaine**

Clearly, François Chidaine was quite strict with his selection process in 2011, as his production was down thirty to thirty-five percent and what he has produced in this vintage is really quite impressive. The 2011 les Argiles (which includes some fruit from the Le Haut Lieu vineyard of Domaine Huët fame) is excellent, delivering a fine bouquet of apple, peach, lanolin, a touch of honeycomb, a fine base of soil and a bit of upper register citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with an impressive core of fruit, again, a very wide open personality that invites immediate drinking, a good spine of acidity and very good grip on the long finish. This is really a very fine result in the difficult vintage of 2011. 2013-2023+. **91**.

**2011 Vouvray Sec “Clos Baudoin”- Domaine François Chidaine**

The Clos Baudoin bottling includes a fair bit of older vines in its blend (the older vines here are from forty to seventy-five years of age) and really shows off superb depth in the 2011 vintage. The filigreed and classy nose is a blend of pear, apple, chalky minerality, bee pollen, lanolin and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and really rock solid at the core, with outstanding focus and balance, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the dancing finish. Other than this wine

being wide open and drinking gloriously right out of the blocks, there is nothing here that suggests this wine hails from a difficult growing season! 2013-2030+. **92+**.

**2011 Vouvray “Le Haut Lieu” Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 2011 vintage was the last that was overseen by Noël Pinguet at Domaine Huët, and it looks to be a lovely closing note to his great career at this iconic Vouvray estate. The 2011 Le Haut Lieu Sec is a deep and complex wine, offering up a lovely and classic bouquet of apple, orange zest, lanolin, a touch of beeswax, wisps of petrol and a lovely base of complex soil tones. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and, though it is not as powerfully concentrated as the 2009 or 2010 versions, it has a very good core for a 2011, with reasonably crisp acids, lovely focus and balance and a very long, still quite youthful and primary finish. This does not have the same core as the last three vintages of Sec from Le Haut Lieu, nor the acid drive of either 2008 or 2010, but it is a very classy effort for the vintage that should drink well from a fairly early age, and yet has the requisite balance to age well. 2013-2025+. **89**.

**2011 Vouvray “Le Mont” Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 2011 Le Mont Sec from Domaine Huët is also a bit gently structured- particularly by the very high standards of this estate- but, it is a very tasty wine that shows just a bit more mid-palate intensity than the very good Le Haut Lieu Sec from this vintage. The nose is a lovely blend of apple, quince, dried flowers, a touch of lanolin, gentle notes of honey and chalky soil tones and a nice dollop of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and wide open for business, with good focus and nascent complexity, very respectable depth at the core, nice framing acids and a long, bright and classy finish. Again, the late season rains of 2011 have taken away just a bit of the concentration here, but the wine is drinking well out of the blocks and should age nicely for at least the next dozen years. In the context of the vintage, it is a very successful wine. 2013-2025+. **90**.

**2011 Vouvray “Clos du Bourg” Sec- Domaine Huët**

Domaine Huët’s 2011 Sec from the Clos du Bourg is the pick of the litter amongst these three vineyards in 2011 at this level of sweetness, offering up a pure and classic nose of lemon, tangerine, lovely minerality, a touch of honey, lemon zest and a gentle note of lanolin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very precise in its focus, with solid mid-palate depth, outstanding mineral drive (particularly for the vintage) and a very long and complex finish. This does not have the usual grip of a top vintage of Clos du Bourg, but it does have all the complexity that this great vineyard is justly famous for and the wine should drink well for at least a dozen years. Fine juice and a Herculean effort for the vintage. 2013-2025+. **92**.

**2010 Montlouis “Clos Habert” Demi-Sec- Domaine François Chidaine**

The Clos Habert is one of the top vineyards in Montlouis, as this three hectare vineyard is planted with a range of vines that runs from thirty to fully ninety years of age. The 2010 from François Chidaine is a stunning young wine, soaring from the glass in a blaze of pear, tangerine, a fine signature of chalky soil tones, beeswax, spring flowers and a nice touch of orange oil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and soil-driven, with lovely complexity, a very suave attack, great mid-palate intensity and a very long, focused and youthfully refined finish. This is a great wine from

a great vintage that is just starting to stretch its wings and show all of its stunning potential. 2013-2040. **94.**

**2007 Vouvray “Le Haut Lieu” Demi-Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 2007 Le Haut Lieu Demi-Sec from Huët is a recent re-release from the estate and the wine is dynamite. The deep, fairly closed and superb bouquet is a mix of quince, candied lemon, a complex base of chalky soil tones, orange blossoms, beeswax, citrus peel and incipient notes of honeycomb. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and rock solid at the core, with outstanding focus and balance, impressive, nascent complexity, bright acids and a very, very long and still youthful finish. This is in a very interesting stage of its evolution, as the wine is still very primary on both the nose and palate, but structurally, it is not closed and it really drinks well with some time in decanter. 2013-2060. **93+.**

**2006 Vouvray “Clos du Bourg” Moelleux Premier Trie- Domaine Huët**

The 2006 Clos du Bourg Premier Trie is another rather recent re-release from Domaine Huët and the wine is really lovely. Like the 2007 Le Haut Lieu Demi-Sec, this wine is young, but not shut down structurally, as it wafts from the glass in a classic bouquet of oranges, quince, nectarines, chalky soil tones (that still show just a whisper of dustiness from the wine’s adolescence), orange blossoms and a gentle topnote of beeswax. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, lovely, creamy sweetness on the attack, bright acids and a very, very long, youthful and poised finish. A lovely wine that is drinking very well at the pleasant time, but will certainly improve exponentially in complexity with further bottle age. 2013-2050+. **93.**

**1996 Vouvray “Le Mont” Sec- Domaine Huët**

The 1996 Le Mont Sec from Domaine Huët is drinking beautifully today and is just beginning its long period of peak maturity. The bouquet is wide open, vibrant and beautifully complex, as it wafts from the glass in a blend of pineapple, peach, chalky soil tones, lanolin and a lovely topnote of lemon peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, bright and classy, with still the exuberance of youthful fruit, but now tied to mounting secondary layers of complexity. The wine is beautifully focused and balanced, with a rock solid core, zesty acids and a very long, pure and dancing finish. This is still very early on in the wine’s evolutionary arc, but its period of hibernation is now behind it and it will be drinking with great style for the next forty or fifty years. 2013-2050+. **93.**

**1989 Vouvray Moelleux 1er Trie “Reserve”- Domaine Clos Naudin**

I have only had the ’89 Reserve bottling from Clos Naudin on one or two previous occasions, and each time the wine has been absolutely magical. The wine is very dark in color- almost the color root beer- and offers up a magically pure, complex and vibrant nose of apricot, raspberries, oranges, gentle honey tones, citrus zest, a very complex base of chalky soil tones and a topnote of dried flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with bottomless depth, stunning complexity, great focus and balance and a very, very long, tightly-knit and gorgeous finish. Based on the dark color, one might expect that this wine would be at its apogee, but it is still a puppy and will last at least another fifty years! 2013-2070. **97.**

**1957 Vouvray “Le Mont” Moelleux- Domaine Huët**

The 1957 Le Mont Moelleux is a beautiful bottle of wine at its apogee of peak maturity, wafting from the glass in a classic aromatic constellation of orange, apricot,

leather, tea leaves, honeycomb, lovely soil tones and a bit of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and now fairly dry in profile, with much of the sweetness having undergone esterification into other nuances, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and grip, good acids and a long, ripe, rock solid and fully mature finish. A lovely bottle. 2011-2050. **92.**

### ***The Great Sauvignon Blanc Appellations of the Central Loire***

*In the 2012 vintage, the eastern end of the Loire Valley has certainly had the best success in terms of yields, as production generally here is only down about twenty percent, which would sound awfully good to vigneron in the Touraine who lost seventy-five to eighty percent of their production due to hail during flowering and continued vineyard depredations over the course of this very difficult growing season. From what I sampled of the 2012 vintage, this is an absolutely superb vintage for the sauvignon blanc producing appellations of this end of the Loire and it may well prove to be the most complete vintage here in several years. The one caveat to this observation is that it was possible to let the grapes hang out on the vines for an extended period if one were predisposed in this direction (like François Cotat- whose 2012s I have not yet tasted) and so there may be a few rather heady examples of sauvignon blanc produced in this vintage.*

### ***Quincy***

#### **2012 Quincy “Haute Victoire”- Domaine Henri Bourgeois**

The 2012 Quincy “Haute Victoire” from Henri Bourgeois is a fine follow-up to their outstanding 2010 version (I missed their 2011 vintage of this wine in the lag between Loire features). The bouquet is deep, complex and shows off superb refinement for Quincy, offering up an aromatic constellation of gooseberry, lime, green apple, chalky soil tones, grassiness and orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and beautifully balanced, with a very good core, fine focus and lovely length and grip on the complex and bouncy finish. A superb bottle of Quincy. 2013-2018+. **91.**

#### **2010 Quincy “Grandes Vignes de Villalin”- Domaine Villalin**

As I noted when reviewing the 2010, Domaine Villalin’s Quincy is quite unique in that it comes from a one and a half hectare parcel of vines on the eastern side of the Cher River (ninety-eight percent of the appellation of Quincy is across the river on the western side), and these are the finest soils in the appellation, with much more Pouilly-Fumé-like flint, rather than the deeper, chalky clay found in most of Quincy. The resulting wine from these flinty soils tend to be a bit more elegant than those from most of the appellation, without losing any of the fruity exuberance that makes Quincy so appealing. The 2012 Domaine de Villalin is a lovely follow-up to the 2010, offering up a deep, complex and classy nose of gooseberry, fresh lime, a touch of smokiness, fresh-cut grass, flinty soil tones, a touch of citrus zest and a lovely topnote of lime blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and seamless, with crisp, ripe acids, a lovely core of fruit, impressive complexity and a very long, refined and bouncy finish. This is clearly one of the very top producers in Quincy, and the 2012 is one of the finest examples I have had from the appellation. Great juice and a superb value! 2013-2018. **92+.**

### ***Menetou-Salon***

#### **2007 Menetou-Salon “le Prieuré des Aublats”- Domaine Henri Bourgeois**

It has been three and a half years since I last reviewed the 2007 Bourgeois Menetou-Salon and the wine has aged quite gracefully and is still quite crisp and vibrant, with lovely complexity on both the nose and palate. The bouquet is moving to a mature plateau as it offers up scents of grapefruit, tart orange, damp grass, petrol, a nice base of chalky soil and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and well-balanced, with a good core, still plenty of acidity and structural integrity, fine focus and a long, grassy finish. I had liked this wine out of the blocks and it continues to drink very well indeed. 2013-2015. **89.**



### ***Reuilly***

#### **2012 Reuilly- Domaine Dyckerhoff**

Christian Dyckerhoff was born and raised in France- the son of a French mother and German father (who has farmed in France his entire career). Christian started his winemaking journey with a *stage* in Alsace, where he met his wife Bénédicté (born and raised in Ribeauvillé) and the couple are relatively recent transplants to Reuilly, having produced their first vintage here in 2004. This was my first taste of their wines and I was very impressed with the excellent quality of their 2012 Reuilly, which offers up a lovely, vibrant nose of lime, tart orange, fresh-cut grass, a touch of smokiness and a lovely base of chalky soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and vivid, with tangy

acids, lovely focus and balance and a long, classy finish that closes with impressive cut and grip. Just a classic bottle of Reuilly. 2013-2018. **91.**

### ***Pouilly-Fumé and Friends***

#### **2012 Pouilly-sur-Loire Chasselas “la Centenaire”- Domaine Serge Dagueneau et Filles**

This is the first time I had ever tasted this beautiful bottling of Chasselas made from one hundred and eight year-old vines in the Dagueneaus’ vineyards in Pouilly. As it is vinified with indigenous yeasts, it is not too surprising (given how much sauvignon blanc is made in these cellars for the family’s various Pouilly-Fumé cuvées) that there is a decided touch of grassiness here that really works nicely with this varietal’s classic transparency to its underlying soil. The superb nose jumps from the glass in a complex blend of green apple, fresh-cut grass, stony minerality, lime peel and a nice touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely cut and grip, snappy acids and a long, classy and most impressive finish. This is clearly the best bottle of Chasselas I have ever had the pleasure to taste! 2013-2020. **90.**

#### **2012 Pouilly-Fumé “Les Pentes”- Domaine Serge Dagueneau et Filles**

The Les Pentes cuvée from Domaine Serge Dagueneau et Filles is their standard bottling of Pouilly-Fumé and in 2012 it is an excellent bottle, offering up a refined and utterly classic nose of sweet grapefruit, orange, flinty soil tones, cut grass, green apple and just a hint of pepper. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and zesty, with a vibrant core of fruit, lovely soil signature and fine cut and grip on the long and bouncy finish. Just a classic bottle of fine Pouilly-Fumé. 2013-2018. **92.**

#### **2012 Pouilly-Fumé- Domaine Jonathan Didier Pabiot**

This was the first wine I had tasted from Jonathan Didier Pabiot and I was quite impressed with its classic quality. The bouquet is deep, complex and still quite youthful in its mélange of gooseberry, lime peel, petrol, flinty soil tones, damp grass and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a fine core, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the zesty and youthful finish. This is a young and still slightly forceful style of wine with plenty of personality right out of the blocks, but if one tucks it away in the cellar for six months or so, it should really start to develop a bit more breed and refined complexity. Good juice. 2013-2018. **89+.**

#### **2012 Pouilly-Fumé- Domaine Hubert Veneau**

Due to the lag between Loire features, I missed the 2011 vintage from Monsieur Veneau, but his 2012 is every bit as fine as his lovely example from 2010. The bouquet is very suave and pretty, offering up scents of green apple, lime, flinty soil tones, cut grass, a touch of petrol and a topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and rock solid at the core, with lovely cut and grip, fine focus and a long, perfectly-balanced finish. A beautiful bottle of Pouilly-Fumé. 2013-2016. **90.**

#### **2011 Pouilly-Fumé “Chadoux”- Domaine Serge Dagueneau et Filles**

The Chadoux bottling from the Dagueneaus is a single vineyard bottling made from a parcel of forty-eight year-old vines. The 2011 is a lovely wine, with a more mature bouquet than the 2012 les Pentes, which is comprised of scents of orange, pink grapefruit, plenty of grassiness, a touch of Chartreuse-like herb tones and a lovely base of flinty soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely tertiary,



with lovely framing acids, fine mid-palate intensity and fine length and grip on the wide open and classy finish. Good juice. 2013-2016. **91+**.

**2011 Pouilly-Fumé- Domaine Karine Lauverjat**

The 2011 Pouilly-Fumé from Christian and Karine Lauverjat is a quite classic and easy-drinking example of its appellation, offering up a bright nose of grapefruit, tangerine, fresh-cut grass, flinty soil tones, white flowers and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and wide open, with good, but not great depth, sound complexity and good length and grip on the grassy and well-balanced finish. The rather gentle side of the 2011 vintage is evident here, and the wine is a touch on the short side, but it is true to its origins and really quite tasty. 2013-2014. **87**.

***Sancerre Rosé and Friends***

**2012 Petit Bourgeois Rosé de Pinot Noir- Domaine Henri Bourgeois (screwcap)**

The 2012 Petit Bourgeois Rosé de Pinot Noir is a pretty middleweight for near-term drinking, offering up scents of white cherries, melon, chalk and orange peel on the vibrant bouquet. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and juicy, with perfectly respectable depth, nice, juicy acidity and solid length and grip on the finish. For its price point, this more than serviceable. 2013-2014. **86**.

**2012 Sancerre Rosé “les Bonnes Bouches”- Domaine Henri Bourgeois**

The 2012 Sancerre Rosé from Henri Bourgeois is not bad at all, but this is clearly not the firm’s specialty. The very pretty and slightly candied nose offers up scents of cherries, blood orange, chalky soil tones, citrus peel and a touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and juicy, with good length and grip, but a slightly heavy-handed personality from its skin contact. Good, solid, respectable Sancerre Rosé, but without the lift and mineral drive of the best examples of the appellation. 2013-2015. **87**.

**2010 François Cotat Sancerre Rosé**

To my mind, François Cotat makes the finest rosé in the Loire Valley and one of the two or three greatest dry rosés in the entire world. The wines age brilliantly year in and year out and seem to improve dramatically with extended cellaring. The 2010 Sancerre Rosé is a riper version for Monsieur Cotat, tipping the scales at thirteen percent alcohol and offering up a beautifully pure and youthful nose of tangerine, melon, chalky minerality, orange peel, dried roses and lovely spice tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and just starting to blossom a bit from behind its structure, with crisp acids, a fine core and excellent focus and grip on the very long and nascently complex finish. This is going to be a classic vintage for this stellar rosé. 2013-2025+. **94**.

**2001 François Cotat Sancerre Rosé**

The 2011 rosé from François Cotat is fully into its apogee and drinking stunningly well. The wine takes a bit of time to blossom once it is opened, so decanting is recommended, as this wine is a touch less ripe than the 2010 (12.5 versus 13 percent alcohol) and consequently is still a bit more buttoned up behind its structure when the cork is first pulled. But, with twenty minutes of air, the fireworks get rolling on the nose, as the wine offers up scents of dried white cherries, orange peel, gentle notes of beeswax, smoke and a beautifully complex base of chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and wide open, with lovely purity and focus, crisp acids and

magical length and grip on the perfectly balanced and stunning finish. A great wine! 2013-2020. **94.**

### ***Sancerre***

#### **2012 Sancerre- Domaine Gérard Boulay**

Gérard Boulay is clearly one of the finest *vignerons* in all of Sancerre these days, and I have the feeling that his also hailing from the village of Chavignol, which is already home to the Cotat cousins and the Vatan estate tends to steal a bit of his thunder. But, year in and year out, his lineup of stellar Sancerre bottlings are amongst the highlights of all the wines I taste for this annual report. His 2012 “regular” bottling is excellent, offering up a pure and complex bouquet of gooseberry, tart orange, a bit of white pepper, a nice base of crystalline minerality, gentle notes of petrol and a very understated grassiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a fine core of fruit, superb soil signature, a youthful personality and excellent cut and grip on the long, complex and classy finish. This is a superb young bottle of Sancerre. 2013-2019. **91.**

#### **2012 Sancerre “les Bonnes Bouches”- Domaine Henri Bourgeois**

The 2012 les Bonnes Bouches from Domaine Bourgeois is a lovely and quite concentrated bottle of young Sancerre, delivering a fine nose of gooseberry, pink grapefruit, cut grass, chalky soil tones and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nicely reserved on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, brisk acids and excellent length and grip on the focused finish. This really shows great intensity for this bottling and augurs very well indeed for the other Sancerre cuvées in 2012 *chez* Bourgeois. An excellent value! 2013-2020. **92.**

#### **2012 Sancerre “Le Mont”- Foucher-Lebrun**

Foucher-Lebrun is a small négociant and their Le Mont bottling of Sancerre is made from purchased grapes sourced in the villages of Chavignol and Amigny and is vinified and raised entirely in stainless steel tanks. The 2012 Le Mont is a fine example of the vintage, offering up a deep and expressive nose of pink grapefruit, tart orange, a touch of petrol, a solid base of grassiness, a fine base of soil and a touch of Chartreuse-like herb tones in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a good core, bright acids and very good length and grip on the wide open and zesty finish. Good juice with plenty of personality. 2013-2015. **89.**

#### **2012 Sancerre “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Gérard et Pierre Morin**

The 2012 old vine bottling from the Morins is lovely and a classic example of Bué Sancerre, wafting from the glass in a bright and classy blend of gooseberry, lime, green apple, chalky minerality and a topnote of white lilies. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and youthfully bouncy, with very respectable depth at the core, bright acids, lovely focus and a long, zesty finish. A lovely bottle. 2013-2017. **89.**

#### **2012 Sancerre “Cuvée les Côûtes”- Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy**

The 2012 Sancerre “Cuvée Les Côûtes” from Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy is a lovely wine and an utterly classic bottle in the making. The very refined bouquet offers up scents of green apple, lime, a touch of tangerine, chalky soil tones, fresh-cut grass and a nice touch of pebbly minerality. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and intensely flavored, with a wide open and complex personality, bright acids, fine focus and a long, zesty finish that closes with fine cut and grip. Lovely juice. 2013-2017. **91.**

### **2012 Sancerre “Cuvée les Angeslots”- Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy**

The Cuvée les Angeslots from Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy is produced from a single parcel of seventy-five year-old vines and is vinified and aged in old *foudres*, rather than stainless steel tanks. The 2012 is outstanding, jumping from the glass in a complex and classy mélange of gooseberry, lime, chalky minerality, cut grass, citrus peel and a nice dollop of upper register smokiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and classy, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and cut, bright acids and impressive grip on the long and utterly classic finish. This is a very, very high class bottle of Sancerre. 2013-2020. **92+**.

### **2012 Sancerre- Domaine des Vieux Pruniers (Christian Thirot-Fournier)**

Christian Thirot-Fournier’s domaine is located in the village of Bué, and the 2012 is really a lovely and utterly classic bottle of Sancerre. The bright and youthful nose jumps from the glass in a blend of gooseberry, tart orange, chalky minerality, a touch of white pepper, a delicate base of cut grass and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and tightly-knit, with excellent focus and cut, a fine core, lovely soil inflection and a long, snappy and nascently complex finish. This is a very fine bottle of Sancerre that clearly will be even better with six months or a year of bottle age, as it has great structure and should age quite well. Fine juice. 2013-2019+. **92**.

### **2011 Sancerre “Monts Damnés”- Domaine Gérard Boulay**

The 2011 Sancerre “Monts Damnés” from Gérard Boulay is a great example of this vintage and there is absolutely nothing “off vintage” about this wine! The bouquet is deep, pure and supremely complex, delivering a mélange of pink grapefruit, fresh lime, pulverized stone, orange peel, a hint of petrol and Chartreuse-like herb tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a lovely core, crisp acids and a very long, wide open and zesty finish. Perhaps the only indication that this wine is from a less than top vintage is that it is uncharacteristically open out of the blocks, making it a stellar drink right from the outset, whereas in many vintages one needs to wait three or four years to see the wine this open and accessible. A beautiful wine. 2013-2020+. **92+**.

### **2011 Sancerre “La Côte”- Domaine Gérard Boulay**

2011 is the second vintage of the La Côte cuvée from Monsieur Boulay, which hails from a subsection of the la Grande Côte vineyard in the village of Amigny. This second vintage of this bottling is absolutely outstanding, wafting from the glass in a complex and classic blend of lime, gooseberry, a very complex base of minerality, petrol, herb tones and orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and like the Monts Damnés, this is quite open out of the blocks, with a superb core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, crisp acids and a very long, refined and intensely flavored finish. This is another absolutely dynamite wine from Monsieur Boulay. 2013-2020+. **92+**

### **2011 Sancerre “La Comtesse”- Domaine Gérard Boulay**

As I have noted in the past, the La Comtesse bottling from Domaine Gérard Boulay comes from his oldest vines in his section of the Monts Damnés (fifty to seventy five years of age) and is barrel-fermented in old wood and also bottled unfiltered. The 2011 La Comtesse is a superb example of this vintage, offering up a pure and complex bouquet of gooseberry, pink grapefruit, a touch of white pepper, chalky minerality, fresh-cut grass, lime peel and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is deep, full-

bodied and utterly refined, with a superb core, great focus and complexity, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the suave and zesty finish. Again, there is absolutely nothing “off vintage” about this great wine. 2013-2020+. **93.**

**2011 Sancerre “Culs de Beaujeu”- Domaine François Cotat**

As this report was straddling the line between vintages from the Cotat cousins, I only had the opportunity to taste one of the bottlings from the two cousins. The 2011 Culs de Beaujeu from François Cotat is a truly exceptional bottle in the making and another of those 2011s that totally transcends the style of the vintage, as there is plenty of cut and structure on display here in this quite classic wine. The bouquet is truly stunning, jumping from the glass in a mix of lemon, tangerine, a touch of petrol, kaleidoscopic minerality, beeswax, botanicals and a dollop of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite open on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, superb soil inflection and excellent length and grip on the focused and zesty finish. This is not as structurally forbidding as the 2010, nor as ripe and powerful as the 2009, but it is an absolute classic in the making that I prefer over the more heady and powerful 2009 version. 2103-2025. **93.**

**2011 Sancerre “Chêne Marchand”- Domaine Gérard et Pierre Morin**

The Chêne Marchand vineyard is one of the two great *terroirs* in the village of Bué, with the soils here the stonier *les Caillottes*”, rather than the more typical *terres blanches* found in most of the village. The vineyard faces due south in its exposition, which makes it one of the earliest ripening vineyards in all of Sancerre and it is always the first parcel picked by the domaine. The Morin family has owned a small slice of this great vineyard for decades, but have always blended it into one of their standard cuvées until very recently, and the 2011 is either the first or second vintage where they have decided to bottle it on its own. The 2011 Chêne Marchand is outstanding, offering up a young and stunning nose of green apple, lime, a touch of cut grass, brilliantly complex, stony minerality, orange peel and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tightly-knit, with a very minerally personality, superb focus and cut and a very long, racy and still very primary finish. A superb bottle in the making that will really drink better with another year’s worth of bottle age and should age very gracefully. 2014-2020. **92.**

**2011 Sancerre “Clos la Néore”- Edmond et Anne Vatan**

I am so happy to see that the great work done here since 1959 by Edmond Vatan is being carried on in conjunction with his daughter Anne, as I have been a huge fan of these magical Sancerres since I first crossed paths with the brilliant 1988 vintage here. The 2011 Clos la Néore is another superb wine in the making, with a very classic aromatic and flavor profile and great potential for longevity (though perhaps not the steely spine of acidity of the 2010 here). The stunning nose offers up scents of lime, tart pear, a touch of almond, incipient notes of the lovely Vatan botanicals that will blossom with further bottle age, citrus peel and a lovely base of minerality. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and crisp, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely focus and balance, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the nascently complex and quite seamless finish. This will be a lovely vintage of Vatan Sancerre and will probably drink a bit sooner than the snappier 2010 version. One of France’s greatest white wines is spot on in this vintage! 2016-2035. **94.**



### **2010 Sancerre “la Chapelle des Augustines”- Domaine Henri Bourgeois**

It had been nearly fifteen months since I last tasted the la Chapelle des Augustines from Henri Bourgeois and, if anything, the wine was showing even better than it did in its youth. The bouquet has blossomed beautifully and now offers up a mix of tart orange, grapefruit, fresh-cut grass, lovely, stony soil tones, petrol and a topnote of lime zest. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and very refined, with a fine core and focus, a beautiful signature of soil and excellent length and grip on the wide open and snappy finish. This is clearly one of the top cuvées produced in the appellation of Sancerre and will continue to age gracefully for many years to come. Great juice from a domaine that deserves to be even better known! 2013-2025. **93.**

### **2007 Sancerre “La Grande Côte”- Domaine François Cotat**

This was my first bottle (out of a case in the cellar) of the 2007 Grande Côte from Domaine François Cotat and at age six it is starting to spread its wings and really drink well. The deep and very classy nose is now beginning to show some secondary layers in its aromatic mix of pink grapefruit, green apple, pulverized limestone, incipient Chartreuse-like botanicals, orange peel, a touch of petrol and gentle notes of damp grass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and quite wide open, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip, lovely acids and a very long, complex and classy finish. While this is still early days for this fine wine, it is really beginning to drink with some generosity and verve. 2013-2025+. **94.**

### **2005 Sancerre “Clos la Néore”- Edmond Vatan**

It had been a few years since I last visited the 2005 Vatan Sancerre, and the wine is still a few years away from really hitting its apogee and drinking with wild abandon-but, it is getting closer! The deep, complex and gently candied nose offers up a beautiful constellation of lime, pear, fresh mint, very complex, crystalline minerality, orange peel and a topnote of Chartreuse-like botanicals. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite powerful in profile, with simply gorgeous balance, bright, zesty acids and laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the still slightly youthful finish. This was one of the riper vintages of Vatan Sancerre in recent memory, tipping the scales at fourteen percent, but it handles its octane with great precision and the wine is absolutely cool in the mouth! A great wine that is still just a few years away from primetime drinking. 2015-2035+. **94+**.

### ***Sancerre Rouge***

#### **2011 Sancerre “Terre de Maimbray” Rouge- Domaine Pascal et Nicolas Reverdy**

The Sancerre rouge bottling from Pascale and Nicolas Reverdy is vinified and aged in older *foudres* and is fermented entirely with indigenous yeasts. The 2011 is very pretty and light on its feet, offering up a fine bouquet of red berries, cherries, chalky soil tones, fresh herbs and a topnote of woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with fine focus, solid mid-palate depth and lovely length and grip on the gently tannic finish. I really like this style of Sancerre rouge, with gentle extraction and lovely intensity of flavor. 2013-2020. **88**.

#### **2010 Sancerre Rouge- Domaine Gérard et Pierre Morin**

The Morins work very hard on their Sancerre rouge and the 2010 is vinified with indigenous yeasts, made entirely from whole clusters, aged for four months in older barrels and six months in tank and bottled unfiltered. It is a very good example of pinot noir from these chalky soils, offering up a lovely nose of cherries, herb tones, espresso, limestone soil and vinesmoke in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and classy, with firm structure, good focus and a bit of tannin to resolve on the long and nicely balanced finish. This will be a very tasty bottle in a couple of years and should age quite well. 2016-2025. **87**.

#### **2010 Sancerre “Bellechaume” Rouge- Domaine Gérard et Pierre Morin**

The Bellechaume bottling from the Morins all hails from a single vineyard and is aged entirely in older barrels for its *elevage*, rather than spending any time in tank prior to bottling. Like the regular Sancerre rouge, it is all indigenous yeasts, whole clusters and bottled unfiltered. The 2010 is a lovely wine and seems a bit more accessible out of the blocks than the regular cuvée, offering up a deeper and more open nose of black cherries, dark berries, coffee bean, damp soil tones, woodsmoke and a touch of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and chewy, with a good core, nice complexity and fine length and grip on the suavely tannic finish. Good juice that should blossom a year or two sooner than the regular Sancerre rouge, but will still be better with at least a few years in the cellar. 2015-2030+. **88+**.

### ***Côte Roannaise***

*The Côte Roannaise is actually closer to Beaujolais than it is to Tours, but it is on the extreme reaches of the Loire River (which at this point in its circuit actually travels north-south and is in parallel with the Rhône River. I am not sure if the Côte Roannaise is officially considered part of the Loire Valley region, but seeing as it sits on the river here, I have added notes on a couple of good wines I tasted from here for this report. The soils here are a combination of Beaujolais' granite and schist, which gives the gamay that is planted here a rounder style that is quite appealing in its own right.*

### **2012 Côte Roannaise “les Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Robert Sérol**

The 2012 Côte Roannaise “les Vieilles Vignes” from Robert Sérol is comprised of one hundred percent gamay and is a cool twelve percent alcohol. The bouquet on this fine wine offers up scents of black cherries, woodsmoke, a touch of fallen leaves, espresso, violets and a nice base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, fresh and sappy at the core, with good acids, a touch of tannin and lovely length and grip on the wide open and bouncy finish. This is good juice and a fine value. 2013-2018. **88.**

### **2012 Côte Roannaise “l’Incorruptible”- Domaine Robert Sérol**

The l’Incorruptible bottling from Robert Sérol is also comprised entirely of gamay, but this is the all-natural cuvée from the estate that sees very little sulfur during its *elevage* and none at bottling (if my notes are correct). The bouquet on the 2012 l’Incorruptible is deep and sappier than the regular bottling, delivering a mix of black cherries, dark berries, a touch of dark chocolate, lovely soil tones, pepper and a floral topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a good core, soft tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused finish. Good juice. 2013-2018+. **89.**

### **Turbulent- Stéphane Sérol**

This is a very lovely sparkling wine that is made entirely from gamay and is labeled under Stéphane Sérol name, rather than that of his father. The bright and classy nose jumps from the glass in a blend of cherries, dried roses, a bit of bread dough and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and frothy, with good mid-palate concentration, well-done *mousse* and lovely focus and grip on the long and vibrant finish. This is really a very nice bottle of sparkling wine. 2013-2017. **88.**



## ROUND TWO OF THE LOW OCTANE 2011 BURGUNDY VINTAGE: CLASSIC ELEGANCE AND TRANSPARENCY



*The Château de Clos Vougeot on a beautiful summer afternoon- not taken this June!*

I spent ten days in Burgundy in late March and early April visiting domaines I did not have a chance to taste at during my nearly three weeks in the region this past November. This was my stopover locale between visits to Germany and Bordeaux to taste their 2012 vintages (which made up the bulk of Issue 44), and I was quite happy to be back in Burgundy for this stage of my long spring tasting trip. The focus again was on the low octane and really superb 2011 vintage, which was showing every bit as well as it had on my last visit, though in addition to the 2011s, I did also begin to sample some 1998s in anticipation of doing a retrospective look at this underrated vintage in the not too distant future. As I work on this article, I am back in Beaune again in the first week of June and waiting, along with many anxious Burgundians, for the spring of 2013 to really get rolling, as it has been extremely cold and wet since I left here at the end of March and the weather here today looks more like it did in November than what it would normally be on the first of June. Given that the yields are way, way down for the 2012 vintage, and at this point in time, the 2013 vintage is about as up in the air as one could imagine this late in the season, it makes sense for Burgundy lovers to pay close attention to the fine quality of the 2011 vintage. I should note that no Burgundy vintage has ever had its quality realized during the months of April and May, so it is far too early to panic on the



2013s, but there is no denying that the vines are at least four weeks behind schedule here at the start of June, and not only September, but October is going to have to be bright and sunny for the 2013 vintage to excel. Since I wrote my first piece on the 2011 vintage in December of last year, it has become even clearer that this year is quite fine in quality (and far above some reports circulating around the Ethernet from well-meaning, but clearly inexperienced Burgundy hands), with lovely focus and balance to the wines, impressively low alcohol levels and really fine signatures of *terroir*. For new subscribers who have not seen part one of my report on the 2011 vintage, which comprised all of Issue 42, I would be happy to send it along if you email me, or one can easily access it through the subscriber database, so it makes no sense to repeat the climactic conditions in this article that led up to this quite old-fashioned (in the very best sense of the word) and high quality vintage.

As I observed in Issue 42, many Burgundian *vignerons* have commented that the 2011 reds are quite similar in shape and structure to the 2007 reds, but then universally add that they prefer the more recent vintage and fully expect the 2011s to rest even a bit higher up on the quality ladder, due to their finer mid-palate depth and intensity and every more precisely-drawn expressions of their underlying *terroirs*. I spent much of my June visit also sampling 2007 reds off of restaurant wine lists in Burgundy and can only note that if the 2011 reds are going to prove to be superior to the lovely 2007s, then this is going to be an outstanding vintage. For the white wines of 2011, the examples I sampled in both March and June were excellent, with a lovely combination of crunchy purity of fruit and soil, encompassed in wide open structures that promise excellent drinking right out of the blocks. None of the white-wine producing *vignerons* whom I spoke with on my two spring visits to Burgundy suggested that the 2010 whites should be drunk ahead of the 2011s, as the younger vintage is far more accessible right now and should prove to be at its best over the next several years- which may well make it the finest vintage yet for white Burgundies in this uncertain era of premature oxidation. In general, the 2011 whites present very shapely, medium-full to full-bodied personalities that are succulent with ripe and very fresh fruit tones, lovely expressions of their underlying soil signatures and plenty of bright, framing acids that keep the wines vibrant, bouncy and light on their feet without burying the fruit behind snappy structural impediments. The vintage does not have the cut or grip of 2007, 2008 or 2010, but I find it superior to the 2009s, which are a bit plumper, but not quite as enticing in their purity and expression of *terroir* as their 2011 counterparts. The 2011 white wines tend to be beautifully balanced and will have no troubles keeping in bottle (beyond, of course, the Damocles Sword of premoxy which hangs over every vintage of white Burgundy and white Bordeaux these days), but this is a vintage that really is going to drink very well early on and I can see no logical reason to not enjoy many of these wines in the first blush of their youthful complexity.

The following wines were all tasted during the ten days I spent in Burgundy at the end of March this year, as I revisited several domaines I had already tasted at on my two previous visits during my visit to the Côte d'Or in June. I just want to reiterate that 2011 has turned out to be a very fine vintage in Burgundy- perhaps a shade superior for the reds than the whites, but overall, excellent for both colors, and those who ignore this vintage and do not have a cellarful of aging Burgundies already are likely to be quite

disappointed when the pricing pressures engendered by the extremely short crop from 2012 (which already looks to be outstanding in quality, if miserly in quantity, as I did sample quite a many 2012s in June) start to be felt later this year and on into next. The amount of inexperienced commentary on recent Burgundy vintages that one can easily access these days through a few keystrokes totally misread the quality of the 2009s (heaping laudatory praise on the vintage far beyond what was merited by the rather inconsistent nature of this buxom year- with some wines plump and properly reflective of their underlying soils, but a great many others clearly overripe and rather less interesting and serious), managed in spite of its lack of expertise to get the 2010 vintage right, but clearly many of these nice folks are really out of their element when discussing the 2011 vintage and one is going to be very disappointed down the road if one listens to the naysayers on this vintage and waits for the next “great year” to come along. 2011 is clearly a very, very fine vintage for Burgundy and a decade down the road, those who skip this vintage are going to feel as foolish as the folks who overlooked 2000 and 2001 and loaded up on the far more expensive (and less interesting) wines from 2002.

### ***Marsannay-la-Côte***

#### **Domaine Bart (Marsannay-la-Côte)**

*I arrived egregiously late for my appointment at Domaine Bart in March, and as this was my last stop of the day on the Friday before the Easter holiday weekend (the French, like most European countries, do not work on Easter Monday and this is always a long weekend, with children usually off from school as well the week following Easter), I felt very sorry to arrive so late for my tasting. But, the Bart brothers were very gracious in still seeing me at the late hour and I was very happy to taste through a fine range of their excellent 2011s. The bottling had taken place here between the end of January and mid-March, so everything was already in bottle by the time I stopped by on the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month. The Barts chose to chapitalize everything in the cellar just a tiny amount (two-tenths of a percent on average) simply to keep the fermentations going a bit longer and to more fully extract in 2011, but the wines overall exemplify the great transparency and purity of this low octane and exciting vintage. There is a new wine in the cellars beginning in 2011, as the Barts now have a small parcel in the “villages” section of Chambolle-Musigny “les Veroilles” that lies immediately above their parcel in the vineyard of Bonnes-Mares. As readers may recall, there is only a small section of les Veroilles which is entitled to premier cru status, and this section is owned in its entirety by Ghislaine Barthod. In any event, the fine new bottling from Domaine Bart is enough for three barrels’ worth of wine, with one of the three barrels new in the 2011 vintage. The domaine is adding a bit more whole cluster to their fermentation regimen these days, and as the pips were beautifully ripe in 2011, this was used in several of the cuvées- with very positive results I might add! Domaine Bart is at the top of its game right now and there are some absolutely stellar 2011s waiting for release.*

#### **2012 Marsannay Rosé- Domaine Bart**

This has just been bottled prior to my visit and was destined for shipping a bit later in the spring. By now, most of it has probably already been happily drunk up! The wine is lovely, offering up a juicy bouquet of cherries, melon, a touch of orange peel, white soils and a bit of upper register spiciness. On the palate the wine is medium-full,

crisp and succulent, with a good core, bright acids and sneaky length on the finish. A fine example. 2013-2014. **87.**

**2011 Marsannay “Longerois”- Domaine Bart**

The 2011 version of Longerois included about fifteen percent whole clusters and was raised in twenty percent new wood. The wine has turned out very fine this year, offering up a very elegant bouquet of red and black cherries, meaty tones, mustard seed, stony soil, a touch of cedar and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and intensely flavored, with a sound core, lovely transparency and good focus and grip on the gently tannic finish. This will drink very well young, but has the balance to keep nicely as well. 2013-2030+. **88.**

**2011 Marsannay “Echézots”- Domaine Bart**

The 2011 Marsannay “Echézots” from Domaine Bart was raised entirely in *demi-muids* this year, with twenty percent of these larger barrels new and the wine also having been made with fifteen percent whole clusters. This is really a classy young bottle of Marsannay in the making, wafting from the glass in a fine blend of cassis, dark berries, grilled meat, dark soil tones and a nice touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, focused and beautifully transparent, with a fine core, lovely balance and a long, classy and suavely-tannic finish. Good juice and an absolute steal in terms of pricing! 2013-2030+. **89+.**

**2011 Marsannay “Grandes Vignes”- Domaine Bart**

My notes do not indicate what percentage of whole clusters were used for the Grandes Vignes, but I am sure that there was again at least fifteen percent used here. The 2011 Grandes Vignes has turned out superbly well, offering up a superb and quite soil-driven nose of black cherries, grilled meats, woodsmoke, coffee bean, a touch of fresh herbs and a lovely base of dark soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and again, very intensely flavored, with fine mid-palate depth, fine-grained tannins and a lovely synthesis of dark soil and meatiness on the very long and classy finish. Another great value. 2014-2030+. **90.**

**2011 Marsannay “Clos du Roy”- Domaine Bart**

The 2011 Clos du Roy was raised in twenty-five percent new oak and one-third of its stems were retained for the fermentation. This is a beautiful young bottle of Marsannay, delivering a fine aromatic constellation of black cherries, cassis, mustard seed, black minerality, a touch of vinesmoke and a deft framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and very mineral in its personality, with excellent focus and grip, fine-grained tannins and lovely length and grip on the poised and soil-driven finish. This is a bit more structured out of the blocks than the previous few examples and a handful of years in the cellar will pay dividends. These superb 2011 Marsannays could be habit forming! 2017-2035+. **91.**

**2011 Marsannay “Champs Salomon”- Domaine Bart**

Champs Salomon is one of the great *terroirs* in Marsannay and really deserves premier cru status. The 2011 from Domaine Bart is outstanding, having been raised in twenty-five percent new wood and using twenty-five percent whole clusters as well this year. The superb nose offers up a deep and more masculine bouquet of black cherries, cassis, roasted meats, coffee bean, black minerality, fresh herb tones and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and tangy, with a superb core of fruit, ripe tannins, lovely focus and nascent complexity and superb grip on the very long and classic finish.

Since the 2005 vintage this wine has been bottled unfiltered and it has to be one of the greatest bargains in red Burgundy out there in the world today! Great juice. 2018-2035+. **91+**.

**2011 Fixin “les Hervelets”- Domaine Bart**

The 2011 les Hervelets from Domaine Bart was one of the last wines to be bottled, having only been bottled a week or so prior to my visit and the wine was a bit unsettled from its recent *mise*. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that this will be a lovely wine, as it offers up a complex bouquet of red and black cherries, French roast, dark soil tones, mustard seed, a bit of bonfire, a dollop of youthful stemminess and cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, young and fairly reserved in profile, with ripe chewy tannins, a very good core and very fine length and grip on the finish. This will need a bit of cellaring as well, but it shows fine potential. 2021-2041. **90-91+**.

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Veroilles”- Domaine Bart**

The new addition to the Bart lineup is outstanding in 2011. This parcel hails from an outcropping of *terres blanches* directly above the family’s holdings in Bonnes-Mares, and the wine was raised in one-third new oak for fifteen months prior to *assemblage* in tank in anticipation of bottling. Out of tank, the wine is still fairly closed, but with a bit of swirling in the glass offers up scents of black cherries, plums, dark chocolate, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, a dollop of new wood and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and long, with a fine core, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the finish. This was a bit agitated from its recent *assemblage*, so I have scored it within a range, but it should land at the top end of the range once it has settled back in after its bottling. 2020-2045+. **90-91+**.

**2011 Bonnes-Mares- Domaine Bart**

As I noted last year, Domaine Bart’s parcel of Bonnes-Mares lies directly above that of the Comte de Vogüé on the slope, and consequently, this wine is almost entirely *terres blanches* (as the *terres rouges* section of the vineyard lies further down the slope here in the Comte de Vogüé section). The Bart’s old vines in Bonnes-Mares were raised in their customary fifty percent new wood this year and fifty percent of the stems were retained as well. This is a superb young bottle of Bonnes-Mares in the making, wafting from the glass in a deep and classy blend of black cherries, dark berries, woodsmoke, bitter chocolate, a touch of venison, a complex base of soil and a nice framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully structured, with a rock solid core of fruit, lovely transparency, ripe, firm tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and classic finish. Superb juice in the making. 2025-2075. **94**.

**2011 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Domaine Bart**

The Domaine Bart Clos de Bèze in 2011 is equally stellar. I did not take note on what percentage of whole clusters were used this year, but I have to assume that it is similar to the Bonnes-Mares, and the wine was also raised in fifty percent new wood. The deep and stunning nose delivers a fine mélange of black cherries, black raspberries, grilled meat, espresso, a very complex base of minerality, a whisper of chocolate and a deft base of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and multi-layered, with a rock solid core, classic focus and balance, ripe tannins and stunning length and grip on the poised and utterly refined finish. 2025-2075. **94+**.

## **Gevrey-Chambertin**

### **Maison Pierre Bourée (Gevrey-Chambertin)**

*As was the case last year when I visited at Maison Pierre Bourée, the white wines from the 2011 vintage had already been bottled and were not in shape for tasting, and the red wines were in varying stages of evolution in the cellars, with some having been recently racked and most still due for a final racking right after my visit. So, I had to content myself with tackling the range of red wines in the cellars here, with some not really on form and others absolutely singing and exemplary bottles of 2011 red Burgundy. It is really not proper to try and handicap the wines that were not showing their best at the time of my visit, so a few of the wines commented on below do not have scores for that reason. That said, there were also a few wines that seemed likely to not have quite the ripeness that they needed and look likely to always be a touch green and underripe as a result throughout their lives. It is still very early days, so perhaps these wines were just in a very awkward stage and will show more sweetness in the mid-palate and a less herbaceous personality later on in their evolutions, but I left the cellars here this year thinking that it is in the customary blue chip regions of Gevrey-Chambertin and the fine Corton bottling from the Vallet family where the real cherries lie in the cellar this year. A few of the other bottlings that I have always liked here, like their excellent Beaune “Epenottes” really seemed slightly malnourished, but there is no doubting that the best examples of the vintage here are exceptional wines and will, once again, offer up outstanding value to savvy Burgundy lovers in search of “old school” reds with the potential for great longevity in the bottle.*

## **2011 Vins Rouges**

### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Bourgogne from Pierre Bourée is a very good example in the making, offering up a complex nose of cherries, cocoa, gamebirds, a touch of the vintage’s signature nutskin and a nice topnote of spices. On the palate the wine is medium-full, round and focused, with a nice spine of modest tannin, good acids and lovely length and grip. A very, very good example for its level. 2013-2020+. **87.**

### **2011 Santenay “Gravains”- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The Santenay “Gravains” is usually one of the great bargains in the Pierre Bourée cellars, but either the 2011 is not quite up to its usual standards or I caught it at an awkward phase of its evolution. The nose seems a bit advanced and autumnal in its mix of cherries, baked strawberries, woodsmoke, coffee, *sous bois* and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, tangy and complex, with solid mid-palate depth, good acids, little observable tannin and sneaky length and grip on the wide open finish. This seems likely to be best on the early side. 2013-2020. **86+.**

### **2011 Volnay “Robardelle”- Maison Pierre Bourée**

This is a premier cru bottling I have not had previously from Maison Pierre Bourée, and despite it being a touch reduced at the time of my visit, it was quite clear that this is a very good bottle in 2011. Robardelle lies along the Meursault border at the bottom of the slope, right below Chevrets. Underneath the slight whiff of reduction is a complex bouquet of black cherries, woodsmoke, venison, coffee, a nice base of soil and a deft touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and meaty, with a good core, firm, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and

youthful finish. This will never be the most elegant of Volnays, but it has impressive depth and complexity and will be a fine value. 2018-2035+. **89+**.

**2011 Pommard- Maison Pierre Bourée**

I had very much liked the 2010 Pommard *villages* bottling from Maison Pierre Bourée, but the 2011 seems a bit less convincing and does not strike me as thoroughly ripe this year. The slightly weedy nose offers up scents of black cherries, a touch of game, vinesmoke, herbal tones and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and tangy, with a good core, but slightly green-edged tannins on the long, low fat finish. This just needed a bit more ripeness. 2020-2040. **84**.

**2011 Beaune “Epenottes”- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The Beaune “Epenottes” from the Vallet family is usually one of the superb values in the cellar, year in and year out, and the 2011 may well be up to its customary level of fine quality, but it was in a very cantankerous and shut down state when I tasted it at the end of March and really pretty tough to get a good read upon. The wine reluctantly offers up a pretty complex aromatic blend of black cherries, cocoa, venison, good soil tones and perhaps a touch of acetone in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very chewy, with a nice sense of meatiness and a good core, but also with a distinctly hard edge to its finish. It is hard to bet against this wine, as it is usually so reliable, but this was certainly not a great time to catch it in barrel! ???

**2011 Corton- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The Bourée Corton hails entirely from the *lieu à dit* of Renardes, but the Vallets do not print this on the label. The 2011 is an excellent wine in the making, jumping from the glass in a complex blend of red and black cherries, a stony base of soil, venison, Corton spice tones and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent focus and grip, firm, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex and tangy finish. This had just been racked and was less hunkered down than the wines that were not yet racked, and consequently was showing very well at the time of my visit. A lovely bottle of Renardes in the making. 2021-2050. **92+**.

**2011 Côte de Nuits Villages- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Côte de Nuits Villages from Maison Pierre Bourée is a very good wine in the making and will drink well with a few years of bottle age. The deep nose offers up a slightly rustic mélange of red and black cherries, venison, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite structured for its appellation, with a good core, chewy tannins and plenty of length and grip on the sturdy finish. This is not long on elegance, but it has good stuffing and should age quite well. 2018-2035+. **87**.

**2011 Fixin “la Croix Blanche”- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Fixin was really not on form at the time of my visit, showing a slightly herbal nose of cassis, espresso, black minerality and vinesmoke in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, chewy and tangy, with not a lot of ripeness in evidence. Perhaps this was just a very bad time to taste this wine, but my gut feeling is that it is always going to be a touch underripe. It certainly was not on form enough to give it a score! ???

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Pierre Bourée Gevrey AC bottling was fairly closed on the nose, but impressively expressive on the palate and is clearly going to be a very good *villages* with five or six years of bottle age. The reticent nose is a blend of red and black cherries, a touch of dark berry, coffee, fresh herb tones and a nice touch of Gevrey meatiness. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and chewy, with a good core and focus, a slight streak of herbaceousness and fine grip on the long backend. Good juice in the making, but it will need some cellaring before it really gets rolling. 2020-2045. **88.**

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos de la Justice”- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The Clos de la Justice is consistently one of my favorite bottlings from Pierre Bourée and the 2011 will be lovely. The deep and classic nose wafts from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, grilled meats, chocolate, a lovely and complex base of soil, mustard seed and just a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and ripely tannic, with a fine core, good acids and excellent grip on the long and promising finish. A lovely wine in the making. 2020-2050. **91.**

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Champeaux from Pierre Bourée was in need of a racking and showing just a touch of volatile acidity on the nose at the time of my visit, but underneath is an excellent wine in the making. The deep and complex bouquet offers up scents of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, a complex base of soil, venison and a deft base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with lovely mid-palate depth, ripe, chewy tannins and fine length and grip on the very mineral finish. This is going to be superb. 2020-2050. **92.**

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Cazetiers”- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Cazetiers from Pierre Bourée was also due for a racking right after my visit and was a bit reduced, but this too is going to be an excellent example of the vintage. The bouquet is a fine and meaty blend of black cherries, plums, grilled meat, cocoa, black minerality and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and very precise, with a rock solid core, ripe, firm tannins and excellent length and grip on the nascently complex and classic finish. A lovely wine. 2021-2050. **92+.**

### **2011 Charmes-Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Charmes-Chambertin from Maison Pierre Bourée is a great wine in the making, wafting from the glass in a complex blend of red and black cherries, exotic spice tones, coffee, a touch of grilled meat, nutskins, a classy base of soil and a stylish framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly complete, with a super core of fruit, ripe, well-measured tannins, lovely focus and balance and outstanding length and grip on the suave and very promising finish. This is a great bottle of Charmes in the making! 2022-2060. **94.**

### **2011 Chambertin- Maison Pierre Bourée**

The 2011 Chambertin is another stellar effort from the Vallet family, offering up a deep, young and powerful nose of black cherries, plums, raw cocoa, plenty of grilled meat, a great base of dark soil tones and a lovely touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and still quite primary, with a rock solid core, nascent complexity, firm, ripe tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the very, very long and perfectly balanced finish. Great juice. 2025-2075. **95.**

### **Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils (Gevrey-Chambertin)**

*The 2011 vintage is now the second year to be “officially” overseen by the two Burguet brothers, Eric and Jean-Luc as heads of Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils, though of course, they worked alongside their father for many years before the transition was made official. As I noted in Issue Forty-two, I arrived to taste here last November, but the wines had been in need of a racking and the Burguet brothers thought it better to do so on that Friday, rather than put off the procedure until after the weekend, so we both decided it would be fairer to the wines to wait until my March trip to taste them. The 2011 harvest started here on September the fifth and the wines were all chapitalized “just a touch” to prolong their fermentations. Overall, the results here are outstanding, which should come as no surprise to long-time fans of this domaine, as this has been one of the finest sources in Gevrey-Chambertin for as long as I have been involved in the world of wine. The wines have gotten more gently extracted and more refined as the years have gone by, and the 2011 vintage chez Burguet is a superb success. There are two new wines in the cellar beginning in this vintage- the first being a village wine bottling of Chambolle-Musigny “Echézeaux” that is made from of two tiny parcels of vines, with one being forty years of age and the other being extremely old. The two small plots make enough for three barrels of wine, and the Burguet brothers are purchasing the grapes for this bottling and vinifying the wine themselves. The second new addition here is a Vosne-Romanée villages bottling made from a parcel of vines right up above the premier cru vineyard of Rouge Dessus, with this small parcel also making enough for three barrels of wine. Additionally, the Burguets are now augmenting their small holdings in the Rouge Dessus by purchasing grapes from this vineyard as well (presumably from the same estate that is supplying the grapes for the new Vosne AC bottling) and they can now happily offer five and a half barrels of this lovely wine beginning in 2011.*

### **2011 Bourgogne “les Pincés Vin”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2011 Bourgogne rouge from Domaine Burguet is a fine bottle in the making, jumping from the glass in a very pretty and red fruity blend of strawberries, cherries, a lovely base of soil, rose petals and a nice touch of spice in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and nicely transparent, with solid depth, just a touch of tannin and good length and grip on the finish. A fine example. 2013-2023. **88.**

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Cuvée Symphonie”- Domaine Alain Burguet**

As I noted last year, the “Cuvée Symphonie” is the new name of the former “Cuvée Tradition”, as Alain Burguet’s sons, have decided to change the name of this bottling. The 2011 was a bit reticent at the time of my visit on both the nose and palate, but eventually yields up a promising blend of red and black cherries, a touch of meatiness, black minerality, mustard seed, vinessmoke and a deft touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely transparent, with a fine core, moderate tannins and a very long, soil-driven finish. High class juice. 2016-2035. **90.**

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Mes Favorites”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2011 old vine cuvée of Mes Favorites is outstanding this year, delivering exceptional focus and minerality on both the nose and palate. The deep and very classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a sappy mix of red plums, cherries, a touch of blood orange, raw cocoa, black minerality, Gevrey spice tones and a very discreet base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and beautifully focused, with a



sappy core of fruit, moderate tannins, tangy acids and a very long, poised and extremely elegant finish. This has been for many, many years a wine of top premier cru quality and the 2011 is another in a long line of successes. 2019-2040. 92+.



*Alain Burguet has turned over the reins to his two sons, but is still readily available at the domaine.*

### **2011 Chambolle-Musigny “Echézeaux”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The new bottling of Chambolle-Musigny “Echézeaux” from the Burguet family is excellent in 2011. The very lovely nose delivers a fine aromatic mélange of plummy and cherry fruit, cocoa, a lovely base of soil tones, gentle floral topnotes and an elegant base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and pure, with a plush personality on the attack, a fine core, velvety tannins and lovely length and grip on the classy finish. There is not quite the same precision to expression to the minerality here as in the Mes Favorites, but this is a very classy bottle of Chambolle AC and a fine new addition to the Burguet lineup. 2016-2035. 90.

### **2011 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The Vosne-Romanée *villages* cuvée is another superb new addition to the lineup *chez* Burguet, with the thirty-five year-old vines from this small plot having done exceedingly well in the 2011 vintage. The lovely nose jumps from the glass in a mix of red plums, raspberries, cocoa powder, a lovely array of Vosne spice tones, and excellent base of soil and a whisper of new wood (one barrel out of three is new for this bottling). On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very suave, with a sappy core of fruit,

lovely focus and balance and a long, classy finish that closes with just a touch of tannin. This is really a lovely bottle! 2018-2040. **91+**.

**2011 Vosne-Romanée “Rouge Dessus”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

Happily, there is now a reasonable quantity of this wine to go around for a thirsty world, and the new addition of purchased grapes has no doubt made the Burguet brothers' job of vinifying this wine far less complicated than in the former “micro-cuvée” days. The 2011 Vosne-Romanée “Rouge Dessus” from Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils is a beautiful wine in the making, offering up an aromatic mix of raspberries, cherries, cocoa, a complex base of minerality, vinesmoke, spice tones and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved, with a rock solid core of fruit, ripe tannins and outstanding focus and grip on the long and youthfully complex finish. Lovely juice. 2020-2050. **93**.

**2011 Chambertin “Clos de Bèze”- Domaine Alain Burguet et Fils**

The 2011 Clos de Bèze from Domaine Burguet is a brilliant example of the vintage. The deep, pure and exquisite nose soars from the glass in a youthful mélange of cherries, red plums, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, superb minerality, a touch of the vintage's nutskin, blood orange and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure and vibrant, with its full-bodied format delivering a sappy core, outstanding focus and grip, ripe, suave tannins and a very, very long, poised and primary finish. This is pure magic in the making! 2022-2060. **95**.

**Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy (Gevrey-Chambertin)**

*As was the case last year, I had the opportunity to taste a few of the domaine's wines during the “Salon de Gevrey” during the weekend of Les Trois Glorieuses last November- the Gevrey “Vieilles Vignes”, premier cru “la Perrière” and the Mazis-Chambertin, and I followed this up with a full visit to the estate in March to taste through the entire range of 2011s from this excellent producer. Most of the cellar had been bottled up at the end of January, with only the Lavaux St. Jacques and the Mazis-Chambertin bottled later (mid-March, or two weeks prior to my visit). The harvest started here on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and Monsieur Harmand chose to chapitalize just a touch to prolong the fermentation in 2011. I sampled a few of the domaine's wines at the Salon de Gevrey Tasting in November of last year, and while the wines had shown well then, they seemed even better in the comfort of their own cellar, with even a bit more mid-palate intensity and complexity than had been evident at that big tasting, and it seems pretty clear that I had slightly underrated the wines I tasted from Monsieur Harmand in November. This is one of the top domaines in Gevrey-Chambertin today, and I had been remiss in not visiting here consistently since I started the newsletter and regret only having found my way to the Harmand-Geoffroy cellars a few years ago! Simply superb 2011s.*

**2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2011 Bourgogne Rouge from Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy is really a lovely example, offering up early appeal and lovely breed for its pedigree. The stylish nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, dark soil tones, smoke and a nice touch of grilled meat. On the palate the wine is medium-full, black fruity and shows off good mid-

palate depth, with bright acids and just a touch of tannin on the long finish. Good juice. 2013-2020+. **87.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2011 Gevrey *villages* from the Harmand family is a very bottle in the making, wafting from the glass in a blend of black cherries, dark chocolate, black minerality, woodsmoke, incipient notes of Gevrey's smoked meats and a hint of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and nicely sappy at the core, with modest tannins, fine focus and lovely length and grip on the bouncy and transparent finish. A very classy bottle of Gevrey AC that needs just a couple of years in the cellar to fully blossom. 2016-2035+. **89.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin "en Jouise"- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2011 Gevrey-Chambertin "en Jouise" bottling from Monsieur Harmand is excellent, as these sixty year-old vines have really done well in this vintage. The more reserved bouquet offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, French roast, woodsmoke, grilled meats, dark soil tones and just a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully structured, with a fine core, superb focus and balance, ripe tannins and lovely grip on the long and vibrant finish. This is going to be a terrific bottle of village wine. 2018-2035+. **90+.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin "Vieilles Vignes"- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The Harmand family's bottling of Gevrey V.V. hails from a few parcels of vines in the fifty year range, with most of the vines located on the northern end of Gevrey towards the Combe de Lavau, augmented by a small parcel right below Mazis-Chambertin. The 2011 version was showing even better in March than it had at the Salon de Gevrey, jumping from the glass in a lovely blend of cassis, black cherries, grilled meats, dark soil tones, espresso, woodsmoke and a deft framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, nicely reserved, with a rock solid core, ripe tannins and lovely focus and grip on the long and beautifully balanced finish. Fine juice. 2020-2040. **91+.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin "Clos Prieur"- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

As I have observed before, the Clos Prieur bottling from Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy is a blend of the estate's holdings in both the village level section of the vineyard (seventy percent of the cuvée) and the premier cru section (thirty percent), with the parcel of premier cru vines forty years of age and the village wine section comprised of vines that are eighty to eighty-five years-old. The result is a dynamite wine that is clearly of premier cru quality, but priced at the village wine level and the 2011 is going to be one of the great steals of the vintage. The superb nose wafts from the glass in a deep and expressive mix of cassis, black cherries, French roast, grilled meat, a complex base of black minerality and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very minerally in personality, with a fine sappy core, ripe tannins and a very long, focused and still quite primary finish. A total steal! 2020-2045+. **92.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin "la Bousière"- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The Harmands' Monopole premier cru bottling is exceptional in 2011, jumping from the glass in a very classy mélange of cassis, black cherries, woodsmoke, grilled meats, fresh herb tones, black minerality and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very soil-driven in personality, with a rock solid core of very pure fruit,

lovely minerality and a very long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. A superb bottle in the making. 2002-2050. **92+**.

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Perrière”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Perrière” from Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy is a bit more closed and reserved than the la Bousière, but it too shares outstanding purity and precise minerality and will be a dynamite wine with sufficient bottle age. The impressively deep and classy nose offers up scents of black cherries, dark berries, grilled meats, dark soil tones, a nice touch of mustard seed and a judicious framing of spicy new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, nascently complex and nicely reserved, with a superb core of fruit, tangy acids and a long, focused and chewy finish. High class juice in the making. 2021-2050. **92+**.

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Lavaux St. Jacques”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The Lavaux St. Jacques had only been bottled two weeks before my visit and was understandably agitated from its recent *mise*. Nevertheless, it was easy to appreciate that this will be a lovely bottle once it has recovered from the bottling. The slightly agitated nose is a mix of cassis, black cherries, plenty of grilled meat, espresso, fresh herb tones, black minerality and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with a bit more depth than the two preceding premier crus, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and youthful finish. I am sure that this will be an excellent wine. 2022-2050+. **92-93**.

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Champeaux”- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

The 2011 Champeaux had been bottled a bit earlier than the Lavaux St. Jacques and was a bit more recovered from the *mise* and showing all of the potential that was evident from the barrel sample I tasted in November. The deep and very classy nose offers up a superb blend of black cherries, sweet dark berries, black minerality, mustard seed, raw cocoa and a stylish base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with an excellent, sappy core, outstanding precision and a very long, ripely tannic and tangy finish. A great bottle of premier cru in the making! 2020-2050+. **93+**.

**2011 Mazis-Chambertin- Domaine Harmand-Geoffroy**

As I noted in November, it was possible that I was underrating the wine a touch at the Salon de Gevrey tasting, as that sample was probably taken from a new barrel which would have been a bit more evolved in the cellar and more accessible for the tasting. Despite this wine only having been bottled two weeks before my visit, it was really showing brilliantly at the end of March, soaring from the glass in a superb bouquet of cassis, dark berries, grilled meat, classic Mazis dark minerality, woodsmoke, mustard seed, espresso and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with excellent focus and grip, ripe, substantial tannins, bright acids and outstanding complexity and focus on the very long and vibrant finish. A simply superb example of Mazis, the 2011 Harmand-Geoffroy will need a good decade in the cellar to start to stir and should prove to be a great example of the vintage. 2023-2060. **95+**.

**Domaine Rossignol-Trapet (Gevrey-Chambertin)**

*I did not catch the 2011 Rossignol-Trapet wines at the best moment in late March, as the entire cellar (with the exception of the Bourgogne rouge) had been bottled over the fortnight prior to my visit and most of the wines were in varying stages of grumpiness*

*from the mise. The grand crus had actually been bottled the day before I arrived, but samples had been set aside before the bottling from the assembled wines to taste the following day, so they were in a bit better mood. Harvest here started on September 6<sup>th</sup> in 2011. The Rossignol brothers, Nicolas and David, decided to chapitalize just a touch in 2011 to keep the fermentations going a bit longer, with each wine raised about a half degree. I have scored most of the wines within a range this year, as they were really not caught at the best moment and it was rather difficult to get a proper read on where they were headed. Given their recent bottling, I did not see the point of asking to see samples of the full range of the premier crus, so the three with the smallest production- Cherbaudes, Combottes and Corbeaux- were not tasted on this visit. Most of the wines were showing quite gentle in terms of structure, which I attribute to their recent bottling, rather than the actual style of the wines here in 2011, though there is little doubt that the Rossignols sought to maintain the elegance of the vintage through pretty gentle extraction this year. Several of the wines were also showing a bit of weediness at the time of my visit, which again I expect was a reflection of their recent mise. But, this domaine has been making very fine wines for several vintages in a row now and it is hard to imagine that the 2011s will not eventually land at the top end of the projected range in the fullness of time.*

#### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

The 2011 Bourgogne Rouge from Domaine Rossignol-Trapet had been bottled in September of 2012 and was a bit more on form than most of the wines in the cellar at the time of my late-March visit, as it had seen some decent recover time from the mise. The bouquet is very pretty, offering up a fruity mélange of red and black cherries, a touch of cocoa and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, silky on the attack and easy-going, with modest tannin and sneaky length and grip. This will drink well from the outset. 2013-2020. **86+**.

#### **2011 Beaune “Teurons”- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

The domaine’s 2011 Beaune “Teurons” was also showing quite forward and silky on the palate. The bouquet is a perfumed blend of cherries, plums, woodsmoke, herbs, soil and a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and tangy, with a gentle core (at the present time) and a very good backend of modest tannins and good length and grip. I am sure this will be quite tasty. 2015-2035. **87-89**.

#### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

The 2011 Gevrey old vine bottling from Domaine Rossignol-Trapet was also showing a bit upset from its recent bottling and not showing all of the structure I would expect it will eventually prove to have once it has recovered a bit. The nose is also a bit discreet from the *mise*, but offers up scents of red and black cherries, grilled meats, a touch of mustard seed, black minerality, dark chocolate and a gentle framing of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, long and classy, with sound depth, moderate tannins and very good length and grip. I would fully expect this wine to put a bit more meat on the bone as it moves forward from its recent bottling. 2017-2035. **88-89+**.

#### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos Prieur”- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

The 2011 Clos Prieur was the first of the Gevrey premier crus to have been bottled, so it had seen two and a half weeks of recovery time and was a bit more expressive on the nose as a result. The wine shows off a lovely synthesis of the elegance

of the vintage and the sturdier character of this *terroir* in its bouquet of black cherries, dark plums, espresso, dark soil tones, grilled meat, herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and quite soil-driven, with a fine core, ripe tannins and a long, tangy finish. Good juice in the making. 2020-2050. **90-92.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Petite Chapelle”- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

I am a big fan of the Rossignol-Trapet Petite Chapelle and the 2011 is going to be a lovely wine. The fine nose offers up scents of red plums, cherries, cocoa, a very pretty base of soil, roses, incipient notes of gamebird and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, full, pure and nascently complex, with lovely intensity of flavor, a good core, suave tannins and a long, tangy and focused finish. This will evolve in the direction of a very lovely middleweight with bottle age. 2019-2045. **91-92+.**

**2011 Latricières-Chambertin- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

The 2011 Latricières-Chambertin from Domaine Rossignol-Trapet is going to be excellent. The black fruity, reserved and classy nose offers up scents of cassis, black cherries, espresso, dark soil tones, smoke, herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and inherently elegant, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the well-balanced and promising finish. This will need a good decade to blossom and should prove to be a fine example of the vintage. 2023-2050+. **92-93.**

**2011 Chapelle-Chambertin- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

The 2011 Chapelle-Chambertin is also going to be exceptional, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, a superb signature of soil, incipient notes of grilled meats and a nice dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, cool and nascently complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely transparency, ripe tannins and outstanding length and grip on the focused and youthful finish. Good juice. 2021-2050+. **92-93+.**

**2011 Chambertin- Domaine Rossignol-Trapet**

The 2011 Chambertin is deep and pure on both the nose and palate, but also quite shut down at the present time. The reticent nose offers up scents of black cherries, dark plums, grilled meats, herb tones, dark soil, espresso and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, tight and chewy, with lovely mid-palate concentration, fine focus and a long, young and well-balanced finish. Fine potential. 2022-2060. **92-94.**

**Domaine Trapet Père et Fils (Gevrey-Chambertin)**

*Normally, I will taste with Jean-Louis Trapet in November of each year, and we indeed did have an appointment on my previous trip, but Jean-Louis was busy down in the cellar when I arrived and did not hear me, and passively (which is quite out of character for me!) I did not poke around at the various doors at the domaine to see if he was around. So, we made an appointment for my next trip to the region and I was very happy to see his fine 2011s this spring. However, it was not the ideal time to be tasting the wines, as he had bottled up almost the entire cellar at the end of February and several of the wines were still in their recovery process after the mise a month later. Harvest here began on September 5<sup>th</sup> and natural alcohol levels were in the twelve to twelve and a half percent range for the most part. I did not write down whether or not the wines were chapitalized this year- why I do not know- and writing up my notes now six weeks later (and a thousand wines further on down the road) I cannot recall. In any case,*

*the wines are quite classic examples of the 2011 vintage, with lovely purity and expression of their underlying terroirs, sound structures and lovely focus and balance for medium-term aging (or longer in the case of the fine range of grand crus here this year). I did not have a chance to taste the old vine Capita bottling from Gevrey this year, as it was one of the last bottled and it made no sense to waste the bottle while it was still in the throes of post-bottling trauma.*

#### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

Jean-Louis Trapet makes a lovely example of Bourgogne rouge, but the 2011 was still a little upset from its recent bottling and was not on its best form at the time of my visit. The nose is very pretty and red fruity this year, offering up scents of strawberries, cherries, coffee, soil and a gentle touch of smokiness in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, round on the attack and perfectly respectable at the core, with nice grip and backend energy on the focused finish. This is a bit *fatigue* from the bottling and showing a little easy-going on the attack today- which I am sure is just the after-effects of the recent *mise*. 2014-2025. **87.**

#### **2011 Marsannay- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

The 2011 Marsannay was more on proper form at the time of my visit, delivering a very stylish bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of grilled meat, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a nice topnote of dried herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely soil-driven, with a sound core, fine balance and good grip on the modestly tannic finish. This will want a few years to blossom and should drink very well for fifteen or so years. The Trapet Marsannay has been excellent in recent times and is consistently one of the best values to be found in the Côte de Nuits each vintage. Quite a classy version. 2016-2030. **88.**

#### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

The 2011 Gevrey-Chambertin from the Trapets is a very fine and suave example of the vintage, with lovely perfume and plenty of the red fruity character of the vintage in evidence in its aromatic mélange of cherries, blood orange, grilled meats, a fine base of soil, and touches of cocoa and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and complex, with a wide open personality, good mid-palate depth and a long, gently tannic and bouncy finish. Lovely juice. 2019-2040. **90.**

#### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Petite Chapelle”- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

The 2011 Petite Chapelle from Domaine Trapet Père et Fils is really a lovely wine in the making, and though it, too, was not entirely at its best after its recent *mise*, the quality here was quite self-evident. The bouquet is a fine blend of red and black cherries, red plums, cocoa, a complex base of soil, a nice touch of vanillin oak and a classic topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a good core, moderate tannins and very good length and grip on the precise and nascently complex finish. This will be a beautiful bottle with some cellaring- suave, elegant and intensely flavored. I love the Petite Chapelle here and the 2011 is another very fine success. 2020-2045. **92.**

#### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos Prieur”- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

The vines in the Clos Prieur parcel of the Trapet family are some of the oldest that the domaine owns, with much of the plot having been planted in 1937 and with *pinot fin* clones that Jean-Louis now uses for the genetic material for the family's *selection*

*massale* nursery. This wine was one of the last to be bottled in 2011, having gone in its vessel fifteen days prior to my visit, but the wine was showing quite well. The superb nose is a blend of red and black cherries, grilled meat, French roast, a touch of bonfire, black minerality and a deft base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a good core, lovely transparency and a long, suavely tannic finish. This is another absolutely superb premier cru in the making. 2021-2045+. **91+**.

**2011 Chapelle-Chambertin- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

The 2011 Chapelle-Chambertin from Jean-Louis Trapet was still quite closed on the nose from its recent *mise*, but was absolutely singing on the palate. The reticent nose offers up a pure blend of red and black cherries, a touch of cocoa powder, a superb base of soil, herb tones and a stylish base of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a lovely core, excellent focus and balance, ripe tannins and superb length and grip on the pure and soil-driven finish. A classic Chapelle in the making. 2022-2050+. **93+**.

**2011 Latricières-Chambertin- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

The 2011 Latricières-Chambertin from Domaine Trapet Père et Fils is also excellent. The bouquet shows superb nascent complexity in its constellation of red and black cherries, grilled meats, dark soil tones, espresso, herbs, woodsmoke and cedar. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, focused and very transparent, with an excellent core, fine-grained tannins and impeccable balance on the very long and focused finish. This will probably take a year or two longer than the Chapelle-Chambertin to reach its apogee, but it will be outstanding. 2023-2055+. **94**.

**2011 Chambertin- Domaine Trapet Père et Fils**

The 2011 Trapet Chambertin is absolutely magical and one of the best 2011s that I tasted on this trip. The classic and youthful nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, black minerality, plummy overtones, raw cocoa, mustard seed, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and youthfully structured, with the purity of the vintage very much in evidence, a great core, ripe, firm tannins and superb focus and grip on the very, very long and soil-driven finish. This is the most aromatically expressive of the three grand crus here today, but also more shut down on the attack and reserved. However, the backend purity and energy are enormous and this will clearly be a brilliant wine in the fullness of time. 2025-2075. **96**.

***Morey St. Denis***

**Domaine David Clark (Morey St. Denis)**

*Sadly, 2011 will be the next to last vintage from David Clark, as the intrepid Scotsman has decided to sell his small domaine in Morey St. Denis and turn to other challenges. I am sure that his lack of success in purchasing additional vineyards over the last several years was a key reason for his deciding to sell his domaine in Morey, as it is very difficult to try and make a living these days in Burgundy without a single premier cru or grand cru in the portfolio. I had once asked David about the possibility of purchasing grapes from a few premier or grand crus to augment his own vineyard holdings, but he had always stated that he preferred to oversee every bit of the winegrowing process from vine to bottle, and it was simply unthinkable for him to not be doing the vineyard work for the wines that were going to wear his label. It really is a pity that David was never able to shed the outsider tag and latch onto a few prime vineyards*



*during his career in Morey, as his winemaking has always been exemplary and his vineyard work was always as good as it gets. As Jeremy Seysses once observed about David's viticultural work, "there are no Bourgogne level vines that get as much TLC as those that David works with." But, at least there are still the superb 2011s to savor and the vintage of 2012 remains waiting in the wings, so there will still be a bit more of Domaine David Clark's superb wines to savor over the coming years- after which, we are all going to be dependent on what we had the good fortune to cellar from David's career here to carry us on into the future with his wines. The 2011s here are excellent, as David decided not to chapitalize any of his wines and most will come in around 11.8 to 12 percent in alcohol in this vintage. The 2011s were bottled at the end of November and most had recovered quite well by the time of my visit in late March. I did not taste the full range of 2011s here on my visit, but contented myself with the lovely Côte de Nuits Villages and the Morey and Vosne AC bottlings. Based on these three cuvées, 2011 is (yet again) another really lovely set of red fruity and transparent Burgundies from David Clark.*



### **2011 Côtes de Nuits Villages- Domaine David Clark**

The 2011 Côtes de Nuits Villages from Domaine David Clark was produced with one third whole clusters this year and the wine has turned out beautifully. The bright, complex and red fruity nose jumps from the glass in a lovely blend of cherries, strawberries, fresh herb tones, vinesmoke, coffee and a gentle touch of meatiness from its Brochon origins. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and very transparent,

with a solid core, lovely focus and grip and a long, elegant and soil-driven finish of modest tannins and tangy acids. This will take a couple of years to really blossom and should be a beautiful middleweight and, as always, a great value. 2015-2025. **88+**.

**2011 Morey St. Denis- Domaine David Clark**

The 2011 Morey *villages* from David Clark shows quite a bit more mid-palate depth than the very pretty Côtes de Nuits Villages, offering up a deep and classy bouquet of cherries, beetroot, coffee, woodsmoke, a complex base of soil and incipient notes of cinnamon from the stems that were retained here. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and intensely flavored, with a nice touch of sappiness at the core, striking soil inflection, modest tannins and lovely focus and bounce on the tangy and very transparent finish. A lovely *villages*. 2015-2030+. **90+**.

**2011 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine David Clark**

The 2011 Vosne-Romanée from Domaine David Clark was still just a bit cranky from its *mise* and had not quite recovered as fully as the other two wines we sampled during my visit. The fine bouquet is a bit more black fruity in profile, delivering a lovely mix of dark berries, black cherries, vinesmoke, espresso, dark soil tones, game and a lovely topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off lovely mid-palate depth, with good acids, a lovely base of soil and a nice backbone of moderate, suave tannins to carry the wine nicely into the future. I am sure this will be fine once it has recovered fully from its *mise* and should merit a score at the top end of the range. 2018-2035. **90-91+**.

**Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils (Morey St. Denis)**

*As I noted last year, tasting in the new Lignier family's "gîte" located on the Route Nationale just to the north of the main road up into the village of Morey St. Denis is a most comfortable setting to try the new vintage, and I look forward to the day when I have a chance to stay here, as it looks to be very, very commodious. The Lignier family has had more than its share of ups and downs in the last decade, with the untimely passing of Romain Lignier and the subsequent dispute between Romain's widow, Kellen Lignier and the family. Happily, the domaine's wines, which are now made by Hubert Lignier's other son, Laurent Lignier, have never been better and this is one of the great estates in the Côte de Nuits. Due to the sharing of some parcels between the family domaine and Kellen Lignier, there are a number of new cuvées that have been added to the lineup since the 2009 vintage, including a fine St. Romain blanc, a very old vine cuvée of Pommard AC, a new Gevrey AC bottlings from the lieu à dit of Les Seuvrées", some vines in the premier cru of Gevrey-Chambertin "la Perrière", as well as a new Chambolle premier cru in the vineyard of Chabiots and a new Nuits St. Georges AC bottling made from sixty-four year-old vines planted in the lieu à dit of Poisets, which lies immediately downslope from Les Cailles and which has been stellar in the vintages I have had a chance to taste it. Laurent Lignier has also purchased a lot of Nuits St. Georges "Cuvée Didiers" from the Hospices de Nuits auctions again in 2011, so the lineup is a lovely tour of both the Côte de Nuits and Côte de Beaune in this vintage. I did not taste the Gevrey-Chambertin "la Justice" or the Chambolle-Musigny "les Chabiots" cuvées this year from the Ligniers, and do not know if the wines were just being racked at the time of my visit or if Laurent did not purchase the fruit from these parcels in 2011. I also did not taste the old vine bottling of Morey "Premier Cru" in March, as this had just*

*been racked in anticipation of bottling. Somehow I missed tasting the two white wines here as well on this visit (the St. Romain and the Fixin Blanc- not sure why- probably the wines had just been bottled, but my notes do not note the reason), but seeing as I arrived late (and was even later for my next appointment), it was probably more polite at my next stop at Domaine Bart in any case not to have tasted every wine in the cellar here. I should note that everything from Domaine Lignier that I did taste was still in barrel at the time of my late March visit, with the exception of the Bourgogne rouge, which had been bottled in mid-December. Laurent Lignier has made a beautiful range of 2011s and they are a very worthy set of wines to follow-up his utterly brilliant 2010s! According to Monsieur Lignier, the wines generally were chapitalized from a half to seven-tenths of a degree of alcohol this year, primarily to keep the fermentations going just a bit longer. Laurent Lignier's style is a bit different than his brother's was here at the domaine (and in fact, the wines seem to me much more reflective of his father's superb wines back in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s), with less new oak and a bit less early flamboyance, but they are every bit as fine as Romain's wines were in his days at the helm here and these are clearly some of my absolute favorite wines in the Côte de Nuits today.*

#### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The 2011 Bourgogne rouge had bounced back nicely from its *mise* and was showing lovely potential at the end of March, offering up a pretty and red fruity nose of cherries, pomegranate, a nice base of soil and a touch of nutskin in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and bouncy, with fine length and focus and just a touch of backend tannin to perk up the finish. A fine example. 2013-2023. **87.**

#### **2011 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

As I learned last year, the Ligniers' parcel of forty-five to fifty year-old vines for their Chambolle AC lies in the *lieu à dit* of La Bussière, which is the same vineyard from which Domaines Dujac and Taupenot-Merme have their Chambolle *villages* parcels as well. Laurent Lignier augments the production of the family parcel in La Bussière with a very small addition of purchased grapes from another *vigneron*. The 2011 is a lovely village wine, offering up a pure nose of red and black cherries, coffee, lovely soil tones, incipient notes of gamebird, woodsmoke and fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and nicely structured, with broad shoulders for the vintage, a lovely core, and a bit or ripe tannin on the long, focused and classy finish. Good juice. 2016-2030+. **88+.**

#### **2011 Morey St. Denis- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The 2011 Morey AC, like all of the village wines from Laurent Lignier this year, was raised in twenty percent new oak. The lovely bouquet offers up a complex blend of cherries, plums, a lovely base of minerality, woodsmoke, a touch of mustard seed and a hint of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and has a nice touch of sappiness in the core, with moderate tannins, tangy acids and lovely length and grip on the well-balanced finish. A very fine result. 2016-2035+. **89+.**

#### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin "les Seuvrées"- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The *lie à dit* of les Seuvrées lies just below the grand cru of Mazoyrès-Chambertin and the plot of vines Laurent Lignier works with here were fifty-one years of age in 2011. This was a bit shut down and reductive at the time of my visit, so I may be underrating it just a touch. It was racked at the completion of its malolactic fermentation,

whereas almost everything else in the cellar had not yet been racked and was still resting on its fine lees in the cellar. The reticent bouquet offers up a mix of black cherries, cassis, espresso, dark soil tones and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and youthfully structured, with a good core, ripe tannins and a long, focused and chewy finish. This wine shows a nice touch of blood orange on both the nose and palate as it aerates, and I strongly suspect that it will ultimately deserve a score at the top of the range. 2017-2035.

**2011 Nuits St. Georges “les Poisets”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The parcel of vines in les Poisets that Laurent Lignier purchases grapes from were planted in 1947, and these old vines have made a lovely wine in 2011. There are five barrels of this lovely village wine in the cellars this year, with one barrel out of five new oak. The superb bouquet is deep and youthfully complex, offering up scents of cassis, dark berries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, dark soil tones and espresso. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and properly chewy, with a lovely core, fine focus and purity, ripe tannins and a very long, soil-driven and complex finish. This is an excellent village wine! 2018-2040. **90.**

**2011 Pommard “Chanlins”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

This fine new addition, commencing in the 2009 vintage, comes from the *villages* section of Chanlins and is the oldest parcel of vines that the Ligniers work with, with all the vines in their section planted in either 1931 or 1937. Chanlins produces one of the most elegant of the premier crus of Pommard, and this elegance is also evident in this example from the *villages* section of the vineyard. The superb nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, a touch of pomegranate, game, a lovely base of stony soil tones and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent, with an affine core of fruit, lovely structure, firm, chewy tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This will need some bottle age to blossom, but it will be excellent. 2020-2045. **90.**

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Baudes”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The 2011 Baudes from the Lignier family is lovely and quite an example of this fine premier cru, offering up a pure and nascently complex bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of blood orange, a fine base of soil, gamebirds, a hint of cedar and a topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and nicely structured, with a very good core of fruit, fine transparency and a very long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. A very fine bottle of Chambolle in the making. 2020-2045+. **91+.**

**2011 Morey St. Denis “la Riotte”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The 2011 la Riotte is an excellent follow-up to the superb version of this wine produced here in 2010. This cuvée was raised in twenty-five percent new wood this year, as opposed to thirty percent for most of the other premier crus *chez* Lignier, and that may partially account for its stunning signature of soil in this vintage. The very pure and expressive nose jumps from the glass in a blend of red and black cherries, roses, complex minerality, raw cocoa, mustard seed and a deft framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly classic in shape and size, with a fine core of pure fruit, a very soil-driven personality, vibrant acids and a long and classy finish that closes with ripe, well-integrated tannins and excellent complexity and grip. This is a very high class and stylish bottle of Morey premier cru and fully underscores that the top premier

crus here in the village certainly do not get the credit their quality deserves! 2018-2045+. **92.**

**2011 Morey St. Denis “les Chaffots”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The 2011 Lignier les Chaffots is also a very fine example of the vintage, offering up a classic bouquet of black cherries, a touch of plum, venison, stony soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a nice touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and more reserved than the la Riotte, with a fine core of fruit, ripe, chewy tannins and excellent length and grip on the youthful and very promising finish. This is a more powerful wine than the La Riotte (more Clos de la Roche than Clos St. Denis in inspiration) and will take a couple more years in the cellar to fully blossom, but it will prove to be another outstanding bottle. 2020-2050. **91+.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Perrière”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The parcel of vines that Laurent Lignier buys his grapes from the la Perrière bottling is made up of a nice blend of young and old, with one-third of the parcel planted to fifty-five year-old vines, one-third thirty-five years of age and one-third having just turned fifteen and starting to round into fine form. The resulting wine in the 2011 vintage is outstanding, offering up a fine bouquet of red and black cherries, espresso, Gevrey’s black minerality, incipient notes of grilled meats, a touch of graphite and a nice framing of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a superb core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, ripe, chewy tannins and a long, bright and soil-driven finish. This is a dynamite new addition to the Lignier lineup and a beautiful wine in the making in this vintage. 2020-2050. **92.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “aux Combottes”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The Ligniers’ parcel of vines in Combottes are all over fifty years of age as well these days and this wine is stellar in 2011. The deep and utterly refined nose soars from the glass in a classic mélange of red and black cherries, a touch of game, mustard seed, a very complex base of soil, dark chocolate and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent focus and transparency, tangy acids and a very long, beautifully-balanced and suavely tannic finish. A beautiful wine in the making. 2020-2050. **93.**

**2011 Nuits St. Georges “Cuvée Didiers”- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

Like all of the Hospices de Nuits cuvées, this wine is raised initially in one hundred percent new oak, but Laurent Lignier racks this into three to four year-old barrels as soon as the malolactic fermentation is complete, so that the wine is not too marked by its new oak. In 2011, the malo finished up fairly briskly and the wine was racked out of its new oak after seven months. The results are impressive on both the nose and palate, as the wine offers up a fine aromatic mix of dark berries, cassis, bitter chocolate, a nice touch of youthful Nuits St. Georges medicinal overtones, dark soil and plenty of cedary new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite elegant for young Nuits, with a fine core of pure fruit, firm, well-integrated tannins and excellent length and grip on the tangy and soil-driven finish. This is an excellent wine in the making, and though it is a touch oakier than the other premier crus in the cellar, it is beautifully-balanced and the wood is far from obtrusive. Fine juice. 2020-2050+. **92.**

### **2011 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

Domaine Lignier's Charmes-Chambertin is a brilliant wine in the making in 2011. The deep and beautiful bouquet is a mix of strawberries, cherries, a touch of beetroot, mustard seed, a great base of soil, woodsmoke, cedar and a topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very transparent, with a fine core of fruit, superb intensity and focus, fine-grained tannins and a very, very long, elegant and utterly classic finish. The family's small plot of vines are located in Mazoyères-Chambertin, and I would like to think that the superb quality and refinement of this wine in 2011 is a pretty strong statement that one can produce absolutely brilliant and compellingly suave Charmes from this vineyard as well. A great wine. 2022-2060. **94+**.

### **2011 Clos de la Roche- Domaine Hubert Lignier Père et Fils**

The 2011 Clos de la Roche from Laurent Lignier is also a magical wine in the making. The stunning nose soars from the glass in a blaze of cherries, plums, beetroot, gamebirds, a beautifully complex base of soil, coffee, woodsmoke and a judicious framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and again, very soil-driven in personality this year, with superb focus and mid-palate concentration, suave, ripe tannins and exceptional length and grip on the poised and classic finish. It will take a few more years to fully blossom than the Charmes this year, but it will be a classic in the fullness of time. A great wine by any measure! 2024-2060+. **95+**.





### **Domaine Taupenot-Merme (Morey St. Denis)**

*This was only my second visit with Romain Taupenot of Domaine Taupenot-Merme and so I repeat a bit of the background information on the domaine that appeared in last spring's profile of this fine Morey St. Denis estate. The domaine has been fully biodynamique since the 2001 vintage, and its thirteen hectares of vines scattered amongst some of the top crus of the Côte de Nuits (and a couple of very serious Côte de Beaunes as well) have been farmed organically since the days of Romain's father. The wines are made in a very lovely style, with a six to eight day pre-fermentation maceration (or cold soak), one hundred percent de-stemming and a very rational percentage of new wood translating into some lovely examples of their respective appellations. Romain Taupenot typically uses fifteen percent new wood for the village wines, fifteen to twenty-five percent for the premier crus and never more than forty percent for the grand crus. The entire range of 2011s had been bottled in February of 2013, so the wines were still in the process from bouncing back from the mise when I visited here at the end of March and consequently, I have scored many of the wines within a range to be fairer to them right after bottling. If the wine seemed completely on form, I have given it a single score, but if it still seemed a bit agitated from bottling, then I have given it a range. I would fully expect the wines to eventually place at the high end of each range, as it was very clear that Romain Taupenot has made a lovely constellation of 2011s. All the wines were chapitalized a touch in this vintage, with the bottlings from the Côte de Beaune generally chapitalized about one percent and the wines from the Côte de Nuits having been chapitalized about half a degree of potential alcohol. While there is an excellent range of premier and grand crus in the Taupenot family's cellars, I would be remiss in not pointing out just how well-made and classy the village wines are here as well, and for those looking for beautifully-made Burgundies at more reasonable price points, one could do a whole lot worse than laying in some cases of these very complex and age-worthy village wines. This is a superb domaine on the rise in Morey!*

### **2011 Auxey-Duresses- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

The 2011 Auxey-Duresses *villages* was one of the first wines bottled and was showing very well at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a pretty red fruity and spicy blend of cherries, a touch of blood orange, lovely soil tones, spices and a gentle touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and nicely soil-driven, with a good core, a touch of tannin and a long, tangy finish. Good juice. 2015-2032. **88.**

### **2011 Auxey-Duresses "Premier Cru"- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

Domaine Taupenot-Merme's premier cru bottling from Auxey-Duresses is a blend of two vineyards: les Duresses and les Bréterins. The 2011 is going to be a lovely wine, as it offers up a stylish nose of red and black cherries, cocoa, a touch of nutskin, gamebirds, woodsmoke and just a whisper of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full and youthful in personality, with a fine core, moderate tannins and lovely length and grip on the focused and classy finish. This was still just a touch jumpy from its *mise*, so I have scored it in a range, but I would be shocked if it does not ultimately land at the top of the range once it has settled back in after the bottling. Good juice in the making here and a superb value! 2017-2040. **89-90.**

### **2011 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

As I noted last spring, the Taupenot family's Chambolle AC parcels lie primarily in the vineyard of Les Bussi res, which is a continuation across the border of Christophe Roumier's Morey "Clos de la Bussiere" premier cru. The vines here average forty years of age and the 2011 is a fine wine in the making, offering up a blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee, gamebirds, mustard seed, a lovely base of soil and a touch of spicy wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and tangy, with a good core, lovely focus, modest tannins and fine length and grip on the stylish finish. This will be lovely. 2018-2035. **90-91.**

### **2011 Morey St. Denis- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

The 2011 Morey St. Denis AC from Domaine Taupenot-Merme had really recovered nicely from its February bottling and was showing very well indeed, jumping from the glass in a mix of plums, black cherries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, a complex base of soil and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, long and tangy, with a fine core of fruit, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and nascently complex finish. This wine hails from a parcel of thirty-one year-old vines next door to again to Christophe Roumier's Clos de la Bussiere. Fine juice. 2019-2035+. **91.**

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

Romain Taupenot's 2011 Gevrey AC bottlings was a bit more upset from its recent bottling than the Morey *villages*, but it clearly is also going to be a lovely wine. The nose is a blend of red and black cherries, fresh herb tones, vinesmoke, coffee, cedar and a gentle topnote of rose petals. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely mineral, with a touch of *herbacit * showing today from its recent bottling, but a long, tangy and nicely chewy finish. I am sure this will be a very good example, but it was a bit cranky at the time of my visit. 2019-2035+. **89-90+.**

### **2011 Chambolle-Musigny "la Combe d'Orveau"- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

The domaine's 2011 Combe d'Orveau was still pretty shut down from its recent bottling, but it had recovered its equilibrium very nicely and was quite easy to read. The reserved nose offers up a fine and youthful blend of black cherries, red plums, coffee, gamebirds, vinesmoke, a lovely base of soil and a touch of cedar in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very well-balanced, with a nice, sappy core of fruit, fine focus and balance and a long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. This will be a lovely wine. 2020-2050. **91-92+.**

### **2011 Morey St. Denis "la Riotte"- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

Romain Taupenot parcel of fifty-six year-old vines in the premier cru of la Riotte have turned out a lovely wine in 2011. As I noted last year, La Riotte is located beautifully right in the heart of the band of premiers in Morey, alongside les Millandes and directly below Clos St. Denis. The 2011 was a bit unsettled still from its recent *mise*, but its constituent components are excellent and this should prove to be a lovely wine in seven or eight years. The bouquet is a sappy blend of cherries, plums, roses, woodsmoke, gamebirds, soil and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a good core and a long, ripely tannic finish. The wine was still a bit out of whack from its bottling, but this will clearly be a very fine example of the vintage in the fullness of time. 2020-2050. **91-92+.**



### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “Bel Air”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

In contrast to the La Riotte, where the bouquet was nicely recovered from the bottling and the palate was agitated, the Bel Air was still fairly closed from the recent bottling, but the wine had snapped nicely back into focus on the palate. As I observed last year, the Taupenots’ parcel in the premier cru of Bel Air are thirty years of age, and these vines are now really starting to hit on all cylinders. The reticent nose on the 2011 offers up scents of red and black cherries, gamebirds, cocoa, nutskins, lovely soil tones and a touch of cedar. On the palate the wine is back on form after the *mise*, delivering lovely focus and balance in its full-bodied format, with ripe tannins, tangy acids and a very good core of fruit. This will be lovely. 2021-2050. **91-93.**

### **2011 Nuits St. Georges “les Pruliers”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

The domaine’s parcel in les Pruliers were replanted in the mid-1970s and now average thirty-five to forty years of age. The 2011 was the most recovered of all the premier crus here from the recent bottling and was showing lovely potential, wafting from the glass in a black fruity blend of cassis, dark berry, espresso, game, dark soil tones, a touch of bonfire and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, primary and fairly chewy, with a fine core, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the youthful and promising finish. A fine example. 2022-2060. **91-93.**

### **2011 Corton “Rognet”- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

As I noted last spring when reporting on the 2010s from the domaine, the Taupenot parcel in Rognet was also replanted in the mid-1970s and the vines are in their prime. The 2011 Rognet was again a bit shaken from its recent *mise*, but should prove to be outstanding with a decade’s worth of bottle age. The youthful nose is a fine blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, venison, a fine base of soil, herbs, nutskins and a touch of spicy oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven, with a rock solid core, ripe, firm tannins and a very long, closed and primary finish. This will be excellent. 2024-2060+. **92-94.**

### **2011 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

As the domaine’s parcels in Charmes and Mazoyères are quite different in age (thirty years for the Charmes and fifty years of age for the Mazoyères), so the domaine has bottled the two wines separately. The 2011 Charmes was showing quite well after its recent bottlings, jumping from the glass in a mélange of black cherries, plums, grilled meats, herb tones, a lovely base of soil, French roast and spicy wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and focused, with firm tannins, tangy acids and a long, primary and classy finish. This will be superb. 2022-2060. **92-94.**

### **2011 Mazoyères-Chambertin- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

The 2011 Mazoyères-Chambertin from Domaine Taupenot-Merme was the last wine to be bottled and was totally closed and grumpy at the end of March when I visited. The reticent and shaken nose offers up scents of black cherries, bonfires, game, black minerality, savory elements, cedar and a gentle topnote of violets. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and agitated, with a good core, firm tannins and sound acids. The finish is long and nicely balanced, but this wine had not yet bounced back from the bottling. Nevertheless, given how well everything else showed in the cellar, it is hard not to assume that this will be excellent once it is back on form. 2022-2060. **91-94?**

### **2011 St. Romain- Domaine Taupenot-Merme**

Ironically, the 2011 St. Romain Blanc was the last wine bottled at the domaine and had not yet had a chance to hunker down after the *mise* and was showing quite well at the time of my visit. The nose is a pretty blend of pears, green apples, white soil tones, a touch of citrus peel and a bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied and impressively deep for its appellation, with a good core, crisp acids and fine focus and grip on the sneaky long finish. Good juice and an excellent value. 2013-2023. **89.**

### ***Chambolle-Musigny***

#### **Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig (Chambolle-Musigny)**

*I did not have the opportunity to visit Christine and Gilbert Felettig during my November swing through Burgundy tasting the 2011s, as I could not get our two schedules to cooperate, but did manage to do so in early April. The brother and sister team of Gilbert and Christine Felettig have run this family estate since 2000, which was originally begun by their father Henri Felettig in the early 1970s. Gilbert is in charge of the viticultural and vinification side of the estate, with Christine taking care of the business side and receiving visitors. They have just over five hectares of vines, with small holdings in Chambolle premier cru parcels of Feusselottes, Combottes and Charmes, as well as a small slice of Echézeaux. The family also has small parcels in three different Vosne premier crus, including Reignots, from which they make a single, blended Premier Cru bottling. The Felettig lineup is rounded out by a few parcels that they rent, including a bit of Grands Echézeaux, village wine parcels in Nuits St. Georges and Gevrey-Chambertin and a bit of Bourgogne Hauts-Côtes de Nuits. The harvest for the 2011s began around the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> of September, and none of the wines was chapitalized this year. Most of the premier crus are raised in fifty percent new oak (which is also the percentage that Gilbert Felettig prefers for his grand crus as well), the village wines in twenty-five to thirty percent, and everything had already been bottled at the time of my visit on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. As the grand crus had only been bottled a few days, I saw no reason to ask for the Felettigs to open any examples, as it would just be wasting bottles of what are already very small quantities, but was quite content to taste a very representative range of their 2011 village and premier cru bottlings, as well as a bottle of the 2010 Chambolle-Musigny “les Combottes”. These are really quite lovely wines and this is clearly a domaine on the rise in Chambolle-Musigny. As a few of the wines were not quite as well recovered from their bottling as others, those that were still a little shut down from the recent mise have been scored within a range.*

### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The domaine's 2011 Bourgogne rouge had been bottled a bit earlier than the rest of the cellar, with the *mise* taking place in November of 2012 and the wine was showing quite well at the time of my visit. The nose is a very pretty blend of cherries, a touch of plum, raw cocoa and a nice dollop of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, suave and easy-going, with solid depth, modest tannins and quite good length and grip on the finish. Good juice. 2013-2020. **86.**

### **2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Justice”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The domaine has been producing a la Justice bottling since the 1995 vintage, with the vines between forty and fifty years of age for their small parcel. The 2011 was raised

in thirty percent new wood and was bottled at the end of January of 2013. The wine is really lovely on both the nose and palate, as the inherent elegance of the vintage works beautifully with this fine *terroir*, offering up a complex bouquet of red plums, cherries, cocoa powder, a fine base of soil, woodsmoke and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and very silky on the attack, with a fine core, ripe, moderate tannins and a very long, elegant and youthful finish. This is a lovely example of one of my favorite *lieux à dits* in Gevrey-Chambertin and quite clearly of premier cru quality *chez* Felettig. 2017-2035. **90.**

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The 2011 Chambolle AC was a bit more closed than the la Justice bottling, but also showed fine potential. The Felettigs' parcel of wines here are around forty years of age and the wine was also raised in thirty percent new oak. The bouquet is a blend of red and black cherries, fresh herb tones, a fine base of chalky soil, coffee and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and reserved, with a good core of fruit, moderate tannins and a long, primary and gently chewy finish. I am sure this will be a very good example, but it may not quite reach the same level or refinement as found in the la Justice this year. 2018-2035. **88-89.**

**2011 Vosne-Romanée- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The 2011 Vosne-Romanée from Gilbert et Christine Felettig was also still a bit agitated from its recent *mise*, but it was easy to appreciate that this is going to be a lovely example for its appellation. The bouquet is a fine blend of black cherries, a touch of raspberry, lovely soil tones, Vosne spices, incipient notes of game and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, a touch reticent from the *mise*, but with a lovely core of fruit, bright acids and a long, tangy and moderately tannic finish. There is a bit of wood tannin perking up the finish at the present time, but this is probably just a result of the recent bottling. Good juice. 2018-2035+. **88-90.**

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Combottes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The Felettigs have fifty year-old vines in the premier cru of Combottes, and their 2011 was bottled in mid-February and had recovered nicely from the *mise* by the time of my visit. The wine was raised in fifty percent new oak and was showing a bit new oaky on the nose, offering up scents of plums, cherries, gamebirds, a touch of coffee bean, a good base of soil and a judicious base of toasty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite classy on the attack, with a fine core, ripe tannins and a long, nascently complex and promising finish. This is a lovely example. 2021-2045. **91+.**

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Carrières”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The Chambolle-Musigny “les Carrières” from Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig also hails from a parcel of fifty year-old vines and was also raised in one half new barrels. This wine is deep and very classy on both the nose and palate, offering up an aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, plums, cocoa, a lovely base of soil, woodsmoke and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely structured, with fine-grained tannins, excellent focus and grip and a long, pure and focused finish. An excellent wine! 2021-2045. **92.**

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Charmes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The family's parcel of vines in Charmes are located right along the road that runs up from the center of Vougeot to the center of Chambolle, so this is on the side of the

vineyard across from les Hauts Doix and les Amoureuses. The age of the vines in this parcel is a bit more than fifty years of age and the 2011 is excellent, offering up a fine bouquet of plums, red and black cherries, cocoa, a complex base of chalky soil and a nice framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and potentially quite silky, with a sappy core, refined tannins and a very long, complex and tangy finish. I really like this wine, but it will need seven or eight years of cellaring to really blossom. High class juice. 2020-2045+. **92+**.

**2010 Chambolle-Musigny “les Combottes”- Domaine Gilbert et Christine Felettig**

The only 2010 I had tasted previously from Gilbert and Christine Felettig was their outstanding Echézeaux and Madame Felettig was very kind to offer to open a bottle of their 2010 Combottes for me at the end of my visit. This is an excellent wine, wafting from the glass in a complex and very pure nose of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, gamebirds, a complex base of chalky soil tones, mustard seed and new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure on the attack, with a sappy core, excellent structure and grip, ripe tannins and a long, complete and tangy finish that closes with lovely focus grip. A totally complete Chambolle premier cru. 2022-2050. **92+**.

***Vosne-Romanée***

**Domaine Bruno Clavelier (Vosne- Romanée)**

*Bruno Clavelier started his harvest in 2011 on the first of September and brought in fully ripe, classy fruit at the typically low octane of the vintage and chose not to chapitalize all but one or two of his wines this year. Consequently, these utterly pure and soil-driven wines fall in the range from 11.8 percent alcohol up to about 12.6 percent, and yet are utterly complete, poised and balanced wines at these lovely levels. He has been biodynamique for several years now and though I do not get the opportunity to visit and taste here every year, it seems to me that his wines today are more refined and soil-driven than they were six or seven years ago and it is quite clear that he is currently at the top of his game and making some of the most exciting wines in the village of Vosne-Romanée. What I find particularly refreshing about his wines is his quite modest use of new oak- particularly in the context of Vosne-Romanée, which tends to be one of the holdouts when it comes to the use of a high percentage of new wood these days, with many of the domaine here hitting their wines with wood like it was still 1995! The premier crus here were raised in anywhere from twenty-five to thirty percent new wood in 2011, the village wines received only about ten percent and the grand cru Rognet fifty percent new oak. Monsieur Clavelier had just begun bottling at the March equinox for a few of his cuvées, as like most adherents to the precepts of biodynamique viticulture, he closely aligns his cellar regimen to the phases of the moon. Consequently, the village wines had only been in bottle two weeks at the time of my visit, but their fine potential was still easy to see.*

**2011 Vosne- Romanée “Hauts Beaumonts”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2011 Vosne- Romanée “Hauts Beaumonts” from Domaine Bruno Clavelier had been bottled two weeks before my visit and was a bit muted from the *mise*, but clearly has plenty of potential. The wine today was most expressive on the nose, offering up a lovely blend of raspberries, cherries, violets, cocoa and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and quite suave on the attack, with a good

core of fruit, fine focus and a long, gently tannic finish. This was just a touch “compacted” from the bottling, but will be a lovely example of the vintage in five or six years. 2018-2035. **89-90+**.

**2011 Vosne- Romanée “Combe de Brûlées”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2011 Combe de Brûlées from Monsieur Clavelier was not chapitalized at all and comes in at a cool 11.8 percent alcohol this year. Despite an octane level that one of the young bucks in Napa Valley would insist is impossible to make wine from, the wine is absolutely lovely and will be another fine village wine. The very bright and classy nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, espresso, stony soil tones, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a whisper of new wood. On the palate the wine is medium-full, complex and beautifully balanced, with a very good core, lovely transparency and fine length and grip on the modestly tannic finish. This too had just been recently bottled, so there may well be a bit more structure hidden here that will emerge as time goes by. A classy bottle. 2018-2035. **89-90+**.

**2011 Vosne- Romanée “Hauts Mazières”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

My notes do not indicate (and I cannot recall now) if the Vosne- Romanée “Hauts Mazières” from 2011 had also been bottled at the time of my visit, but I have to assume that all these fine Vosne AC cuvées had been bottled at the same time. This was really showing well at the end of March, delivering a fine bouquet of black plums, cherries, dark soil tones, coffee, woodsmoke and a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and quite suave on the attack, with good mid-palate depth, tangy acids and lovely shape and grip on the moderately tannic finish. Fine juice. 2018-2035+. **90+**.

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “aux Combottes”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2011 Combottes from Domaine Clavelier is excellent, wafting from the glass in a classy mélange of plums, cherries, cocoa powder, a beautifully complex base of soil, roses and a deft base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and velvety on the attack, with lovely mid-palate concentration, fine-grained tannins and excellent length and grip on the tangy and focused finish. Just a classic example of Combottes in the making. 2020-2050. **92**.

**2011 Vosne- Romanée “aux Brûlées”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2011 Brûlées from Domaine Clavelier is going to be an excellent wine, as it offers up a complex and classic bouquet of black plums, black raspberries, dark soil tones, coffee bean, Vosne spices, a touch of new oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a fine core, lovely mineral drive, suave tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused and very long finish. Superb juice. 2020-2050. **92+**.

**2011 Vosne- Romanée “les Beaumonts”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2011 Beaumonts from Bruno Clavelier is another outstanding example of the vintage, offering up a very complex and soil-driven personality on both the nose and palate. The very fine and elegant nose certainly shows the vineyard’s proximity to Echézeaux, wafting from the glass in a blend of black cherries, black plums, dark soil tones, herbs, a bit of bonfire, incipient notes of venison, espresso and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nascently complex, with a fine core, ripe tannins and excellent length and grip on the poised and classy finish. 2022-2050. **92+**.

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Noirots”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The Chambolle premier cru of les Noirots is home to some of Monsieur Clavelier’s oldest vines, as his parcel is made up of a mix of one third eighty year-old vines, one-third sixty-five years of age and one-third forty-five years old. The wine has really turned out well in 2011, offering up a very perfumed and seductive nose of cherries, red plums, woodsmoke, cocoa, a touch of mustard seed, violets and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, tangy and nicely defined by a vein of minerality. The complex finish is long, moderately tannic and tangy, with lovely focus and balance. Classy juice here. 2020-2050. **92+**.

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “Combe d’Orveau”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The Clavelier parcel in Combe d’Orveau has recently had one quarter of its vines replanted, but the young vines were not used in this cuvée in 2011. This left a mix of two-thirds sixty-five year-old vines and one-third twenty-five year-old vines, with the blend producing an excellent bottle of Chambolle. The very classy nose is deep and reserved, offering up scents of red and black cherries, gamebirds, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, a lovely base of soil, a hint of mustard seed and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very elegant, with tangy acids, moderate tannins and lovely mid-palate intensity. The long finish shows off fine grip and excellent focus. 2020-2050. **92-93**.

**2011 Nuits St. Georges “les Cras”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

Les Cras is one of the finest premier crus in Nuits St. Georges, located up on the slope right above Murgers and Boudots, and Monsieur Clavelier’s parcel is all in old vines, with one third of the vines eighty years of age and the remainder fully seventy years old! These old vines produce very small berries each year, which accounts for the intensity and beautiful balance of the wine in the 2011 vintage. The classy bouquet is very Murgers-like this year, offering up scents of black plums, black cherries, woodsmoke, game, dark soil tones, espresso and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and transparent, with a fine core of fruit, good acidity, and excellent length and grip on the ripely tannic finish. This is a very elegant bottle of young Nuits St. Georges in 2011! 2020-2050. **92-93**.

**2011 Corton “Rognet”- Domaine Bruno Clavelier**

The 2011 Corton “Rognet” from Domaine Clavelier is outstanding, wafting from the glass in a refined aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, gamebirds, espresso, fresh herb tones, a superb base of soil, vanillin oak and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven in its personality, with a fine core of fruit, nascent complexity and a very long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. This will be an outstanding bottle of Corton in eight to ten years. 2022-2060. **94**.

**Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (Vosne- Romanée)**

*My timing has not been great at the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti in the last couple of years, as I always seem to be requesting appointments when there are projects going on (such as shifting offices to the new facility) or when the wines have recently been racked and are not available for tasting. This was once again the case in March of this year, as Monsieur Noblet had already begun the bottling of some of the 2011s and several of the cuvées had been recently assembled in tank in preparation for the bottling and were not in condition to be tasted at the time of my visit. However, the domaine very graciously allowed me to taste the four wines that had not yet been assembled and were*

*still resting on their fine lees in barrel, so I was not shut out with notes on all of the 2011s from DRC this year. But, continuing my streak of bad luck at the domaine, Monsieur Noblet broke his glass right as we began tasting, and while he dutifully continued on with the remainder of the tasting of the 2011s (without having a chance to see how the wines were showing himself), he eschewed the customary visit to a few older bottles that is normally part of a visit to the domaine and I had to content myself with a savory tour of the top four wines in the cellar from 2011 and was back out on the streets in Vosne-Romanée twenty minutes after my arrival! My mojo is clearly not in alignment with DRC at the moment! In any case, not surprisingly, the four 2011s I tasted here were superb, and as the domaine decided to harvest very late for this vintage, it is a pretty black fruity vintage for the top wines here- with the exception of the absolutely stellar Romanée-St.-Vivant. No one is going to be disappointed with any of these four wines in 2011, and I suspect that they are an excellent follow-up to what must have been a great vintage here in 2010. I was supposed to have a chance to taste a few of the 2010s after the 2011s on this visit, but perhaps the broken glass also waylaid these plans as well.*



*The statue in the courtyard of DRC's new offices- the vineyard just over the wall is Romanée-St.-Vivant.*

### **2011 Romanée-St.-Vivant- Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

The 2011 Romanée-St.-Vivant from Domaine de la Romanée-Conti is a superb example of the vintage and a classically red fruity and spicy rendition of this supremely elegant *terroir*. The exceptional bouquet offers up scents of raspberries, cherries, lovely minerality, Vosne spice tones, duck, raw cocoa and a generous base of spicy new oak. On

the palate the wine is full-bodied, pure and very transparent, with a great core of pure fruit, suave tannins and a very long, complex and tangy finish. A beautiful, young example of RSV. 2022-2060. **94.**

**2011 Richebourg- Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

The 2011 DRC Richebourg was a bit more closed at the time of my visit than the lovely Romanée-St.-Vivant, and was still a bit marked by its youthful stemminess, but with superb depth, focus and promise for the future. The reticent nose delivers a deep blend of red and black cherries, plums, cocoa, gamebirds, a lovely base of soil and plenty of luxuriant new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and balance, ripe tannins and a very long, primary and tangy finish. This will be a very fine Richebourg in the fullness of time. 2025-2065+. **94.**

**2011 La Tâche- Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

The 2011 La Tâche still had a bit of CO<sub>2</sub> in the barrel (helping to protect the wine from oxygen) and was a tad effervescent when first poured. With a bit of swirling the wine blossomed nicely, delivering a youthfully complex nose of plums, black cherries, dark chocolate, gamebirds, a great base of soil, exotic La Tâche spices and a suave base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and nascently complex, with quite a powerful personality for the 2011 vintage, ripe tannins and great focus and grip on the extremely long finish. This will be a wonderful wine, but probably more on the black fruity side of the La Tâche ledger when it reaches full maturity. 2025-2075. **96.**

**2011 Romanée-Conti- Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

Like the 2011 La Tâche, the Romanée-Conti this year is quite black fruity in profile (aromatically it is not dissimilar from the 1993 in its youth) and is a wonderful wine in the making. The pure and reserved nose wafts from the glass in a sophisticated blend of black cherries, black raspberries, raw cocoa, Vosne spice tones, beautifully expressive soil tones (that also seem almost “spicy” in character), fresh nutmeg and a beautifully measured base of nutty new oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and nascently complex, with wonderful mid-palate depth, ripe tannins and lovely, tangy acids giving the wine bounce and vibrancy on the very, very long and utterly refined finish. Great juice. 2022-2060+. **96+.**

***Pernand-Vergelesses***

**Domaine Bonneau du Martray (Pernand-Vergelesses)**

*The 2011 Corton-Charlemagne had been assembled in late January and was showing very well at the time of my late March visit. Jean-Charles de la Mornière was expecting to bottle the wine in early April- perhaps right after Easter and was quite content with the classic style and shape of the Corton-Charlemagne this year. He was also kind enough to open bottles of the 2009 and 2010 versions to compare to the infant 2011 and it was quite a lovely trio. The 2011 Corton rouge is very promising as well, coming in just around thirteen percent alcohol and was not chapitalized at all in this vintage. The domaine has been making a very concerted effort with their red wines over the last several years and the 2011 and 2010 (which was also generously shown during my visit) strike me as two of the finest young examples of this wine that I have ever had the pleasure to taste. I also had the opportunity to enjoy the 1985 vintage while visiting Egon Müller in Germany the week before, as he served the wine out of his cellar for our*



*main course at dinner, and I have included the note on this vintage as well here. As many readers know, Domaine Bonneau du Martray has really had a hard time with premature oxidation, and though the estate has tried every possible iteration in the cellar to try and solve the problem (with many ongoing experiments with various closures, sulfur levels, and different styles of pressing aging in the cellars with the hopes that one or another of these variations will finally unlock the secrets of this potent scourge and lead to a solution to the problem), it still makes very good sense to be now drinking younger vintages of their Corton-Charlemagne within the first five to seven years out from the vintage. This is so sad, as I love the very classic and ageworthy style of the Bonneau du Martray Corton-Charlemagne and used to be so happy to hold my bottles of this wine in my cellar until the wine had at least a good dozen to fifteen years of bottle age before starting to drink them, and I have had to adjust my thinking accordingly since the vintages of the mid-to-late 1990s to accommodate to the realities of this sorry age of premox. But, that said, the wines here remain every bit as beautifully made today as was the case in the past and they offer up extraordinarily pure and transparent renditions of this magical terroir.*

#### **2011 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray**

The 2011 Corton-Charlemagne from Bonneau du Martray is a very lovely example of this fine vintage, with the acids here ripe and bright, but not as tensile as they can be in some more structured vintages, and like many of the top white Burgundies in this vintage, this is a vintage of Bonneau du Martray that will really drink well from a fairly early age. The deep and classy bouquet offers up a lovely blend of lemon, apple, complex, chalky minerality, white flowers and a judicious base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very transparent, with a fine core of fruit, vibrant, ripe acids and excellent focus and grip on the very long and soil-driven finish. Fine juice. 2018-2035. **93.**

#### **2010 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray**

The 2010 Corton-Charlemagne from Domaine Bonneau du Martray is a gorgeous example of the vintage and one of the finest young examples of this wine that I have tasted in several years. The very classic nose wafts from the glass in a blend of delicious apples, a touch of orange peel, fresh lemon, incipient notes of *crème patissière*, hard limestone, a touch of iodine and a fine, discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core from the vintage's low yields, with lovely focus and purity, snappy acids and great backend grip on the very, very long and youthful finish. Prior to premox, this is a vintage of Bonneau du Martray that I would not plan to open until it had seen at least fifteen years in the cellar, as it is utterly classic in its structure and shows of stunning potential, but with the realities of so many white wines these days demanding earlier attention, I would not hesitate to start opening bottles of this wine at age six or seven. 2016-2050. **94+.**

#### **2009 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Bonneau du Martray**

The 2009 Bonneau du Martray Corton-Charlemagne is another very strong example of the vintage, and while it does not possess quite the same inner core and superb structural tension as the 2010, it is a lovely wine that will drink very well early on in its evolution. The fine bouquet delivers a constellation of pear, apple, chalky minerality, spring flowers, vanillin oak and a nice touch of citrus zest in the upper

register. On the palate the wine is deep, broad-shouldered and full, with very good mid-palate depth, a fine vein of minerality running from attack to finish and very fine length and grip on the backend. The wine is today starting to shut down a bit and probably will want three or four years in the cellar to start to really drink optimally. It is a very strong and soil-driven 2009 white Burgundy. 2017-2040+. **93.**

**2011 Corton- Domaine Bonneau du Martray**

The 2011 Corton *rouge* was showing very well out of barrel at the time of my visit. The classic nose wafts from the glass in a mix of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil, a touch of venison, red currants and coffee. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and promising, with a good core, chewy tannins and very fine length and grip on the soil-driven and youthful finish. Fine juice in the making. 2020-2060. **90+.**

**2010 Corton- Domaine Bonneau du Martray**

The 2010 Bonneau du Martray Corton *rouge* was already quite hunkered down in anticipation of an extended period of hibernation after its bottling, and though its inherent quality was quite evident, this is a structured 2010 red Burgundy that is going to want a good decade in the cellar before it is likely to start to blossom. The reserved nose offers up noteworthy complexity in its blend of red and black cherries, a bit of bonfire, dark soil tones, fresh herbs, a bit of resin and a judicious base of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and quite shut down today, with a fine core, chewy tannins and a very long, focused and old school finish. This will be very fine in the fullness of time, but let it sleep! 2022-2050. **90-91+?**

***Savigny-lès-Beaune***

**Domaine Antonin Guyon (Savigny-lès-Beaune)**

*I have been very impressed with the consistent excellence of the Domaine Guyon wines for many vintages in a row now and today, this is clearly one of the great “sleeper” domaines in all of Burgundy. The 2011s here are another absolutely superb collection of wines, with the lineup from Côte de Beaune to Côte de Nuits all exceptional and the reds and whites of equally fine quality. The harvest here started in the first few days of September (Monsieur Guyon could not recall if they started picking on September 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> in this year), and only a portion of the wines received a very slight chapitalization. As Monsieur Guyon noted, “it really depended upon the specific cuvée this year, as several of the wines had just lovely balances and needed no chapitalization; for others, we chapitalized just a touch to prolong the fermentations a bit longer.” The entire cellar was racked right before the harvest of 2012 and the bottling here started in January of 2103, with some wines bottled just before my visit. Nevertheless, the entire range of 2011s was showing very well indeed (with the exception of the Volnay “Clos des Chênes, which had only been bottled the day prior to my arrival), with lovely aromatic precision and superb soil signatures evident in each and every wine.*

***Vins Rouges***

**2011 Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits- Dominique Guyon**

The 2011 Bourgogne Haut Côte de Nuits from Dominique Guyon was the first wine bottled at the domaine and was showing quite well at the time of my visit. The nose is a lovely blend of red berries, vinesmoke, spice tones, a lovely base of soil and a

topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and complex, with a perfectly respectable core, tangy acids and lovely length and grip on the suave finish. There is just a touch of tannin here that will need to be waited out, but this wine will drink well from early on. Good juice. 2015-2027. **87.**

**2011 Savigny-lès-Beaune “les Goudelettes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

As I observed last year, the *lieu à dit* of Les Goudelettes is located at the far end of the Savigny *vignoble*, as one heads out of town the direction of Bouilland, and the domaine’s vines here are around forty years of age. The 2011 Goudelettes has turned out quite well, offering up a superb nose of cherries, red currants, woodsmoke, gamebirds and iron-infused soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely structured, with good acids and fine length and grip on the ripely tannic finish. This will be a lovely village wine and should age very well indeed. 2018-2035+. **89+.**

**2011 Pernand-Vergelesses “Les Vergelesses”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2011 Vergelesses from Domaine Guyon had only been bottled at the start of March (I tasted at the domaine on March 27<sup>th</sup>), but it was showing beautifully. The excellent bouquet offers up scents of cherries, currants, a touch of quail, stony minerality, woodsmoke, fresh herbs and a nice base of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a suave attack, fine mid-palate concentration and a long, well-balanced and chewy finish. Fine juice in the making here! 2020-2045. **90.**

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “Clos du Village”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The Clos du Village, which is a Monopole of Domaine Guyon, is one of the finest-situated Chambolle AC vineyards in the commune, as it lies right in the center of town alongside the superb premier cru of les Cras. The 2011 had been bottled at the end of January and seemed to have recovered nicely by the time I was tasting it at the end of March, offering up a pure and classy nose of red and black cherries, a touch of lavender, woodsmoke, gentle notes of gamebird and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely structured, with a velvety attack, a good core, and a long, tangy and ripely tannic finish. This will be a very fine village wine in six or seven years. 2020-2045. **90.**

**2011 Chambolle-Musigny “les Cras”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

This is from the *villages* section of the vineyard, rather than the premier cru section, and the 2011 has turned out very well indeed. The wine was bottled at the start of February and showing fine potential at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a fine and quite minerally precise bouquet of cherries, red plums, quail, complex minerality, a bit of lavender again and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and classy, with lovely mid-palate concentration, ripe, suave tannins and really impressive mineral drive (particularly for a village wine) on the long and focused finish. This is very good juice! 2020-2045+. **90+.**

**2011 Gevrey-Chambertin “la Justice”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2011 la Justice from Domaine Guyon had only been bottled a few days before my visit and was still a bit shaken from the *mise*, but underneath its agitation is clearly a wine that is going to be very good. The bouquet is a fine mix of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, woodsmoke, lovely soil tones, a bit of mustard seed and just a hint of oak spice from its new wood. On the palate the wine is a bit chewier today than I suspect it will be when it fully recovers from the *mise*, with its full-bodied format showing lovely nascent complexity, a good core and focus, and a long, ripely tannic and tangy finish.

Today this is quite long and backwards, but I am sure that the chewy nature of the wine is simply a reflection of its very recent bottling and it should eventually show more of a suave structural façade similar to the two Chambolle *villages* bottlings once it has gotten some distance out from the *mise*. 2019-2040+. **89-90+**.

**2011 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2011 Volnay “Clos des Chênes” from Domaine Guyon had only been bottled the day before my visit and was too upset from its bottling to really take a proper note on at the time of my visit. That said, this has consistently been my favorite example of this great vineyard after the version from the Lafarge family and I am sure that the 2011 will be outstanding. The wine is very deep and pure, with a lovely base of soil, fine focus and soil signature on the backend and despite my catching this wine at an inopportune time, I have utter confidence that it will be a lovely version in this vintage.

**2011 Aloxe-Corton “les Fournières”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2011 les Fournières had only been in bottle a month at the time of my visit, but was nicely bounced back from its *mise* and showing well. The deep and classy bouquet offers up a youthful blend of red and black cherries, venison, coffee, fresh herb tones, a deep base of soil and just a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven, with a fine core, ripe tannins and a long, tangy and youthful finish. This will need seven or eight years in the cellar to really blossom, but it will be a lovely wine and a superb value. 2020-2045+. **90**.

**2011 Aloxe-Corton “les Vercots”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The Guyons’ parcel of les Vercots is comprised of vines of two ages, with half the parcel now reaching the serious age of twenty-five years of age and the other half a bit older at age thirty-seven. As I noted last year, les Vercots has deeper soils than les Fournières, with a bit more clay and limestone, as opposed to the stonier Silex of les Fournières, and so this wine tends to be a bit more powerfully styled out of the blocks, and on top of this, in 2011, this was bottled in mid-February and was only six weeks removed from its *mise*. However, the wine was showing lovely potential in its aromatic mélange of red and black cherries, red currants, bonfires, stony soil tones, coffee and just a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and chewy, with lovely mid-palate concentration, bright acids and very good length and grip on the moderately tannic finish. Good juice in the making and another excellent value for the cellar. 2022-2045+. **90+**.

**2011 Corton “Bressandes”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2011 Corton “Bressandes” from Domaine Antonin Guyon was also bottled mid-February, but was showing outstanding potential at the time of my visit. The pure and classy nose offers up a youthful blend of red and black cherries, a complex base of stony soil tones, gamebirds, a touch of nutskin, coffee and a stylish base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and sappy at the core, with ripe, sturdy tannins, good acidity and focus and a very long, ripely tannic and classic finish. An excellent young Corton in the making. 2025-2065. **94**.

**2011 Corton “Clos du Roy”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

Half of Domaine Guyon’s parcel in Clos du Roy is planted with ninety year-old vines and these old vines have contributed to a superb young bottle in the making. The exceptional nose wafts from the glass in a youthful mix of red plums, red and black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee, nutskins, a whisper of the coriander to come and a lovely

base of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and ripely tannic, with fine focus and mid-palate depth, nascent complexity and a very long, ripely tannic and classy finish. Superb juice. 2-25-2065. **94.**



*The hill of Corton seen in early morning sunlight from the vineyards of Savigny.*

### **2011 Charmes-Chambertin- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

Domaine Guyon's fine example of Charmes-Chambertin was bottled at the end of January and was showing very well at the time of my visit. The deep and beautiful nose offers up a lovely constellation of plums, red and black cherries, cocoa, a hint of grilled meat, and elegant base of soil and a stylish framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure, with a lovely core of sappy fruit, a nice sense of reserve, ripe tannins and a very long, focused and tangy finish. This is high class juice. 2022-2060. **93+.**

### ***Vins Blancs***

#### **2011 Bourgogne Blanc- Dominique Guyon**

Previously, Domaine Guyon labeled this wine as Haut Côte de Nuits Blanc, but have simplified the label in 2011 to simply Bourgogne Blanc, which I think makes sense as it is far easier for entry level Burgundy drinkers to comprehend. The 2011 is quite pretty on both the nose and palate, offering up a bouquet of lemon, crab apples, dusty minerality and a topnote of citrus peel. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and

snappy, with a solid core and a good, long and quite soil-driven finish. Very good for its level. 2013-2020. **87.**

**2011 Pernand Vergelesses “Sous Frétilles” Blanc- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

I often think of this wine as a baby Corton-Charlemagne and the 2011 version is once again a superb wine and a simply stunning value! The excellent nose jumps from the glass in a blend of lime, pear, chalky minerality, a touch of iodine, vanillin oak and a gentle topnote of lilacs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully mineral in personality, with an excellent core, crisp acids and outstanding focus and grip on the very long and zesty finish. A great, great value and a very classy wine! 2013-2025+. **90.**

**2011 Puligny-Montrachet “les Pucelles”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

This year we tasted the Pucelles ahead of the Charmes Dessus- which may be a reflection of the relative merits of the two bottlings in 2011 in the minds of the team at Domaine Guyon, though I always find both cuvées absolutely exemplary versions of these two magnificent *terroirs*. The 2011 Guyon Pucelles offers up a superb nose of apple, pear, complex, chalky soil tones, citrus zest, a dollop of iodine and a lovely base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and racy, with a lovely core, excellent focus and grip and a very long, snappy finish that closes with outstanding mineral drive. This is a dynamite version of Pucelles and will make any serious connoisseur of white Burgundy proud to have in the cellar! 2016-2040. **93.**

**2011 Meursault “Charmes Dessus”- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

The 2011 Charmes Dessus is also superb *chez* Guyon, as it offers up a very vibrant and classy bouquet of lime, apple, almond, a fair bit of iodine, a superb base of complex minerality and a very stylish framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very soil-driven, with excellent mid-palate intensity, lovely focus and balance and a very long, laser-like and vibrant finish. What a beautiful bottle of Meursault “Charmes”! 2016-2040. **94.**

**2011 Corton-Charlemagne- Domaine Antonin Guyon**

These days, one of my absolutely favorite examples of Corton-Charlemagne is being crafted here at Domaine Guyon and the 2011 is a brilliant wine in the making. The stunning bouquet is a youthful mélange of lime zest, apple, pear, a veritable mineral bat of this great *terroir*, iodine, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and youthful, with a rock solid core, great cut and grip and a very long, pure and gloriously focused finish. One does not have to buy their Corton-Charlemagne from Coche-Dury or Bonneau du Martray to get pure magic in the bottle, and for those looking for an utterly profound example of Corton Charlie, the 2011 from Domaine Guyon will be an excellent choice! 2020-2060. **95+.**

**Beaune**

**Maison Champy (Beaune)**

*This was my first visit to Maison Champy and I arrived at a rather inopportune time to taste the red wines here, as the vast majority had been bottled four to six weeks prior to my arrival- which had given them plenty of time to shut down and were rather cranky about being opened so soon after they were just bottled. I always have this image that a wine right after bottling is like a person who has spent its entire youth living in the grand style of a rambling country home (life in barrel) and then is rudely awakened to*

*life in a tiny, studio apartment of the kind we specialize in here in New York (life in bottle). After a while, the wine starts to become accustomed to its much smaller confines, but the transition period can be a bit difficult. I caught most of the Maison Champy reds in this transition period, and it was really difficult to get a good read on where they are headed- though they are probably going to be just lovely examples once they have settled in after the mise. Generally, the team at Maison Champy chapitalized all of their 2011 red wines about a full degree in alcohol and the wines received about a ten day “cold soak” prior to the onset of alcoholic fermentation. As this was my first visit to the domaine, it seems inappropriate to rate the red wines here when viewed through the prism of such and awkward moment- though many of the wines showed very good potential- as I would prefer to have a bit of a sense of the wines before having a go at judging them at such a moment after the bottling. On the other hand, the white wines here were absolutely singing at the time of my visit and did not have any issues, so I have contented myself for this report with writing proper notes only on the white wines from the 2011 vintage at Maison Champy. I will plan to add Maison Champy to my November itinerary to taste through their 2012s at a better moment in their evolutions. I should note that the wines from Domaine de Clos de la Chapelle in Volnay (please see below) are also made here at Maison Champy, but these wines had been bottled in September of 2012 and were much more removed from their own mise and were singing at the time of my late March visit, so they are reviewed below.*

#### **2011 Pernand-Vergelesses Blanc- Maison Champy**

The 2011 Pernand AC Blanc from Maison Champy is a very pretty wine that will drink well right out of the blocks. The wine offers up a lovely bouquet of apple, a touch of lime, chalky, stony soil tones, beeswax and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and nicely transparent, with lovely focus and grip on the long and bouncy finish. This really is a very good bottle of *villages* level white Burgundy. 2013-2025. **89.**

#### **2011 Pernand-Vergelesses “les Combottes” Blanc- Maison Champy**

The les Combottes bottling from Maison Champy is also a *villages* level wine, rather than a premier cru, and it is a bit more soil-driven than the straight Pernand Blanc bottling. The stylish nose wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, chalky minerality, beeswax and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven in personality, with a fine core of fruit (and a bit more depth than the above), bright acids and excellent length and grip on the zesty finish. I would opt for giving this wine a year in the cellar to allow some of its secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Good juice. 2014-2030. **89+.**

#### **2011 Pernand-Vergelesses “en Caradeux” Blanc- Maison Champy**

The vineyard of en Caradeux can be both premier cru or *villages* level, but I believe that the Champy holdings are in the larger, premier cru section of the vineyard (I should have asked and written this down in my notes, but I am new at this!) and the 2011 is excellent. The wine delivers a bouquet of white peach, apple, chalky soil tones, white flowers, orange peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite suave on the attack, with a good core of fruit, sound acids and lovely balance on the long, open and focused finish. This will drink beautifully from release and should be a very fine value. 2013-2030. **90.**

### **2011 Pernand-Vergelesses “Sous Frétille” Blanc- Maison Champy**

I have really been impressed by the bottling of Sous Frétille produced by Domaine Antonin Guyon in Savigny, and I can now add the excellent wine made from this vineyard by Maison Champy to my list of great “insider white Burgundies”. The 2011 version from Maison Champy is a stellar wine, with plenty of Corton-Charlemagne character in its aromatic mix of pear, lime, orange peel, deep minerality, a touch of *crème patissière* and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very mineral in profile, with excellent mid-palate depth, bright acids and excellent length and grip on the focused finish that closes with a lovely synthesis of citrus zest and minerality. This is very high class juice! 2013-2025+. **92.**

### **2011 Beaune “Reversées” Blanc- Maison Champy**

After the superb minerality of the last couple of Pernand Blanc bottlings, the 2011 Beaune “Reversées” Blanc from Maison Champy comes off as quite fruit-driven and not quite in the same league. I suspect that these are still pretty young vines (but I am not certain of this), as the wine offers up a nose of apple, peach, a touch of crab apple, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, fruity and pretty simple, with sound acids and okay length on the fairly four-square finish. This is a perfectly respectable, everyday quaffer, but it pales in comparison to all of the Pernand Blanc bottlings. 2013-2020. **86.**

### **2011 Corton-Charlemagne- Maison Champy**

Maison Champy’s Corton-Charlemagne is raised in one-third new oak (four new barrels out of twelve) and it is a very promising young example. The wine is quite closed down (probably bottled much later than the other white wines here), but shows lovely potential in its bouquet of lime, pear, apple, stony minerality, white flowers, orange zest and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and nicely reserved in profile, with a rock solid core, excellent focus and balance, crisp acids and outstanding backend mineral drive on the long and primary finish. This will be outstanding. 2017-2035+. **93.**

## ***Volnay***

### **Domaine Clos de la Chapelle (Volnay)**

*As I noted back in Issue 38, when reviewing the 2010s, Domaine Clos de la Chapelle is a new domaine in name only, having been previously known as Domaine Louis Boillot up until a year ago (not to be confused with the other Domaine Louis Boillot, based now in Chambolle-Musigny), when an American Burgundy lover, Mark O’Connell, purchased the tiny estate and renamed it after its small monopole vineyard, the Clos de la Chapelle. The domaine’s vineyards are farmed on a day to day basis and the wines made at Maison Champy in Beaune, and this is where I tasted these fine 2011s. In addition to the small monopole premier cru of Clos de la Chapelle, the estate also owns parcels in the Volnay premier cru of Carelle Sous la Chapelle and the fine Pommard premier cru of Chanlins. In total, the domaine only comprises 1.25 hectares of vines. The Clos de la Chapelle sits just on the southern edge of the Clos de la Bousse d’Or, with a slightly higher elevation than its more famous neighbor and a very refined base of soil. The vineyards had been farmed organically for the last several years of the Boillot’s tenure, and since Monsieur O’Connell has purchased the estate, they are in the process of conversion to biodynamique farming. The vines here are old, with both the*



*parcel in Carelle Sous la Chapelle and the Clos de la Chapelle over fifty years of age, and the plot in Chanlins in excess of eighty years old- a true Vieilles Vignes! I know that the 2010s here had all been destemmed, but did not ask if any whole cluster fermentation was used for the 2011s, as it is the plan here to use some stems when the vintage conditions favor this approach. My assumption is that these wines were also chapitalized about one degree, as were the other reds in the Champy cellars from 2011. I am not sure why the Domaine Clos de la Chapelle wines are all bottled earlier than the other red wines in the Maison Champy cellars, but this worked out advantageously for me at the time of my visit on March 26<sup>th</sup>, as these three wines were fully recovered from their bottling, whereas the other Champy reds were still in that shut down and cantankerous stage that makes them hard to get a solid read on for the future. These are really lovely 2011s and should be on every Volnay lover's shopping list!*

**2011 Volnay “Carelle Sous la Chapelle”- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

The 2011 Carelle Sous la Chapelle from Domaine Clos de la Chapelle was raised in one-third new oak in this vintage (all François Frères barrels from Alliers) and the wine was bottled in September of 2012. The bouquet is outstanding, offering up a superb and precise mélange of red plums, black cherries, cocoa, gamebirds, a lovely base of soil and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and focused, with lovely soil drive, a good core, ripe tannins and a long, classy and moderately tannic finish. Fine juice. 2018-2040. **91.**

**2011 Volnay “Clos de la Chapelle” (Monopole)- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

As I noted last year, the Clos de la Chapelle lies right next door to the Clos de la Bousse d’Or in the center of Volnay. At one point it was part of the Clos de la Bousse d’Or, but sometime back in the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, the wall that separates it from the Clos de la Bousse d’Or was built, and it was already a separate vineyard by the time Louis Boillot purchased it in 1865. The 2011 is a superb follow-up to the stellar 2010 version, wafting from the glass in a cool and reserved, but quite complex aromatic constellation of red and black cherries, a hint of red currant, gamebird, coffee, woodsmoke excellent soil tones, fresh herbs and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and intensely flavored, with a lovely core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, fine-grained tannins and lovely length and grip on the soil-driven and very classy finish. This is a beautiful wine in the making. 2019-2045. **92+.**

**2011 Pommard “Chanlins” Vieilles Vignes- Domaine Clos de la Chapelle**

The domaine’s eighty-plus year-old vines in Chanlins have produced a stellar example of the 2011 vintage, as the wine offers up a superb bouquet of cherries, quince, woodsmoke, lovely minerality, cocoa, herb tones and just a touch of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very elegant (particularly for young Pommard), with a very good core of fruit, fine focus, ripe and suave tannins and great transparency on the long and youthful finish. Chanlins seems to often produce one of the most elegant examples of Pommard and this is certainly in evidence in the lovely 2011 from Domaine Clos de la Chapelle. 2020-2050. **92+.**

## **Pommard**

### **Château de Pommard (Pommard)**

*The Cellar Master at Château de Pommard, Emmanuel Sala, elected to chapitalize the range here about one full degree this year, which has given a slightly more opulent rendition of the vintage, but perhaps at the price of the precision of terroir that is found in the collections of those who opted to accept the size and shape of the vintage with a bit less reservation. That said, the grand vin here should be quite attractive and a fine follow-up to the very good examples of the 2008 and 2010 that were opened to compare with the young 2011 that was still sitting in barrel at the time of my visit. The 2011 Monthelie “la Riotte” from the domaine had already been assembled in tank in preparation for bottling soon after Easter, and was not particularly happy to be sampled at the time of my visit and I have scored that wine within a range. The Château de Pommard bottling is really spot on these days and one of the serious sleepers to be found in the Côte de Beaune these days, with a personality that very much reflects its close proximity to the premier cru of Epenots and all three vintages that I tasted of the wine on this visit were showing lovely potential.*

### **2011 Monthelie “la Riotte”- Château de Pommard**

The 2011 Monthelie “la Riotte” from Château de Pommard had already been racked into *cuve* in preparation for bottling later on in the spring, and the wine was really cold coming out of tank when we sampled it and very hard to get a proper read on as a result. The nose offers up a blend of cherries, a touch of blueberries, chocolate and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, focused and modestly tannic, with a nice, broad attack, but just a touch of a dip in the mid-palate. It is a good wine with solid length and grip, but it was in a tough temperature for tasting. 2018-2035. **86-88.**

### **2011 Pommard- Château de Pommard**

All of the samples of the *grand vin* were still sitting in new oak that we tasted on this trip, but the finished wine will have decidedly less than one hundred percent new wood in the blend (probably between forty and fifty percent new wood will ultimately be used for the wine). We tasted several of the individual components and then an approximation of the final blend, from which this note was gleaned. The bouquet is deep, full and complex, offering up scents of plums, cherries, coffee, incipient notes of gamebirds, a fine base of soil and plenty of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite suave on the attack, with a good core and a long, chewy and well-balanced finish. With its full degree of chapitalization, this has nicely plump fruit, but perhaps will never have the same soil drive as the superb 2008 version. But, a good result. 2020-2045+. **91+.**

### **2010 Pommard- Château de Pommard**

The 2010 Château de Pommard is really a lovely wine, offering up a deep and refined nose of cherries, plums, raw cocoa, a superb base of soil tones, a bit of squab, woodsmoke and a nice base of cedar (forty percent new oak was ultimately used for the *grand vin* in this vintage). On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripely tannic, with a fine core of fruit, superb elegance on the attack, ripe tannins and a very long, nascently complex and quite pure finish. Fine, fine juice. 2022-2050. **92+.**

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

I have been very, very impressed with the size and shape of the 2008 Château de Pommard ever since I first tasted the wine, and it remains every bit as refined and soil-driven as it has been since day one and has to be one of the best values out there! The lovely nose offers up an open and very transparent aromatic mélange of cherries, red plums, a touch of venison, blossoming notes of *sous bois*, coffee, mustard seed and a nice touch of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and soil-driven, with a lovely core, ripe, suave tannins, tangy acids and excellent focus and grip on the long and classy finish. This is still several years away from primetime drinking, but it is a superb example of the vintage. 2020-2050+. **92+**.

## **Domaine Parent (Pommard)**

*This was my first visit to Domaine Parent, as I have been thinking for several years now that I am really not visiting enough domaines in this village and that there must be plenty of good wines from Pommard that I have been missing out on by not seeing more domaines here. This is an important and historic estate in Pommard, having been started at the outset of the nineteenth century and now run by the sisters, Anne Parent and Catherine Fages-Parent. Anne Parent is responsible for the winemaking and vineyard work here, while her sister Catherine is in charge of the business side of the domaine. Anne arrived to take over for her brother, François Parent, in the cellars in 1998 and has continued to refine her skills with each passing vintage. The domaine covers over nine and half hectares, with a brace of excellent holdings in Pommard augmented by parcels in Beaune “Epenottes” and Corton “Renardes”, as well as a bit of Corton Blanc and some Bourgogne rouge and blanc parcels. For the premier crus, there is a fair bit of new oak used here, with the Beaune “Epenottes” raised in forty percent new wood and the Pommard premier crus in fifty percent new oak. The two grand cru Corton bottlings are both raised entirely in new oak. I had a lovely visit with Anne Parent during my March trip, as we worked through the domaine’s lineup of their 2011s and a few of the bottled 2010s as well. The harvest began here on September 1<sup>st</sup> of 2011. I did not think to ask Madame Parent if and how much she might have chapitalized in this vintage. The Parent cellars are deep and quite cold, so the malos this year were quite late and the wines will start out life properly structured and chewy- as a young Pommard ought to be- but, the domaine’s wines have always had a good reputation for aging very well and the 2011 vintage here seemed quite promising.*

## **Vins Rouges**

### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Parent**

Most of the parcels for the Domaine Parent Bourgogne *rouge* bottling hail from vines in Volnay, with some entitled to Volnay *villages* status, but used in the Bourgogne. This had already been bottled prior to my visit, as the wine was bottled in early February and had six weeks to start to recover before I tasted the wine. The pretty nose offers up scents of cherries, quince, nice minerality and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is medium-full, young and fairly chewy, with fine focus and a good backbone of tannins and acids to carry it in the cellar. This will need at least a few years to soften and will probably be at its peak about age seven or eight. A fine example. 2016-2025+. **87**.

### **2011 Beaune “Epenottes”- Domaine Parent**

Epenottes is right on the Beaune-Pommard border (a continuation of Epenots from the Pommard side) and is one of the sturdiest of the premier crus in Beaune. This had also been bottled prior to my visit, as the *mise* for this wine took place in mid-February and the wine was still pretty shut down from the bottling. The bouquet offers up a reserved blend of red and black cherries, game, woodsmoke, herbs, dark soil tones and a bit of spicy new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite closed, with a very good core, chewy tannins and fine length and grip. This seems a bit rustic today, but that may well just be a reflection of it being tasted so soon after its bottling. 2020-2045+? **86-88+?**

### **2011 Pommard “la Croix Blanche”- Domaine Parent**

The *lieu à dit* of la Croix Blanche lies right below Grands Epenots, on soils that are quite similar to those of Grands Epenots and are also found in this section of the vineyards of Château de Pommard, which abut the vineyard of la Croix Blanche. The Parents’ parcel of vines here is now over thirty-five years of age. The bouquet on the 2011 is reserved, but quite promising in its mélange of cherries, quince, vinesmoke, a good base of soil, coffee and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite broad-shouldered, with a good core of fruit, ripe tannins and a long, youthful and sturdy finish. This will need some time, but it will be a very good example and certainly of premier cru quality at its apogee. 2020-2050. **88-89.**

### **2011 Pommard “les Argillières”- Domaine Parent**

The 2011 Pommard “les Argillières” from Domaine Parent is a fine bottle in the making, with these thirty-five year-old vines producing a very classically styled, full-bodied Pommard. The bouquet is a youthful blend of black cherries, venison, woodsmoke, a fine base of soil, mustard seed and a deft framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and nascently complex, with a good core, tangy acids and fine focus and grip on the long and ripely tannic finish. Good juice in the making. 2021-2050. **90+.**

### **2011 Pommard “Chanlins”- Domaine Parent**

I love the Chanlins vineyard, which is one of the most elegant premier crus to be found in Pommard (due to the relatively high percentage of limestone in the soils here), but these are some of the youngest vines currently in the Parent patrimony of vineyard holdings, as the parcel just celebrated its fifteenth birthday in 2011. The bouquet is tight and youthfully promising, wafting from the glass in a mix of cherries, quince, coffee, fresh herb tones, gamebirds, vinesmoke, nice minerality and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and quite soil-driven in personality, with sturdy tannins, again, very good acids and fine focus on the long and chewy finish. Despite this being relatively young vines, the 2011 Parent Chanlins is excellent and shows lovely potential. 2022-2050+. **90+.**

### **2011 Pommard “les Chaponnières”- Domaine Parent**

The Pommard “les Chaponnières” from Domaine Parent is produced from the oldest vines that the estate currently owns, with these seventy-five year-old, gnarled specimens producing a truly excellent wine in 2011. The deep, pure and classy nose offers up scents of red and black cherries, quince, woodsmoke, herb tones, raw cocoa, a fine and complex base of soil and spicy oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent, nascent complexity, lovely focus and balance,

firm, ripe tannins and a very long, youthful and promising finish. This is going to be excellent, but it is going to need every bit of a decade to start to really blossom. 2023-2060. **92+**.

#### **2011 Pommard “Epenots”- Domaine Parent**

Domaine Parent’s Epenots bottling is a fifty-fifty blend of wine from parcels in Grands Epenots and Petits Epenots, with the vines in both parcels well over thirty years of age at the present time. This too is going to be excellent in 2011, as it offers up a deep and black fruity nose of excellent potential, with scents of black cherries, dark berries, French roast, a superb base of soil, herbs, vinesmoke and cedar wafting from the glass. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and youthfully reserved, with broad shoulders, firm tannins, good acids and a very long, focused and still very chewy finish. This is more hunkered down at the present time than the lovely Chaponnières, and it is hard to say today if it will quite catch that superb wine in the fullness of time. 2025-2060+. **91-92.**



#### **2011 Corton “Renardes”- Domaine Parent**

The 2011 Corton “Renardes” from Domaine Parent is an excellent wine in the making, with these approximately thirty-five year-old vines really doing a nice job in this vintage. The young and superb nose offers up a mix of red and black cherries, stony soil tones, venison, coriander seed, coffee and plenty of cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a rock solid core, superb focus and balance, firm, ripe tannins and a very long, primary and tangy finish. This wine is

impeccably balanced, but I still get the sense that it gains nothing from its aging entirely in new wood and I would love to see this wine in the future raised in fifty percent new oak, as it is already plenty sturdy from its true Corton character and might show even a more profound signature of this magical *terroir* with less new wood. But, that said, this wine is very, very well-made and will blossom into a superb example of Renardes. 2023-2060+. **92-93+**.

**2010 Pommard “les Chaponnières”- Domaine Parent**

The 2010 Chaponnières from Anne Parent is a lovely young wine, offering up a complex and very pure bouquet of cherries, red plums, quince, coriander, gamebirds, a complex base of soil and a deft framing of cedary oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and chewy, with the elegance of the vintage very much in evidence on the attack, fine mid-palate concentration, lovely focus and plenty of grip and chewy, ripe tannins on the long finish. The wine develops lovely notes of fresh herbs with a bit of aeration and will prove to be an excellent example of the vintage. 2022-2060+. **92-93**.

**2010 Pommard “Epenots”- Domaine Parent**

The 2010 Epenots from Domaine Parent is quite a bit more shut down at the present time than the 2010 Chaponnières. The reticent nose reluctantly offers up a mix of cherries, a touch of dark berry, woodsmoke, French roast, herb tones, complex soil nuances and cedar. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nascently complex, with a rock solid core, tangy acids and a very long, balanced and firmly tannic finish. This is going to be a long-distance runner and will need at least another dozen years of cellaring to really start to blossom. 2025-2075. **91-93**.

***Vins Blancs***

**2011 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Parent**

The Domaine Parent Bourgogne Blanc had been bottled in the middle of January and was showing quite well at the time of my visit. The wine is raised entirely in stainless steel tanks. The bouquet is a very pretty blend of green apple, lemon, chalky soil tones, white flowers and a touch of citrus peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and crisp, with a good core, tangy acids and good length and grip on the well-balanced finish. A very good bottle of Bourgogne Blanc. 2013-2020. **87**.

**2011 Corton Blanc- Domaine Parent**

The Corton Blanc from Anne Parent is made from a parcel of vines that are now twenty-three years of age and the wine is raised in a very generous one hundred percent new oak. The first vintage of this bottling produced by the domaine was in 1996. Madame Parent gives the wines three weeks of *battonage* early on, and then desists and does no more stirring of the lees for the remainder of the *elevage*. The 2011 spent sixteen months in barrel and was bottled in mid-February, so it had only had about six weeks of recovery time prior to my visit. The bouquet is deep and youthfully complex, offering up scents of lime, green apple, flinty, chalky minerality, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, young and rock solid at the core, with fine focus and very good cut and grip on the long and chewy finish. This is a fine bottle that should start to drink nicely with a few years of bottle age. 2016-2030+. **91+**.

## **Auxey-Duresses**

### **Domaine Diconne (Auxey-Duresses)**

*I had never previously visited Domaine Diconne in Auxey-Duresses, but I knew their wines a bit from my sommelier days here in Manhattan, and had sold some of their wines from the vintages of the mid-1990s once upon a time. As I had finished up my appointment at Domaine Lafouge before lunch time and was driving by Domaine Diconne, I thought I might just stop in and ask for a business card so I could contact Monsieur Diconne on my next trip and make an appointment to taste in the cellars. Graciously, as he had another appointment scheduled for late that morning (and who were a bit delayed), he offered to let me taste through the lineup of 2011s without an appointment and I was able to get notes on these very good wines one vintage ahead of plans! Christophe Diconne is now in charge of the winemaking here at the estate, having taken over for his father, Jean-Pierre, several years ago. The wines are quite good in the sturdy, structured style that I remember from the mid-1990s, and my limited experience showed them to age quite well back in the day and I would imagine this would also be the case with the 2011s here. They are not quite as suave and complex as the wines of Domaine Lafouge- who is my very top estate in Auxey-Duresses these days (and one of my absolute favorites in the entire Côte de Beaune), but Christophe Diconne's wines show a lovely fidelity to their underlying soils and are really quite well-made wines. There are a lot of old vines here. The 2011 white wines had been bottled two weeks before my visit on March 27<sup>th</sup>, but were still showing very well (probably not having really shut down in the wake of the *mise*) and the red wines in the cellar had been assembled into tank and were scheduled to be bottled during the month of April. Ironically, it was the white wines that were more on form at the time of my visit- perhaps the reds had recently had their sulfurs adjusted in preparation for the bottling? So, I have scored the reds within a range to be fair to the wines, as I did catch them at a slightly awkward moment and I do not have any recent experience with the domaine's wines to base more precise guesses on how the reds here will develop. But, there are some good wines to be found here and I am looking forward to my next visit.*

## **Vins Blancs**

### **2011 Auxey-Duresses Blanc “Cuvée Terres Folles”- Domaine Diconne**

Despite having been bottled only a fortnight ago, the 2011 Terres Folles Blanc was showing quite well at the time of my visit, offering up a pretty bouquet of apple, quince, chalky soil tones, almond blossoms and just a hint of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, long and soil-driven, with good grip and cut on the long and well-balanced finish. A lovely village wine. 2013-2025. **88.**

### **2011 Auxey-Duresses Blanc “Cuvée Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Diconne**

The 2011 Cuvée Vieilles Vignes from Domaine Diconne is made up of seventy year-old vines and is raised in fifteen percent new oak. This was a bit more shut down post-*mise* than the Terres Folles bottling, but showed lovely raw materials and will be a lovely example of the vintage with a bit of bottle age. The reserved nose offers up scents of apple, pear, a lovely base of limestone minerality, citrus blossoms, a touch of Meursault-like almond tones and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and nascently complex, with a fine core, crisp acids and lovely focus on the long and zesty finish. This is a very fine bottling. 2015-2030+. **90.**

### **2011 Meursault “Narvaux”- Domaine Diconne**

The 2011 Meursault “Narvaux” from the Diconne family is a lovely example of this fine *climat*, offering up a classy bouquet of pear, lime blossoms, hazelnut, a hint of iodine, stony soil tones and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved in style, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids and fine focus and grip on the long and snappy finish. I really like the cut and the backend minerality here. Good juice. 2015-2030+. **90.**

### **2011 Meursault “Clos des Luchets”- Domaine Diconne**

The Clos des Luchets is a monopole of Domaine Diconne and is planted with very old vines, with most of the vines fully seventy-five years of age today and a small slice of the vineyard celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2011! The wine is excellent, offering up a pure and complex nose of apple, pear, hazelnut, a fine base of complex soil tones, a touch of orange peel and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nicely reserved, with a fine core, very good focus and balance and excellent grip and cut on the long finish. This is very good juice. 2015-2035. **91+.**

### ***Vins Rouges***

#### **2011 Auxey-Duresses Rouge- Domaine Diconne**

The 2011 Auxey AC had been assembled in tank in September, and is comprised of two-thirds vines in excess of sixty years of age and one-third a very respectable thirty-eight years old. The wine was a bit cranky at the time of my visit and seemed just a touch rustic structurally, but perhaps that was just the stage it was in right before the bottling. The nose is a blend of cherries, smoke, gamebirds and a good base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, closed and chewy, with solid length and grip, but not showing a whole lot of style at the present time. Maybe I just caught the wine at an awkward moment? 2016-2035. **85-87+.**

#### **2011 Auxey-Duresses Rouge “Grands Champs”- Domaine Diconne**

The 2011 Grands Champs from Christophe Diconne was showing a bit better than the *villages* at the time of my visit, with more obvious depth and harmony on the palate. The bouquet is a blend of cherries, quince, vinesmoke, a touch of gamebird, a sound base of soil and just a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and ripely tannic, with a good core and very good length and grip. Again, this is not showing a whole lot of polish right now, but it may again just be the stage it is in at the present time. 2017-2035+. **87-88+.**

#### **2011 Auxey-Duresses Rouge “les Duresses”- Domaine Diconne**

The Diconne family’s plot of vines in this excellent premier cru are fully ninety-three years of age, and this is quite obviously the pick of the litter amongst the red wines in the cellar this year. The deep and serious nose offers up scents of cherries, red plums, chalky minerality, gamebirds, woodsmoke and a deft framing of new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and nascently complex, with fine focus, ripe tannins, a very good core of fruit and a long, youthful and promising finish. This has real stuffing and potential! 2017-2035+. **89-90+.**



### **Domaine Gilles Lafouge (Auxey-Duresses)**

*The Domaine Lafouge 2011s were showing very well at the end of March, with the reds all having been bottled and the white wines still assembled in tank and waiting bottling soon after Easter. Only the Auxey-Duresses “les Hautés” Blanc was chapitalized in 2011, as the others had sufficiently fine balance at their lower octanes to be deemed just fine by Gilles Lafouge at the alcohol levels nature gave in this year- generally in the 12.5 percent range- give or take a couple of tenths of a percent in either direction. The estate has been on quite a hot streak since I first began visiting here seven or eight years ago (and probably always were outstanding) and each year I gain more respect for just how special these utterly classic red and white Burgundies can be, and the 2011s are yet again another very, very strong set of wines. As I noted last year, The Lafouge family have been part of the fabric of life in Auxey-Duresses for three generations now, and they were one of the first families in the village to estate bottle their wines, which they began doing in 1929. Gilles Lafouge is currently heading the family estate, but he continues to work alongside his father, Jean Lafouge, running this superb domaine. The family owns ten hectare of vines, with parcels located primarily in Auxey-Duresses (both rouge and blanc) and Meursault, though there is also a small slice of the premier cru Pommard “Chanlins” as well. The wines are always very soil-driven in personality, with both the reds and the whites being raised in twenty-five percent new oak casks. The whites here are treated to one year in cask, after which they are racked into tank and allowed to settle for several months prior to bottling. I did not taste the 2011 Meursault “Casse Têtes” during this visit- I cannot recall why now and my notes do not indicate whey it was not shown- but, I assume that it had recently had its sulfur adjusted in preparation for bottling. The reds here are equally lovely, soil-driven and beautifully balanced wines, with red fruity personalities of great purity and balance, and the ability to drink well early on and yet age gracefully for at least fifteen to twenty years, (obviously longer in the case of the Pommard “Chanlins”). Domaine Lafouge is clearly one of the most consistently excellent estates to be found in Burgundy today, and for those intrepid enough to look a bit further afield than the best-known villages, there are some absolute cellar treasures waiting here from the 2011 vintage.*

### **Vins Blancs**

#### **2011 Auxey-Duresses Blanc “les Hautés”- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The Auxey-Duresses “les Hautés” Blanc is a beautifully situated *climat*, lying right alongside the border of Meursault and the 2011 has turned out quite well indeed, with its racy and precise personality in no ways indicative that it was chapitalized. The very pretty bouquet offers up scents of pear, white peach, fresh almonds, chalky and a touch of orange blossom in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and complex, with a lovely core, ripe acids and fine length and grip on the classy finish. A lovely example that will drink very well right out of the blocks. 2013-2025. **89.**

#### **2011 Auxey-Duresses Blanc “les Boutonniers”- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The vineyard of les Boutonniers lies next door to the fine Meursault *lieu à dit* of Meix Chavaux, and the wine is really strong in 2011. The deep and vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a blend of tart orange, lime, pear, a lovely base of complex minerality, white flowers and a delicate framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very precise, with a fine core, racy acids and lovely focus and grip on the very

long and classy finish. This is one of the absolute steals of the vintage in white Burgundy! 2014-2035. **91.**

**2011 Meursault- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

As I noted last year, the Lafouges' Meursault *villages* bottling hails from sixty to seventy year-old vines in the two *lieux à dits* of Aux Moulin Landin (which lies just downslope from Grands Charrons) and Le Clous (which is sandwiched between Tillets and Vireuils at the top of the slope). The old vines and the superb location of these two parcels explain why this is such a fine wine year in and year out, and the 2011 is another very strong and racy bottle of Meursault. The very pretty bouquet offers up a wide open blend of apple, pear, hazelnut, spring flowers and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved in profile, with a sound core of fruit, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the classy finish. Good juice. 2014-2030. **89+.**

**2011 Meursault "Meix Chavaux"- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The Lafouge parcel in Meix Chavaux of eighty-three year-old vines is consistently one of my favorite *lieux à dits* bottlings in Meursault, and the 2011 is really outstanding. The purity and elegance of the vintage are very much in evidence in the superb nose, as it offers up scents of lime, apple, pear, almonds, vibrant minerality, a touch of vanillin oak and a lovely topnote of citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and racy, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, zesty acids and a refined, long and youthful finish. A superb bottle! 2016-2035. **92.**

***Vins Rouges***

**2011 Auxey-Duresses Rouge- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The 2011 Auxey-Duresses AC *rouge* was bottled in December of 2012 and was nicely recovered at the end of March. This is a very pretty, forward and transparent example of the vintage that will drink well right from the start, but has the balance to age quite well over the medium-term as well. The lovely, red fruity nose wafts from the glass in a mix of strawberries, cherries, cocoa, a touch of nutskin, lovely soil tones and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is medium-full, pure and nicely focused, with a nice touch of sappiness at the core, modest, suave tannins and lovely length and grip on the complex and open finish. This is a very high class village wine that reminds me quite a bit of the lovely Auxey *rouge* bottlings from Coche-Dury. 2014-2030. **89.**

**2011 Auxey-Duresses Rouge "Climat du Valle"- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The premier cru of Climat du Valle, which lies at the extreme western end of the small band of premier crus in the village, and the 2011 is an extremely strong and classy example of the vintage. The bouquet is more closed down than the 2011 *villages*, but also deeper and inherently more complex, as it offers up scents of red and black cherries, raw cocoa, , fresh herb tones, a superb base of soil and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and reserved, with a fine core of fruit, excellent focus and balance, ripe, modest tannins and excellent grip on the very long and promising finish. This will need four or five years to really blossom and should be a dynamite value! 2018-2040. **90.**

**2011 Auxey-Duresses Rouge "les Duresses"- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The first Lafouge bottling of Les Duresses came in the 1994 vintage, and I have to believe that this has consistently been one of the finest reds in the Côte de Beaune since that day. The 2011 is serious and nicely reserved on both the nose and palate, offering up

a bouquet of red and black cherries, a touch of nutskin, gamebird, a lovely base of soil, a dollop of raw cocoa and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, refined and complex, with a good core, a very soil-driven personality, ripe tannins and fine length and grip on the focused and very promising finish. A superb middleweight in the making. 2018-2040. **91+**.

**2011 Auxey-Duresses Rouge “la Chapelle”- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

As I noted last year, this parcel is made up primarily of old vines, with two-thirds of the plot planted to vines between fifty and seventy years of age, and the other third now reaching a very good age as twenty-two years old. The Lafouges’ 2011 la Chapelle is outstanding and a decidedly more red fruity example of the vintage than the more mixed red and black profile of the les Duresses this year. The very precise and nascently complex nose hops from the glass in a blaze of cherries, blood orange, a touch of vinesmoke, really lovely minerality, roses, citrus zest, nutskins and a gentle touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, complex and beautifully transparent, with a lovely core, fine-grained tannins, tangy acids and beautiful poise and balance on the very long, pure and youthfully superb finish. This is going to be a dynamite bottle of Auxey! 2018-2040. **92+**.

**2011 Pommard “les Chanlins”- Domaine Gilles Lafouge**

The 2011 Pommard “les Chanlins” from Domaine Gilles Lafouge is absolutely superb in this vintage and will give the outstanding 2010 version a run for its money over the next few decades. The reserved and very classy nose offers up a complex blend of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, coffee, a superb base of soil, gamebirds, a touch of nutskin and a lovely base of cedar from its thirty percent new oak this year. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with ripe tannins, lovely focus and balance, ripe tannins and great soil drive on the long, tangy and very refined finish. Chanlins is one of the most elegant premier crus in all of Pommard, and in the hands of Gilles Lafouge, it makes one of the best premier crus in the entire village! 2020-2050+. **93+**.



## ***Puligny-Montrachet***

### **Domaine Jacques Carillon (Puligny-Montrachet)**

*As I reported last year, Jacques Carillon and his brother, François, split the family domaine starting in the 2010 vintage, so that there will be a less of any given cuvée from each brother, but both now have their own independent operations. As a couple of parcels were too small to divide and still make viable-sized cuvées, Jacques Carillon has given his brother all of the Combettes and the Chassagne “Macherelles”, while he has been able to keep the tiny slice of Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet. Jacques Carillon has long been one of my absolutely favorite white Burgundy producers in the entire Côte d’Or, and his 2011s are yet again another absolutely outstanding set of wines that will delight white Burgundy enthusiasts. In Monsieur Carillon’s opinion, “2011 is like a cross between 2009 and 2010- more mineral than ’09, but more forward and “flatteur” than 2010 and it will drink well sooner than the 2010s.” The harvest started here at the outset of September and everything was bottled between the end of February and the second week of March, making the timing of my visit at the end of March not quite ideal. However, the wines generally had not yet shut down after their mise and were showing very well at the time of my visit and there is no doubt that 2011 is another exemplary vintage from Monsieur Carillon.*

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Jacques Carillon**

The 2011 Puligny *villages* from Monsieur Carillon was aged in fifteen percent new oak for six months, prior to being racked into tank for its *assemblage* and was bottled at the end of February. The wine was showing very well at the time of my visit, wafting from the glass in a very pretty bouquet of lemon, white peach, spring flowers, chalky soil tones and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and crisp, with a lovely core of fruit, fine purity and harmony and a long, zesty and perfectly balanced finish. High class *villages*! 2014-2030. **90.**

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Champs Canet”- Domaine Jacques Carillon**

All of the premier crus *chez* Carillon were raised in twenty percent new wood in 2011. The 2011 Champs Canet is an excellent wine, offering up a deep, youthful and classic nose of apple, a touch of grapefruit, orange zest, a beautifully complex base of soil, a touch of smokiness and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with ripe, zesty acids, lovely focus and bounce and a very long, refined and classy finish. Fine juice. 2016-2035. **91+.**

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Perrières” - Domaine Jacques Carillon**

To my palate, Jacques Carillon makes the finest example of Puligny “Perrières” in Burgundy and his 2011 is a superb wine in the making. The very fine bouquet offers up a deep and still fairly primary mélange of lemon, pink grapefruit, white peach, lovely, stony minerality, citrus blossoms and a suave and understated base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and more reserved than the Champs Canet, with a fine core of fruit, bright acids, lovely focus and balance and superb, backend mineral drive on the long and refined finish. Very, very high class juice! 2017-2035+. **93.**

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Referts”- Domaine Jacques Carillon**

The oldest vines in Monsieur Carillon’s holdings are in Referts and these old vines have really excelled in this fine vintage. The young and scintillating nose soars from the glass in a mix of apple, lemon, chalky minerality, citrus zest, white flowers and

vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with crisp acids, excellent focus and grip and a very, very long, youthful and elegant finish. A classic in the making. 2018-2040. **93+**.

**2011 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Jacques Carillon**

The 2011 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet was the most closed wine after its recent bottling, but its ultimate quality was still very easy to read at the time of my visit. This is a very, very special bottle in the making, offering up a deep and youthful aromatic constellation of apple, pink grapefruit, lemon, complex, chalky soil tones, apple blossoms, lemon zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and utterly suave on the attack, with a great core, laser-like focus, zesty acids and magical length and grip on the seamless and dancing finish. A great, great example of Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet. 2019-2045+. **96.**

**Domaine Leflaive (Puligny-Montrachet)**

*Domaine Leflaive began picking at the end of August of 2011, with the harvest starting on the 25<sup>th</sup> and having been completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> of that month. Virtually all of their cuvées were left without chapitalization, with only one or two given a very small percentage just to keep the fermentation going a bit longer. The malolactics here were quite early, as the weather at the end of 2011 stayed quite warm after the picking, which kept the cellar temperatures a bit warmer than normal for late fall and the malos happily bubbled away until Christmas of that year. Virtually the entire cellar had been assembled into tanks during the latter half of February of 2012 in preparation for bottling, and a few of the cuvées were already bottled at the time of my early April visit, as the mise began here in mid-March for a couple of wines and everything else scheduled to be bottled right after the Easter holiday. In addition to the usual fine range of white wines here, I had a chance to taste a new addition to the Leflaive lineup on the red side of the ledger during this visit- a bottling of Monthelie “Sur la Velle” which the domaine began producing from purchased grapes commencing in the 2009 vintage. The parcel they are purchasing from here is farmed biodynamically and there is sufficient quantity to produce about fifteen barrels per year. I tasted the 2010. Additionally, there is now also a couple of barrels of Charmes-Chambertin produced as a négociant wine as well since the 2009 vintage, with these vines also farmed biodynamically. I look forward to trying a bottle of the Leflaive Charmes-Chambertin on a future visit. The red wines are sold under the “Leflaive et Associés” label. The 2011 white wines here are lovely, which of course, comes as no surprise, as it is a very, very elegant vintage and this domaine has been famous for the refinement and elegance of its wines for generations.*

**2011 Mâcon-Verzé- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Mâcon-Verzé from Domaine Leflaive had been bottled a little earlier than the Côte de Beaune whites, with the *mise* taking place in at the end of January of 2012. The wine has turned out quite nicely in this vintage, offering up a pretty nose of apple, orange zest, peach, spring flowers and a nice base of toasty *Mâconnais* soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and bright, with solid mid-palate depth, crisp acids and fine length and grip on the bouncy finish. Good juice. 2013-2020. **87.**

### **2011 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Leflaive**

The domaine's 2011 Bourgogne Blanc was still in tank and had not yet been bottled at the time of my April 2<sup>nd</sup> visit. The nose is pure, elegant and quite delicate in its aromatic blend of white peaches, lemon, chalky soil tones, spring flowers and citrus zest. On the palate the wine is medium-bodied, bright and intensely flavored, with a good core, crisp acids and very good length and grip on the understated and suave finish. This is not a big wine by the standards of this cuvée, but it is pure and lithesome. 2013-2022. **88.**

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Puligny *villages* was also still in tank at the start of April and was showing lovely potential on both the nose and palate. The bouquet wafts from the glass in a refined blend of lemon, tangerine, apple, lovely minerality, citrus blossoms and a touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, fresh and nicely balanced, with a good core, fine focus and good, but not great length on the elegant and silky finish. This too is a little lean in style, but I really like its personality and complexity. It may or may not put on a bit of weight with bottle age, but there is plenty of intensity here in any case and an awful lot to enjoy in the glass. 2013-2030. **90.**

### **2011 Meursault “Sous la d’Ane”- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Meursault “Sous la d’Ane” had already been bottled in mid-March and was still open and showing very well at the time of my visit. The bouquet is very pretty and vibrant, jumping from the glass in a mélange of apple, pear, orange blossoms, chalky soil tones and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, long and very refined, with lovely inner energy at the core, crisp acids and excellent focus and grip on the long, youthful finish that closes with a note of pink grapefruit. A lovely vintage for this bottling. 2018-2035+. **91.**

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Clavoillon”- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Clavoillon from Domaine Leflaive was still in tank in early April and was showing superb potential. The very expressive and floral nose this year wafts from the glass in a blend of lemon, a touch of grapefruit, apple, impressive minerality, a potpourri of spring flowers and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, long and intensely flavored, with racy acids, excellent focus and grip, a good core and impressive mineral drive on the long and vibrant finish. The complex minerality that has emerged in this cuvée since the parcel was completely converted to *biodynamique* farming a decade ago is really remarkable, as old timers such as myself never would have imagined it could be so expressive in this wine, when viewed through the prism of the vintages of the 1980s and early 1990s Clavoillon! A beautiful wine in the making. 2017-2035+. **92.**

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Folatières”- Domaine Leflaive**

Domaine Leflaive's 2011 Folatières had been bottled on March 11<sup>th</sup> and was only three weeks out from the *mise* at the time of my visit, but it had not yet started to shut down and was still showing quite expressively. This is very elegant this year, offering up a classy bouquet of apple, white peach, citrus zest, chalky soil tones, apple blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very refined, with a lovely core, fine bounce and grip and a long, focused and very classy finish. Sometimes Folatières can be a bit broad-shouldered, but this year it is the epitome of Puligny elegance. Fine juice. 2016-2035+. **92.**

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Combettes”- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Combettes here had also been bottled in mid-March (the 12<sup>th</sup> as a matter of fact) and was starting to shut down a bit after the *mise*. The bouquet was very fine nevertheless and was showing a touch reductively, which may well assist it in warding off premoxy in the future. The aromatic blend is comprised of scents of apple, tangerine, lemon zest, a touch of iodine, complex minerality, citrus blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and very transparent, with a closed, but rock solid core of fruit, bright acids and great backend energy on the very long and focused finish. This is a very beautiful young vintage of Combettes *chez* Leflaive. 2018-2035+. **93+**.

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Pucelles”- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Pucelles (as well as all the grand crus) was still in tank and in the process of being fined prior to bottling getting underway for this cuvée right after Easter. The wine is utterly classic, exuding great elegance in its bouquet of white peach, tangerine, lemon blossoms, a touch of *crème patissière*, chalky soil and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and sports lovely mid-palate depth, with bright acids, laser-like focus and exceptional length and grip on the dancing and youthful finish. This will be beautiful. 2018-2035+. **94**.

### **2011 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet from Domaine Leflaive is very elegant and floral this year, wafting from the glass in a classy mélange of apple, white peach, lemon, chalky soil tones, suave base of vanillin oak and a floral topnote that is redolent of both apple and lemon blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very, very refined, with a superb core of perfectly ripe fruit, beautiful soil inflection, vibrant acids and outstanding backend energy and grip on the seamless and focused finish. Fine juice. 2020-2045. **94+**.

### **2011 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Leflaive**

The 2011 Bâtard-Montrachet is also outstanding, offering up a classic bouquet of peach, orange, a youthful touch of pink grapefruit, excellent minerality, a bit of iodine, orange blossoms and new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with laser-like focus, superb grip and exceptional backend energy on the perfectly-balanced and very refined finish. Domaine Leflaive’s Bâtard-Montrachet is always one of the most elegant examples of this grand cru and the refinement of the 2011 vintage dovetails brilliantly with the style predilections of the team at the domaine. Great wine. 2021-2045+. **95**.

### **2011 Chevalier-Montrachet- Domaine Leflaive**

The queen in the cellar is also stellar in 2011. The bouquet is deep, pure and nicely reserved, as it delivers scents of lemon, pear, tangerine, white flowers, chalky minerality, citrus zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very racy, with a superb core of fruit, great focus and balance and a very long, suave and vibrant finish. I love this wine year in and year out (almost) without exception (the ripeness of the 2006 got away from the domaine a little bit), but the 2011 is definitely going to be a very special and supremely elegant vintage for this wine. 2022-2045+. **95+**.

### **2010 Monthelie “Sur la Velle”- Leflaive et Associés**

The 2010 Monthelie “Sur la Velle” from Leflaive et Associés is a very pretty example of this fine vintage, but the wine is currently tight and quite shut down and in

need of some extended cellaring. The bouquet is young and red fruity, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of cherries, pomegranate, fresh herb tones, a touch of cocoa and gentle topnotes of white pepper and nutskin. On the palate the wine is medium-full, long and quite transparent, with a good core, a fair bit of ripe tannin and a long, focused and tangy finish. This will be a very good wine, but give it some time in the cellar. 2018-2035+. **88+**.

### **Chassagne-Montrachet**

#### **Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard (Chassagne-Montrachet)**

*Readers may recall that when I was in Burgundy in November of 2012, I tasted through the excellent range of white wines from the 2011 vintage at Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard, but the red wines had all been racked a couple of days prior to my visit and were in no condition to be tasted. So, I was happy to swing by at the beginning of April on this spring trip to sample through their fine lineup of red wines from this vintage. While the domaine is best known for its white wines, the Fontaine family has a serious portfolio of red wine cuvées as well, including parcels in two of the best premier crus for reds in Chassagne (Clos St. Jean and Morgeot), as well as fine slices of Volnay “Clos des Chênes” and Pommard “Rugiens”. The 2011 reds here had been bottled at the start of February of 2013 and were showing quite well by the beginning of April, when I had a chance to stop by the domaine to catch up with the reds that had been too cranky to write up on my last visit.*

#### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard**

The Bourgogne rouge bottling from Fontaine-Gagnard hails from parcels located in the villages of Volnay and Chassagne, with the lion’s share in the former village. The 2011 version is very pretty, offering up a red fruity bouquet of strawberries, cherries, a touch of cocoa and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and nicely soil-driven, with fine focus and just a touch of tannin perking up the good, long finish. A very stylish example. 2013-2020. **87**.

#### **2011 Chassagne-Montrachet Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard**

Monsieur Fontaine used ten percent new oak for the *elevage* of his Chassagne rouge cuvée in the 2011 vintage and the wine has turned out very well indeed. This was starting to shut down for a period of hibernation after its *mise*, but still offers up scents of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, a nice base of dark soil tones, fresh herbs and just a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine fullish, pure and nicely structured, with lovely mid-palate depth, impressive transparency, a touch of tannin and very good length and grip on the tangy and well-balanced finish. This will be a very refined example, but give it a few years in the cellar to blossom. 2018-2035. **89+**.

#### **2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean” Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard**

I really like Clos St. Jean rouge with a bit of bottle age, and the 2011 vintage’s natural tendency to elegance is going to augur well for this lovely example. The bouquet is flat out excellent here, jumping from the glass in a pure blend of red and black cherries, a nice touch of meatiness, raw cocoa, impressive minerality, woodsmoke and just a touch of toasty new oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again, very, very pure, with a lovely signature of soil, an impressive core, excellent, nascent complexity and a long, tangy and moderately tannic finish. This is going to be an exceptional example of



Chassagne *rouge* with five or six years of bottle age and should age long and gracefully. Fine, fine juice and a great value! 2018-2040. **92.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Morgeot Rouge- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard**

The 2011 Morgeot *rouge* is a bit more reserved than the Clos St. Jean, but it too shows outstanding potential. The deep and refined nose offers up scents of black cherries, a touch of plum, dark soil tones, herb tones, a deft touch of new wood and a smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very soil-driven in personality, with a rock solid core of fruit, ripe, firm tannins and a very long, focused and youthful finish. High class juice in the making and another absolute sleeper for the cellar. 2020-2045. **91+.**

**2011 Volnay “Clos des Chênes”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard**

The 2011 Volnay “Clos des Chênes” from Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard is a beautiful example of this great *terroir*, offering up a classy and impressively complex bouquet of cherries, red plums, gamebirds, a complex base of soil, a touch of blood orange, woodsmoke and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very elegant, with a sappy core of fruit, excellent soil inflection, a very refined structure and outstanding length and grip on the focused and tangy finish. Just a classic example of Clos des Chênes! 2020-2045+. **93+.**

**2011 Pommard “Rugiens”- Domaine Fontaine-Gagnard**

The Fontaine’s parcel of thirty-one year-old vines in Rugiens lie in the upper slope of the La Bas section of the vineyard, which really is the finest section of this lovely premier cru. The 2011 has turned out beautifully, delivering a superb aromatic constellation of cherries, pomegranate, vinesmoke, a complex base of soil, incipient notes of game and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with superb transparency, ripe tannins and outstanding length and grip on the well-balanced and focused finish. A superb wine. 2022-2045+. **93.**

**Domaine Michel Niellon (Chassagne-Montrachet)**

*I had the pleasure to meet and taste with Monsieur Michel Coutoux, Michel Niellon’s son-in-law, for the first time on my March trip to Burgundy. Monsieur Coutoux has worked alongside Monsieur Niellon for many years already, and I was very happy to finally have an opportunity to make his acquaintance. It was an odd day for a spring visit in Burgundy, as it was “Good Friday” and yet it was snowing lightly at the time of my morning arrival at Domaine Niellon’s new winemaking facilities just outside the center of Chassagne, and I never would have imagined that this light snow at the outset of the Easter weekend in Burgundy would be a harbinger for one of the coolest and rainiest springs in recent memory in the region. In any event, despite the grey skies and flurries in the air outside of the tasting room’s windows, there was plenty of sunshine on display in the lovely range of 2011s from Domaine Niellon. As is customary at this domaine, all of the 2011 white wines had been bottled in September of 2012, so the wines were in fine form for tasting at the end of March and were showing beautiful potential. In finally had the good sense on this visit to ask to taste the Chassagne rouge bottlings here, which I had never tasted previously in the cellars. In fact, for many years I was completely unaware that the domaine produced red wines, but an odd bottle of the 1978 Clos St. Jean rouge a few years back proved that the red wines here are also very well made and worthy of attention. The two 2011 reds I tasted on this vintage were excellent examples.*

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2011 Chassagne *villages* is a lovely wine in the making, offering up a deep and vibrant nose of apple, lime, a touch of wheat toast, a superb base of minerality, lime blossoms and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and complex, with a lovely core, bright acids and fine cut and grip on the long and classy finish. This will want a few years of bottle age to fully blossom and will be a superb bottle of village wine. 2016-2030+. **90.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean”- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2011 Clos St. Jean from Domaine Niellon is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a bright and very stylish bouquet of pear, a touch of pink grapefruit, deep soil tones, a dollop of citrus oil and a fine base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite ample at the core, with lovely framing acids, fine focus and balance and a long, classy and wide open finish. The Clos St. Jean *chez* Niellon always seems to be the most accessible of the premier crus here and the 2011 is no exception, and this lovely wine will drink beautifully right from the outset. 2013-2030+. **90+.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Champgains”- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2011 Niellon Champgains is a step up in terms of structure and cut from the Clos St. Jean, wafting from the glass in a superb aromatic blend of apple, pear, a touch of tangerine, deep soil tones, citrus zest, vanillin oak and a gently smoky topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and vibrant, with a rock solid core of fruit, zesty acids and outstanding length and grip on the racy finish. A superb wine in the making. 2014-2030+. **92.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Maltroie”- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2011 Maltroie from Domaine Niellon is equally fine, offering up a superb bouquet of lime oil, pear, smoky overtones, a complex base of soil, a touch of leanness and a discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a wide open attack, a fine core and a long, crisp, vibrant and focused finish that closes with lovely mineral drive and plenty of citrus zest. This is another absolutely superb example of the vintage, but I would give this at least an additional year in the cellar over the Champgains before having at it in earnest. Nevertheless, it will provide a lot of pleasure early on in its lifetime. 2015-2035. **92.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Vergers”- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The Vergers vines of Domaine Niellon are still on the young side, having been planted in 1999, but they are starting to gain a bit more mid-palate depth as they mature. The bouquet on the 2011 Vergers is very stylish and decidedly floral in its composition of apple, clementine, citrus blossoms, a nice touch of soil and a bit of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, suave and silky on the attack, with very good, but not great depth at the core (courtesy of the younger vines here), bright acids and fine focus and bounce on the long and elegant finish. This will not have the longevity of the Niellon premier crus from older vines, but it will provide a lot of pleasure early. 2013-2023+. **91.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chaumées Clos de la Truffière”- Domaine Michel Niellon**

In contrast to the Vergers, the Clos de la Truffière and its vines planted in 1922 has plenty of mid-palate stuffing and the structure to age long and gracefully- if premox

will spare it! The superb and impressively complex nose wafts from the glass in a blend of pear, pink grapefruit, citrus oil, a very complex base of soil, smoke, gentle leesiness, lime zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very elegant on the attack, with a superb core of fruit and great length and grip on the suave and seamless finish. A beautiful bottle in the making. 2016-2035. **93.**

**2011 Chevalier-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2011 Chevalier-Montrachet from Domaine Michel Niellon is very bright and vibrant this year, offering up a stunning nose of citrus zest, pear, mandarin orange, a touch of pink grapefruit, complex, chalky minerality, lime blossoms, a touch of almond and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very elegant, with a rock solid core of fruit, bright acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the youthful and utterly complete finish. A stunning young wine. 2018-2045. **95.**

**2011 Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The Domaine Niellon 2011 Bâtard-Montrachet is even better, offering up a brilliant bouquet of apple, pear, lime, a touch of iodine, a magically complex base of soil, orange oil and a very discreet base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and youthfully complete, with a rock solid core, great cut and nascent complexity, outstanding balance and a very, very long, pure and vibrant finish. The very old vines here provide a cut and raciness to the Niellon Bâtard-Montrachet that steers clear of the more muscular vinosity that sometimes defines this vineyard at other domaines. A brilliant young wine! 2018-2045. **97.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet Rouge- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2011 Chassagne-Montrachet Rouge from Domaine Michel Niellon is a lovely, old school bottle of red Chassagne, offering up a complex nose of cherries, a touch of fruitcake, bonfires, gamebirds, orange peel and a lovely base of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and offers up plenty of mid-palate stuffing, with lovely focus and grip and a long, ripely tannic finish. Like most red Chassagne bottlings, this will need a bit of bottle age to blossom, but it will be a very good wine in the fullness of time and is a great value. 2018-2035+. **88.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Clos St. Jean” Rouge- Domaine Michel Niellon**

The 2011 Clos St. Jean rouge from Domaine Niellon is going to be a superb wine, but it will also need some time in the cellar to blossom. The deep and youthful nose offers up a complex mix of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, fresh herb tones, just a whisper of youthful barnyard and a delicate framing of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and impressively velvety on the attack, with a fine core, ripe tannins and a long, focused and youthful finish. Lovely juice in the making! 2019-2040. **90.**

***St. Aubin***

**Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy (St. Aubin)**

*Olivier Lamy has produced a lovely range of wines in the svelte 2011 vintage. My timing was not great for a visit at the end of March, as the entire cellar had been bottled three weeks before my arrival (with a few exceptions that are traditionally bottled a bit earlier), but the wines were showing really quite well for so soon after the mise and it was easy to appreciate their quality. The 2011 harvest here began on August 26<sup>th</sup> and was completed by September the 3<sup>rd</sup>, which of course was one of the reasons that the*

*bottling had already taken place in March. I very much like the understated nature of the new wood in the wines chez Lamy since Olivier began utilizing more demi-muids in the cellar, and I imagine that one day this will be the standard-sized barrel used in Burgundy for cuvées that have enough production to warrant the 400 liter barrels, rather than the standard 228 liters, as it really makes a much more discreet impression on the wine. I had the distinct impression that the 2011s chez Lamy were some of the raciest and most nicely structured whites that I have sampled from this vintage, with a bit more raciness and cut than many of the white wines from 2011, and perhaps this impression was somehow reinforced by the wider use of demi-muids in the cellar here. In any case, 2011 is a fine, fine success chez Lamy and these are once again a very, very superb range of both red and whites.*

### **Vins Rouges**

#### **2011 St. Aubin “Cuvée Paradis” Rouge- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2011 Cuvée Paradis rouge, which is a village level bottling, is quite pretty in this vintage, offering up a red fruity nose of cherries, strawberries, a touch of raw cocoa, fresh herbs and a lovely base of chalky soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and youthful, with modest tannins, good mid-palate intensity and impressive length and grip for its level. Good juice in the making here. 2015-2025+. **87+**.

#### **2011 Santenay “Clos des Hâtes”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2011 Santenay “Clos des Hâtes” from Olivier Lamy makes an interesting contrast to the red fruity personality of the St. Aubin rouge, as this wine is much more black fruity in character, as well as a bit more youthfully reticent out of the blocks. The bouquet is a fine blend of black cherries, bitter chocolate, dark soil tones, woodsmoke and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish and quite transparent, with a good core, fine structure and a long, focused and chewy finish. This will need a couple more years to blossom than the above wine, but it should also prove to be quite good. 2017-2027+. **86+**.

#### **2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “La Gaujomme” Rouge- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The Chassagne rouge bottling is still quite young vines chez Lamy, with the vines only six years of age in 2011. This parcel lies just below the two premier crus of Morgeot and Boudriotte on the slope in Chassagne, and one imagines that once these vines really gain some age the quality is going to jump dramatically, as this is the best section for red wines in Chassagne. That said, the 2011 is really a very good effort for young vines, as Monsieur Lamy clearly has restrained their natural vigor, and the wine offers up a fine nose of black cherries, plums, espresso, woodsmoke and a good base of clay soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite primary, with a good core and a more polished sense of balance than the Santenay, with ripe tannins and good length and grip on the sturdy finish. Good honest juice. 2019-2035. **88**.

#### **2011 St. Aubin “Derrière Chez Edouard” Rouge- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The St. Aubin “Derrière Chez Edouard” rouge from Domaine Lamy is produced from the oldest pinot noir vines that the family owns, with this parcel now fifty-five years of age. The 2011 has turned out beautifully, offering up a deep and classy bouquet of black cherries, cassis, chalky minerality, dark chocolate, a bit of charred wood, herb tones and a touch of orange peel in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-

bodied, pure and classy, with the complexity of the nose nicely mirrored on the palate, with a fine core, moderate tannins and excellent length and grip on the focused finish. I like the fine sense of reserve that this wine has out of the blocks, which augurs very well for its long-term evolution. A superb bottle and a great value! 2020-2040. **90+**.



*Olivier Lamy in the “high density” section of his St. Aubin premier cru, Derrière Chez Edouard.*

### ***Vins Blancs***

#### **2011 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

After the ridiculously low yields of twenty hectoliters per hectare that Olivier Lamy had with his Bourgogne Blanc in 2010, the 2011 is a bit close to a normal crop level, and the wine is once again really lovely. This was bottled in mid-December of 2012 and was really showing well at the time of my visit, offering up a lovely nose of apple, tart orange, chalky soil tones and a whisper of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and succulent at the core, with a nice signature of soil, sound acids and sneaky length and grip. A fine regional bottling. 2013-2020+. **87+**.

#### **2011 St. Aubin “La Princesse”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2011 St. Aubin “La Princesse” from Domaine Lamy is really a lovely village wine and a great value in this vintage. The very pretty and floral nose wafts from the glass in a classy blend of apples, white peaches, spring flowers, a touch of citrus peel and a lovely base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, crisp and very floral, with a good core of fruit, zesty acids and lovely focus and grip on the long and very stylish finish. This will drink well right out of the blocks, but I would be tempted to give

it at least a year's worth of bottle age to allow its secondary layers to emerge. Fine juice. 2014-2025. **88+**.

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Le Concis du Champs”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The *lieu à dit* of Le Concis du Champs lies downslope from the premier cru of La Maltroie in the center of Chassagne, with a fairly high percentage of clay in the soils. Olivier Lamy has begun to replicate his high density planting in this cru and 2011 is the first vintage where a bit of the new plantation is included in the cuvée. The wine has turned out very well indeed, offering up an excellent nose of apple, lemon, a touch of iodine, fine minerality and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, crisp and beautifully balanced, with a lovely core of fruit, a soil-driven personality and lovely length and grip on the bouncy finish. This is a lovely bottle in the making. 2015-2025+. **89+**.

**2011 Puligny-Montrachet “Les Tremblots”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

As I noted last year, Olivier Lamy has old vines in this parcel, with one section forty years of age and the other section seventy years of age in the *lieu à dit* of Tremblots, which lies just below les Enseignères on the slope. The 2011 is the epitome of elegance, wafting from the glass in a lovely aromatic blend of white peach, apple, spring flowers, chalky soil tones and a judicious framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and nicely reserved, with a very good core, lovely focus and balance and very good grip on the long and poised finish. This does not seem to have quite the same depth at the core as the Chassagne AC this year (the addition of the high density plantings already making their presence felt in the Chassagne?), but it is a very lovely bottle that will drink well with a couple of years cellaring. 2016-2025+. **89**.

**2011 St. Aubin “Clos du Meix”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

Clos du Meix, with its due south exposition usually produces the most forward and succulent of the Lamy premier crus in St. Aubin, and this is always the bottling I look for on wine lists in Burgundy to drink early on in its evolution, as it really is delicious year in and year out almost immediately out of the blocks. That said, of course, the 2011 is probably a wine that will benefit from a few years in the cellar ☺ The bouquet is just lovely, offering up a very pure and detailed blend of pear, lemon, apple tones, a lovely base of *terres blanches*, spring flowers and a gentle framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, fullish, pure and still quite primary for this bottling, with fine focus, bright acids and lovely balance on the long, nascently complex and zesty finish. In a pinch (liked confronted with the wine on a restaurant wine list and feeling thirsty), this wine will drink well young, but with three or four years of bottle age, it really should start to hit its plateau. 2017-2030+. **89+**.

**2011 St. Aubin “Derrière Chez Edouard” Blanc- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2011 “regular” bottling of Derrière Chez Edouard blanc is once again an outstanding bottle of St. Aubin in the making, delivering a fine aromatic constellation of pears, white peaches, deep, chalky soil tones, orange blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and nascently complex, with a fine core of fruit, lovely focus and grip and a beautifully balanced, long and classy finish. This has the cut and bounce of a 2010 white Burgundy, rather than the more laid back and accessible style of so many whites of 2011. Fine juice in the making here! 2018-2035. **91+**.

**2011 St. Aubin “les Frionnes”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

Les Frionnes has an easterly exposition, which usually makes this wine a bit more minerally in personality than the Clos du Meix, and this is the case in the 2011 vintage. The bouquet is quite reserved and refined in its blend of apple, pink grapefruit, chalky minerality, white flowers, lemon peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, crisp and tightly-knit, with a lovely core, nascent complexity and impressive length and grip on the racy finish. This has a decidedly “cooler” personality this year than several of the other St. Aubin premier crus, but it has lovely depth and transparency and will be a superb example of the vintage. 2018-2035. **91.**

**2011 St. Aubin “Clos de la Chatenière”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

As I noted last year, the Clos de la Chatenière is a very steep vineyard that lies to the west of En Remilly on the same slope on the Chassagne side of the village of St. Aubin, with a southerly exposition and a forty-five degree slope. Domaine Lamy’s parcel here is planted with fifty year-old vines and they have made an excellent wine in 2011. The bouquet is deep and shows a lovely sense of reserve in its mélange of pear, apple, chalky minerality, a touch of orange peel, white flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and youthfully reticent, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and balance, crisp acids and excellent length and grip on the racy and poised finish. Fine juice in the making. 2017-2035. **92+.**

**2011 St. Aubin “Murgers Dents de Chien”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2011 Murgers Dents de Chien from Olivier Lamy is another absolutely textbook example of this outstanding *terroir*, offering up a classy bouquet of pear, apple, a touch of *crème patissière*, a fine base of minerality, lemon peel and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with zesty acids, fine focus and outstanding length and grip on the youthful and snappy finish. This will want four or five years in the cellar to really blossom and should age long and gracefully (the angry premo gods willing!) in the bottle. A beautifully made wine. 2018-2035+. **92+.**

**2011 St. Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2011 St. Aubin “en Remilly” from Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy is another outstanding wine that shows a lovely sense of cool reserve out of the blocks. The deep and classic bouquet wafts from the glass in a mix of apple, pear, orange zest, chalky minerality, a touch of iodine and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine cut and focus, lovely, nascent complexity, snappy acids and outstanding length and grip on the transparent and youthful finish. Fine, fine juice in the making. 2018-2035+. **93.**

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Maréchaux”- Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

The 2011 premier cru of les Maréchaux has been bottled with a fairly reductive character that shows off a nice touch of iodine and really smells a bit out of the blocks like a white wine from Coche-Dury. This premier cru lies between Chenévottes and Clos St. Jean on the slope and possesses a fairly rich soil of red clay and large stones. The bouquet on the 2011 is a lovely blend of apple, tangerine, iodine, a very minerally signature of soil (particularly for this *terroir*, which is usually a bit deeper and heavier in soil profile) and a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and quite zesty, with a fine core, lovely focus and grip and a long, well-balanced and quite classy finish. A fine result. 2017-2035. **92.**

### **2011 St. Aubin “Derrière Chez Edouard” Haut Densité - Domaine Hubert et Olivier Lamy**

As I have noted in the past, there is only a single, 350 liter barrel of the Haut Densité bottling, which hails from an upper section of the Derrière Chez Edouard vineyard that Monsieur Lamy has to guard with an electric fence to keep the wild boar from feasting on these grapes, which they prefer to any of the others in the neighborhood. This parcel is planted at 40,000 vines per hectare (rather than the traditional 10-15,000 vines per hectare) and the 2011 has again turned out fabulously well. In fact, Monsieur Lamy chose to serve this wine after the Criots this year! The bouquet on the wine soars from the glass in a beautiful blend of pear, apple, orange zest, chalky minerality, spring flowers, incipient notes of pastry cream and a deft touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and rock solid at the core, with a great spine of minerality, outstanding focus and grip and a very long, nascently complex and racy finish. This is fine, fine juice in the making and really is the quality equivalent of grand cru these days! 2018-2040. 94+.

### **2011 Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet- Domaine Hubert Lamy**

The Lamy Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet is the smallest production wine in the cellars and there is only a single, 228 liter barrel (or twenty-five cases) of this great wine produced in most vintages. The 2011 was bottled a bit earlier than the premier crus this year, having undergone its *mise* at the start of March, and it was showing great, great potential at the end of the month when I stopped by to taste the new vintage. The brilliant nose soars from the glass in a fine blend of apple, clementines, a touch of *crème patissière*, a beautifully complex base of limestone-derived minerality, orange zest, a touch of iodine and a suave base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully reserved in profile, with a rock solid core of fruit, bright, racy acids, laser-like focus and stunning length and grip on the nascently complex finish. White magic! 2020-2060. 97.

### **Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils (St. Aubin)**

*I had a very interesting visit to Domaine Prudhon et Fils this past spring, as I tasted here on the Saturday morning before Easter and it was snowing! Given how cold and wet the spring and early summer have proven to be in Burgundy in 2013, I suppose this was a harbinger of things to come, but at the time it seemed downright weird to be tasting in St. Aubin on the last day of March and watching the snow come down out the window! I am a relative neophyte with the wines of Domaine Prudhon, as last year was my first visit to this fine estate, but I have been very impressed with the quality of the wines I have tasted here from both the 2010 and now the 2011 vintages and this is definitely an address that I will be stopping by every year for many years to come! As I noted last year, the domaine exploits 14.5 hectares of vines in St. Aubin, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet, with Gérard Prudhon's two sons, Vincent and Philippe, currently managing the estate. Last year, I tasted with the younger of the two brothers, Philippe, who is the trained oenologist of the two, and this year I had the pleasure to meet Vincent Prudhon and taste through the 2011s with him. To reiterate from last year's report on the domaine's wines, the entire range here is very pure, very soil-driven and beautifully balanced, with a modicum of new oak for the premier crus and village wine and no new wood for the regionals. The white wines are utterly classic*



*white Burgundies, with beautifully pure fruit tones and lovely and classic expressions of their underlying terroirs. The red wines are quite refreshingly old school in style, with light colors and very soil-derived personalities. All of the 2011 St. Aubins and the regional bottlings had been bottled in August of 2012, with all of the premier cru whites here raised in twenty to twenty-five percent new wood in 2011, as is the domaine's custom. I did not have the opportunity to taste the St. Aubin "La Chatenière" this year, which is usually one of my favorite premier cru whites at the estate. The range of white wines was predictably excellent chez Prudhon in 2011, with lovely purity and succulent fruit tones. I also really liked the reds this year- particularly the St. Aubin reds, as the inherent elegance of this vintage has really dovetailed nicely with the very soil-driven personalities of the wines here. A fine, fine range of both rouges et blancs!*

### ***Vins Blancs***

#### **2011 Bourgogne Blanc- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2011 Bourgogne Blanc from Domaine Prudhon is a lovely example of the vintage, with the wine offering up a bright and juicy nose of apple, lemon, chalky soil tones and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and bouncy, with a solid core and nice backend grip and intensity on the fairly long finish. This is a serious bottle of BB for drinking over the next six to eight years. 2013-2020+. **87+/-**

#### **2011 St. Aubin "le Ban"- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

As I observed last year, the St. Aubin *villages* bottling is the largest of the Prudhon white wine holdings, with a bit over two and a half hectares of vines contributing to the cuvée, with the vine age ranging from ten to sixty years of age. The Prudhon parcels are on the slopes below the premier crus, rather than on the flat parts of the *villages* level vineyards, which adds to the quality here. The 2011 AC is an excellent wine in the making and a stunning value, offering up a refined bouquet of pear, a touch of white peach, orange zest, white flowers and a lovely base of chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, crisp and elegant, with a fine core of fruit, crisp acids and impressive length and grip on the beautifully balanced and zesty finish. This is awfully high class white Burgundy for its tariff! 2014-2025+. **89+.**

#### **2011 St. Aubin "les Castets"- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

I really like the sense of reserve in the 2011 Les Castets, which has a bit more amplitude than the lovely *villages* bottling, but also more cut and structure. As I learned last year, this is the most southerly of the premier crus in St. Aubin, lying just to the southwest of the village proper in a slope that lays right below the *Montagne du Ban*, with the soils composed of quite a bit of clay. The Prudhons have just under a third of a hectare of vines here, which are fairly young still, at sixteen years of age. The bouquet is a lovely mix of tangerine, apple, deep soil tones, dried flowers, gentle vanillin oak and a nice dollop of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite masculine in style (by the svelte parameters of the 2011 vintage), with a good core, bright acids and a very long, primary finish. Good juice in the making. 2016-2030. **89+.**

#### **2011 St. Aubin "Sur le Sentier du Clou"- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The Prudhon's vines in Sur le Sentier du Clou are thirty-six years of age and the 2011 is a lovely wine in the making, with the southeasterly exposition here giving lovely

minerality and cut in this elegant vintage. The wine jumps from the glass in a very expressive, but youthful mélange of pear, orange, chalky soil tones, a touch of citrus peel and a gentle base of vanillin oak., On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very pure and elegant, with a fine core, ripe acids, lovely focus and excellent length and grip on the soil-driven and nicely reserved finish. This will need a couple of years to really blossom and will be an excellent wine. 2016-2030. **90+**.

**2011 St. Aubin “les Perrières”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The Prudhons vines in the premier cru of les Perrières in St. Aubin, which lies just down slope and with the same southeasterly exposition as Sur le Sentier du Clou, are thirty-six years of age as well and the 2011 shows a lovely synthesis of perfectly ripe fruit and lovely mineral drive on both the nose and palate. The excellent bouquet is a blend of delicious apples, clementines, chalky minerality, orange peel and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and a bit more extroverted out of the blocks than the Sur le Sentier du Clou, with lovely mid-palate depth, crisp acids and superb backend minerality on the long and zesty finish. This is an excellent bottle. 2014-2030. **91**.

**2011 St. Aubin “Sur Gamay”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

As I noted last year, Sur Gamay is located on the largest hillside of premier crus in St. Aubin, on the slope that faces southwesterly and borders both Chassagne and Puligny. The domaine owns nearly three quarters of a hectares of vines here, ranging from twenty to sixty years of age. The 2011 Sur Gamay is a lovely wine, with a slightly plumper style than the last two premier crus (due to its basking in more afternoon sun) and a fine nose of apple, pear, lemon zest, chalky soil tones, a touch of *crème patissière* and a nice base of vanilla. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, ripe and racy, with lovely generosity on the attack, a good core and impressive bounce and minerality adding a spine of cut to the long finish. This is very good juice for drinking right out of the blocks! 2013-2025+. **91**.

**2011 St. Aubin “en Remilly”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2011 Remilly from Domaine Prudhon is outstanding wine. Recall that En Remilly lies downslope from Murgers Dents de Chien and is certainly one of the most outstanding *terroirs* in the village and the Prudhon example is stellar this year. The bouquet is a superb mix of pear, tangerine, complex, chalky minerality, lemon zest, gentle floral tones and a fine base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and beautifully balanced, with a fine core, superb signature of soil and absolutely stellar length and grip on the youthful and superbly elegant finish. This is great juice and an outstanding bargain in the realm of white Burgundy! 2014-2030+. **92**.

**2011 St. Aubin “les Murgers Dents de Chien”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

Les Murgers Dents de Chien is probably the most famous premier cru in St. Aubin, as it lies just over the summit of the ridge from Chevalier-Montrachet in Puligny. The Prudhons have just under a quarter hectare of twenty year-old vines, right in the corner of the vineyard, bordering the Puligny premier cru vineyard of la Garenne, which they raise in a third new oak each year. The 2011 Murgers offers up a ripe and refined aromatic constellation of pear, fresh pineapple, a touch of tangerine, chalky minerality, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, complex and succulent on the attack, with a very fine core, excellent cut and grip and a long, pure and perfectly balanced finish. Another absolutely stellar young bottle of St. Aubin. 2016-2030+. **92+**.

### **2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Houillères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The *lieu à dit* of les Houillères lies on the Puligny border, right next door to Puligny “Enseignères” and the Prudhons have a parcel of thirty-five year-old vines here. The 2011 is a lovely wine, but with the deeper soils of this section of Chassagne giving the wine a touch more muscle and a tad less elegance than the top St. Aubin premier crus that preceded it in the tasting. The wine offers up a lovely nose of apple, pear, a good base of clay soil tones, a whiff of orange blossoms and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a fine core, good acidity and a long, classy finish. The inherent elegance of the 2011 vintage works very nicely with this *terroir*. 2013-2025+. **90+**.

### **2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “Chenevottes”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

As I noted last year, there are only three and a half barrels of Chenevottes produced by Domaine Prudhon, from a parcel of forty-one year-old vines that lie directly upslope from Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet, with the small slice of Chassagne premier cru of Blanchot Dessus in between. The 2011 is an excellent example of this fine premier cru (but not demonstrably superior to the best St. Aubin premier crus here), offering up a complex bouquet of pear, apple, clementine, lovely, chalk-laced soil tones, orange blossoms and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and wide open on the attack, with a fine core, crisp acids and lovely length and grip on the focused and soil-driven finish. This is a lovely bottle of Chenevottes that will drink beautifully upon release, but will also age very well on its impeccable balance. 2013-2030. **92**.

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “les Enseignères”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The fine *lieu à dit* of les Enseignères is one of the most important parcels in the Prudhon portfolio, as the domaine owns two plots of vines here that add up to nearly a full hectare. One section is in thirty year-old vines, and the other parcel is fully eighty years of age. This *lieu à dit* is of course best-known for the fine bottling produced here by Domaine Coche-Dury. The Prudhons raise their Enseignères in twenty percent new wood. The 2011 Enseignères from the domaine is a stunning example of this fine *terroir*, offering up a deep and very classy bouquet of apple, white peach, a touch of orange, a lovely base of chalky soil tones, apple blossoms, hints of iodine and a deft framing of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and complex, with excellent mid-palate depth, impressive cut and grip and a very long, focused and refined finish. This is stellar juice in the making. 2015-2035. **92**.

### **2011 Puligny-Montrachet “la Garenne”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

Domaine Prudhon has a very tiny holding of less than nine *ares* in the premier cru of la Garenne, which is enough for two barrels (one of which is new in 2011). This was bottled a bit later than the other premier crus, with the *mise* taking place in February of 2013. The vines here are sixty years or age and the wine offers up an excellent nose of apple, white peach, spring flowers, *terres blanches* soils, orange zest and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and shows off a very soil-driven personality, with a rock solid core, crisp acids and excellent backend minerality on the long and focused finish. This is really a superb bottle in the making. 2014-2030+. **93**.

## ***Vins Rouges***

### **2011 Bourgogne Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

All of the pinot vines for the Prudhon Bourgogne rouge bottling are from the village of St. Aubin. The 2011 is light in color and quite lovely, as it offers up a high-toned and pretty bouquet of strawberries, cherries, coffee, woodsmoke, herbs and a nice base of soil. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and tangy, with a good core, just a touch of tannin and a long, youthful finish. This will need a couple of years to blossom, but it is very well-made. 2016-2025. **87.**

### **2011 St. Aubin Rouge “les Argillers”- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The 2011 St. Aubin *rouge* cuvée of les Argillers from Domaine Prudhon hails from vines that range from thirty to sixty years of age, and the wine sees very little or no new oak during its *elevage*. The 2011 is really a lovely wine, offering up a red fruity nose of strawberries, cherries, woodsmoke, coffee and a nice base of chalky soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and intensely flavored, with a good core of fruit, fine length and focus, a touch of tannin and good grip on the tangy finish. This will drink very well right from the outset and is a lovely sleeper for the savvy red Burgundy lover. 2013-2035. **88+.**

### **2011 St. Aubin “les Frionnes” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

As I noted last year, the les Frionnes *rouge* bottling is one of the founding wines of the domaine (like the Les Perrières *blanc*), as this parcel has been in the Prudhon family since 1921. The domaine owns just under one hectare of thirty to sixty year-old pinot noir vines here and the wine is raised almost entirely in older barrels. The 2011 is lovely, with a deeper nose than the above, offering up a mix of red and black cherries, a touch of bonfire, a stony base of soil, herb tones and a faint whisper of vanillin oak (despite most of these being one or two wine barrels). On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and nicely reserved in personality, with a good core, a fine signature of soil and good length and grip on the moderately tannic finish. Good juice. 2016-2035. **88+.**

### **2011 St. Aubin “Cuvée les Rouges Gorges” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The Cuvée les Rouges Gorges bottling is a blend of three premier crus, as the domaine has small holdings of pinot noir in each of these: Sur Gamay, La Combe and Bas de Vermarain à l’Est (which lies on the Chassagne border). All three are planted with relatively old vines, with the range from forty to sixty years of age. The resulting blend is really lovely and quite elegant in 2011, delivering a fine bouquet of red and black cherries, orange peel, a fine base of soil, gamebirds and a topnote of fresh herbs. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite suave on the attack, with a fine core of fruit, modest tannins and excellent length and grip on the soil-driven and classy finish. A lovely example of the vintage. 2014-2030+. **89+.**

### **2011 St. Aubin “Sur le Sentier du Clou” Vieilles Vigne Rouge- Domaine Prudhon et Fils**

Again, to repeat myself from last year, the *rouge* bottling of Sur le Sentier du Clou comes from the domaine’s oldest vines, as the range of vineyard age here runs from forty years old all the way to more than eighty! Nearly a hectare and a half of the Prudhons’ parcel in this vineyard is planted to pinot noir, making this an important cuvée for the domaine. The 2011 Sentier de Clou *rouge* is a deep, young and complex wine that offers up scents of red and black cherries, woodsmoke, gamebirds, a lovely base of soil, coffee and the faintest whisper of wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure

and nicely structured, with ripe tannins, lovely focus and balance and a long, nascently complex and quite classy finish. Fine juice, but this will need some time in the cellar to fully blossom. 2019-2035+. **90+**.

**2011 Chassagne-Montrachet “les Chambres” Rouge- Domaine Henri Prudhon et Fils**

The les Chambres *rouge* bottling from Domaine Prudhon is comprised of forty year-old vines in a one-third of a hectare parcel in Chassagne, and as is the case with the St. Aubin *rouge* bottlings this year, the elegance of the 2011 vintage has really polished this wine’s personality nicely. The fine bouquet is a blend of cherries, a touch of pomegranate, dark soil tones, woodsmoke, herbs and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite soil-driven, with a rock solid core, a fair bit of ripe tannin and excellent length and grip on the youthful finish. One will have to tuck this away in the cellar to wait for the elegance to fully manifest itself on the palate, but with a bit of patience, the refinement will most assuredly arrive here. 2016-2035+. **90**.

***Santenay and Mâconnais***

**Domaine David Moreau (Santenay)**

**2010 Santenay “Clos Rousseau”- Domaine David Moreau**

The 2010 Clos Rousseau is a very pretty premier cru from David Moreau, offering up a deep and pure nose of cherries, a touch of red plum, woodsmoke, coffee, gamebirds, fresh herbs and a fine base of soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, nascently complex and shows off good mid-palate depth, with fine balance, a fair bit of tannin and very good length and grip on the soil-driven and youthful finish. This has fine elegance for young Santenay (though the classic sturdiness of the village does build as the wine airs) and will be a lovely wine with four to six years of bottle age. 2018-2035+. **88+**.

**Bret Brothers and La Soufrandière (Vinzelles)**

**2011 Mâcon-Villages “Cuvée des Terroirs du Mâconnais”- Bret Brothers**

The 2011 Mâcon-Villages “Cuvée des Terroirs du Mâconnais” from Bret Brothers is a lovely wine and a very good value. The deep and expressive nose shows lots of soil personality (perhaps due to its relatively low octane of 12.5 percent?) in its aromatic blend of peach, apple, spring flowers, a fine base of soil, a touch of vanillin oak and a bit of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, succulent and quite classy, with good, but, not great depth at the core, good acids and sneaky length and grip on the complex finish. This is a very stylish bottle of Mâcon-Villages that should drink well for the next three to five years. 2013-2017+. **88**.

**2011 Mâcon-Chardonnay- Bret Brothers**

The 2011 Bret Brothers’ Mâcon-Chardonnay is a very pretty and vibrant example of the vintage, with plenty of elegance on both the nose and bouncy palate. The bouquet jumps from the glass in a mix of tangerine, pear, lovely soil tones, a nice touch of lime zest, apple blossoms and a dollop of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is fullish, juicy and bright, with a good core, very nice, framing acids and impressive length and grip on the wide open and classy finish. Lovely juice. 2013-2020. **89**.

**2011 Mâcon-Chardonnay “Climat La Roche”- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 Mâcon-Chardonnay “Climat La Roche” from Domaine La Soufrandière is an excellent and very serious example of Mâcon-Villages. The deep, complex and very classy bouquet wafts from the glass in a musky mix of peach, orange, deep soil tones, citrus peel, a touch of smoke and a topnote of orange blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite ripe for the vintage, with a rock solid core of fruit, bright acids, and fine focus and grip on the open, plump and totally inviting finish. This is a bit *Rubenesque* in stature, but crisp and racy at the same time and a delicious glass of white Burgundy for relatively early consumption. 2013-2018+. **90.**

**2011 Mâcon-Cruzille- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 Mâcon-Cruzille from La Soufrandière is a lovely wine for drinking over the next six to eight years, with the purity and elegance of the vintage beautifully synthesized in an impressively mature sense of *terroir*. The nose offers up a mix of apple, white peach, a bit of *Mâconnais* toastiness, dried flowers and a nice dollop of soil tones. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, ripe and wide open, with a bit more citrus in the flavor spectrum than is evident on the nose. The finish is long, ripe and generous, with a good framework of acidity, fine focus and very good length and grip. This is a lovely wine that delivers a fine synthesis of youthfully generous fruit and soil signature. 2013-2018. **89.**

**2011 Mâcon-Cruzille “Clos des Vignes du Maynes”- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 Mâcon-Cruzille “Clos des Vignes du Maynes” from the Bret Brothers is a lovely bottle of *Mâconnais* white Burgundy, offering up a deep and classy nose of pear, tangerine, a touch of almond paste, a lovely base of soil, spring flowers and a fine base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and snappy, with a fine core of ripe fruit, lovely soil signature, crisp acids and a long, focused and complex finish. This wine is wide open for current drinking, but has the balance and structural spine to cruise along nicely for the next decade in bottle. 2013-2023. **90.**

**2011 Mâcon-Uchizy “Cuvée La Martine”- Bret Brothers**

I am a big fan of Mâcon-Uchizy, as I find it one of the most elegant and transparent of the various appellations in this region. The 2011 version from the Bret Brothers is a very classic example of both this village and the elegant, low octane side of the vintage, with its alcohol a very sleek twelve percent and the wine exuding fine style and purity. The lovely nose wafts from the glass in a mix of pear, lemon, a touch of straw, acacia blossoms, pretty soil tones and perhaps just a whisper of vanillin oak way in the background. On the palate the wine is medium-full, bright and youthful, with good, but, not great depth, ripe acids and very nice length and grip on the youthful and bouncy finish. There is a nice, discreet touch of minerality and citrus peel on the backend that augurs very well for this wine down the road, and I would be strongly inclined to give it a year or two of bottle age to allow more complexity to develop. 2014-2023. **89+.**

**2011 Mâcon-Vinzelles “Le Clos de Grand-Père”- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The Bret Brothers’ 2011 Mâcon-Vinzelles “Le Clos de Grand-Père” is one of the riper examples of the vintage I have tasted, tipping the scales at 13.5 percent and showing off a bit of a tropical fruit profile as a result. The nose is a deep, ripe and complex mélange of pineapple, peach, toasty soil tones, orange peel and apple blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and ripe, with a good core, sound framing acids and

good length on the wide open, juicy finish. This is a good bottle that fans of bigger styled chardonnay-based wines are going to like even better than I did, but to my palate, after some of the really refined Mâcon bottlings from this vintage that I tasted from the Bret Brothers, this seems just a bit clumsy and simple. 2013-2020. **87.**

**2011 Mâcon-Viré-Clessé “Climat La Verchère”- Bret Brothers**

The 2011 Mâcon-Viré-Clessé “Climat La Verchère” from the Bret Brothers is a lovely wine, offering up a pure and classy nose of peach, tangerine, the lovely, minerally soil tones of Viré-Clessé, a bit of *Mâconnais* toastiness and a topnote of spring flowers. On the palate the wine is fullish, pure and elegant, with a good core, lovely soil signature, ripe acids and very good length and grip on the focused and quite classy finish. This is a delightful wine for drinking already, and another year or two of bottle age will only allow more complexity to emerge. Classy juice. 2013-2020. **91.**

**2011 Mâcon-Viré-Clessé “Climat Sous les Plantes”- Bret Brothers**

The Bret Brothers’ 2011 Climat Sous les Plantes is a tad riper than their Climate La Verchère bottling (13.5 percent versus 13 percent), but it beautifully retains the inherent elegance and minerality of Viré-Clessé. The vibrant nose jumps from the glass in a mélange of orange, pear, a beautifully complex base of soil, citrus zest and a topnote of fruit blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and intensely flavored, with a fine core, bright, zesty acids, fine focus and balance and a very long, youthful and classy finish. Today, the La Verchère is more complex, and it may be that its slightly lower octane will always deliver a touch more complexity. On the other hand, the Sous les Plantes is certainly a younger wine and with a year or two of bottle age, perhaps the complexity of Viré-Clessé will emerge more fully in this vibrant wine. Another lovely example of Viré-Clessé. 2014-2020+. **90+.**

**2011 Saint-Véran “La Côte Rôtie”- Bret Brothers**

The Bret Brothers’ 2011 Saint-Véran “La Côte Rôtie” is a very pretty wine that offers up bright fruit, a touch of toastiness and good length and grip on the palate. The bouquet is a blend of apple, peach, toasty elements, a nice base of soil and citrus peel. On the palate the wine is fullish, juicy and wide open, with good, but, not great, depth at the core, sound acids and good length and grip on the tasty, but rather un-complex finish. This is a tasty example for near-term drinking, but it is not up to the complexity and breed of the best examples of villages such as Viré-Clessé. 2013-2018. **87.**

**2011 Saint-Véran “En Combe”- Bret Brothers**

The 2011 Saint-Véran “En Combe” is lower in alcohol than the La Côte Rôtie bottling, only tipping the scales at 12.5 percent and the wine is correspondingly more soil-driven and serious as a result. The nose offers up a fairly complex mix of apple, pear, a nice touch of soil, acacia blossoms, a bit of almond paste and a gentle base of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and a decided step up in complexity and grip from the La Côte Rôtie bottling, with a lovely core of pure fruit, zesty acids, very good grip and a fine signature of soil on the long, classy finish. A lovely wine. 2013-2023. **90.**

**2011 Pouilly-Loché Climat “la Cologne”- Bret Brothers**

The 2011 Pouilly-Loché Climat “la Cologne” from the Bret Brothers is a lovely example of the vintage, offering up a deep, pure and perfectly ripe (like an apple right off the tree and still warm from the sun) bouquet of apple, peach, pretty soil tones, spring flowers and a touch of youthful citrus peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied

and still quite young, with a good core of fruit, fine soil signature, good acids and sound length and grip on the still fairly primary finish. At thirteen percent alcohol, this is a very classic bottle of Mâcon, with impressive depth in the mid-palate and very good backend intensity and bounce. I would opt for giving it another year or two of bottle age to let the secondary layers of complexity to emerge. Fine juice. 2014-2025. **90+**.

**2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles from La Soufrandière is a fairly ripe at 13.5 percent, and missed a bit of the elegance of the vintage as a result. The nose is a ripe and straightforward blend of peach, delicious apple, a bit of stony soil tones, lemon zest and citrus blossoms. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and four-square, with a ripe core of fruit, sound framing acids and just a touch of youthful backend bluntness. This will be better with a year's worth of bottle age, but it seems likely to always be just a touch simple. 2013-2020. **87.**

**2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles Climat les Longeays- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles "Climat les Longeays" is a pretty ripe example of the 2011 vintage, tipping the scales at a full 13.5 percent alcohol. The nose is very pretty and invitingly ripe, offering up notes of pear, pineapple, a nice touch of straw, pretty minerality and a topnote of orange peel. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite broad on the attack, with a good core, sound, framing acids and a long, ripe and wide open finish. This is one of the more fruit-driven 2011s that I tasted from La Soufrandière, and while I am sure that it will have plenty of crowd appeal, I had a preference for the more minerally-defined wines in their range this year. This is still a very well-made wine, but for fans of *Mâconnais* fruit tones, rather than soil. 2013-2020. **88.**

**2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles "Climat les Quarts"- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 Climat les Quarts is another quite ripe example of the vintage (13.5 percent), but it has a better vein of minerality to drive its generous and very pretty fruit tones than the Les Longeays bottling this year. The deep and classy nose is lovely, wafting from the glass in a blend of pear, tangerine, a touch of almond paste, elegant soil tones and a gentle topnote of orange zest. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and beautifully transparent, with a lovely core, fine focus and detail and a long, crisp and very elegant finish. This is a lovely wine. 2013-2020+. **90.**

**2011 Pouilly-Vinzelles Climat les Quarts "Cuvée Millerandée"- La Soufrandière**

The 2011 Climat les Quarts "Cuvée Millerandée" from the Bret Brothers is a very pretty wine that shows off plenty of intensity from the small berries that are used for this bottlings. This is a ripe example of the 2011 vintage, offering up scents of pear, mandarins, lovely soil tones, orange blossoms and a nice touch of vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and bright, with a good core, a fine base of soil, crisp acids and a very long, ripe finish that is still pretty young and could do with a year or two of bottle age to really blossom. The label here states that the wine is fully fourteen percent in alcohol (from the concentration of the small berries?), and it tastes as if this is quite accurate, as there is a bit of backend heat here that is currently uncovered on the youthful finish. This is good juice, but it may prove that it is just a touch too heady for its own good- time will tell. Certainly, the constituent components here are pretty impressive. 2014-2025? **88-90+?**





*The Roches des Vergisson and Solutré towering over the appellation of Pouilly-Fuissé.*

### **2011 Pouilly-Fuissé “Cuvée Terres de Fuissé”- Bret Brothers**

The 2011 Pouilly-Fuissé “Cuvée Terres de Fuissé” from the Bret Brothers is another very elegant and relatively low octane version of the vintage, tipping the scales at a very old school 12.5 percent alcohol. The bouquet is a lovely and quite refined blend of apple, tangerine, lovely, toasty soil tones, apple blossoms, a touch of orange oil and a bit of fresh almond in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and complex, with a lovely core of fruit, fine focus and very good balance on the long, zesty finish. This does not quite possess the same precision of soil signature or grip as the Climat bottlings, but it is a fine bottle that is long on both personality and depth. 2013-2025. **90.**

### **2011 Pouilly-Fuissé “Cuvée Terres de Vergisson”- Bret Brothers**

The Bret Brothers’ 2011 Pouilly-Fuissé “Cuvée Terres de Vergisson” is one of the riper examples of Pouilly-Fuissé in their lineup this year, reaching fully thirteen percent, but it is fresh, bright and very stylish at the same time. The fine bouquet is pretty much defined by its lovely fruit, with notes of pear, peach, a touch of orange zest augmenting notes of almond paste, musky floral tones and a nice touch of soil. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very generous on the attack, with a fine core, lovely focus and very good length on the fruit-driven, laid back and wide open finish. The acids here are a tad soft in comparison to many of the other 2011s in the Bret Brothers’ lineup this year, and while the wine is bright and fresh today, I would opt for drinking this up over the near-term, before one starts to yearn for a bit more cut and grip. 2013-2016. **88.**

### **2011 Pouilly-Fuissé Climat “En Carementrant”- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 Pouilly-Fuissé Climat “En Carementrant” from La Soufrandière is a more classic interpretation of the vintage than the riper Pouilly-Vinzelles “Cuvée Millerandée”, weighing in at a very civilized 12.5 percent alcohol. The bouquet shows off

the precision of this lower octane, jumping from the glass in a classy blend of delicious apple, fresh pear, lime blossom, a lovely base of complex soil tones and a touch of spring flowers in the upper register. On the palate the wine is medium-full, crisp and very transparent, with very good, but not great depth at the core, fine focus and nascent complexity and lovely bounce and structure on the long, soil-driven and youthful finish. This is a lovely wine today, but another couple of years of bottle age will certainly pay dividends with more complexity. 2015-2030. **92.**

**2011 Pouilly-Fuissé Climat “La Roche”- La Soufrandière (Bret Brothers)**

The 2011 La Roche from La Soufrandière is an absolutely beautiful bottle in the making, offering up a deep, vibrant and nascently complex aromatic mélange of apple, mandarins, lemon oil, apple blossoms and a complex and very refined base of chalky minerality. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and dancing, with a lovely core, great focus and balance, ripe acids and lovely focus and grip on the transparent and dancing finish. This is also a very refined and low octane example of the vintage, with only 12.5 percent alcohol, and the *terroir* reigns supreme here as a result. Lovely juice. 2014-2030. **92+.**

**2011 Pouilly-Fuissé Climat “Les Clos Reyssié”- Bret Brothers**

The 2011 Pouilly-Fuissé “Les Clos Reyssié” from the Bret Brothers is a bit more marked by its new oak than any of these other Pouilly-Fuissé bottlings, and while this adds a bit of early dramatic appeal on the nose, it also tends to take away some of the lift on the backend of the palate. The bouquet is deep and complex, offering up scents of apple, pear, almond paste, a very pretty base of soil, orange zest, spring flowers and vanillin oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine complexity, bright acids, good focus and a very long, slightly oaky finish. This has aspirations, and it may well be that with bottle age, it will distance itself from some of these other bottlings, but today, I am much more taken with the dancing sense of soil found in bottlings such as the 2011 La Roche or En Carentrant from La Soufrandière. I may be underrating this a tad, but today this comes across as just a touch heavy-handed in style, despite it probably having the best stuffing of the entire lineup in this vintage. 2015-2030+? **88+?**

**THE MAGICAL RIVESALTES OF DOMAINE CAZES**  
**UTTERLY BRILLIANT SWEET WINES THAT ARE NOT FOR DESSERT ONLY**



Domaine Cazes is one of the greatest producers of sweet wines that I have ever had the pleasure to come across. They are located in the wind-swept eastern region of the Languedoc and produce a wide range of wines from the appellation, with special emphasis laid on the great *Vins Doux Naturels* wines of Rivesaltes. This section of the Languedoc, flanked by the Mediterranean Sea to the east and the Pyrenees to the south lies just over the border from Cataluña's sub-region of Empordà and is the heart and soul of the sweet, fortified wines of France, with fully ninety percent of these glorious and distinctive wines produced here in this area of the Languedoc. In addition to Rivesaltes, this area of the Languedoc is also well-known for the sweet fortified wines from the appellations of Banyuls and Maury. This is a beautiful

area that I have never (yet) had the pleasure to visit in person and have had to content myself with vicarious visits through the prism of magical glasses of the wines of this region over the years. In mid-February of this year I was invited to attend an historical tasting of some of the greatest old wines gleaned from the cellars of Domaine Cazes to show how beautifully these sweet Rivesaltes wines age, or more precisely, how time seems to not affect them at all once they have been bottled up and tucked away in the cellar. While I have had great pleasure drinking the wines from this region in the past, I had never attended such a spectacular tasting of so many old and utterly profound dessert wines at one time from the Languedoc and was completely humbled by the magical quality of so many of these wines during the course of our tasting. While I call these wines dessert wines, that is perhaps unfair to the wines themselves, for though the wines are certainly quite sweet, they are also the most flexible wines at the table and the lunch

that we had prepared to go with many of these wines showed authoritatively that well-aged Rivesaltes is every bit as home with sweet or savory dishes (it went absolutely brilliantly with duck as the main course!) or simply sipped luxuriously on its own.

The Languedoc region has a long history and a rather tenuous attachment with greater France that dates back to the days of its independence from France in the Middle Ages, when the Languedoc was an independent principality and also the most cultured and prosperous region in all of Europe. It was a seat of learning, commerce and tolerance- particularly religious tolerance- at that time, which made it the envy of nobles in less enlightened regions of Europe and a thorn in the side of the Roman church, whose worldly power effectively stopped at the borders of the Languedoc. This reality eventually led to a brutal crusade being waged by northern European nobles and the Papacy against the vast majority of the population of the Languedoc during the period from 1209 to 1244 in what was known as the Albigensian Crusade, and it seems quite certain that more than nine hundred years after the start of this war, the ill will engendered during this brutal period of history has still not subsided. In fact, at the start of our tasting, the President of Domaine Cazes, Lionel Lavail was quick to point out in his introductory remarks that “I am not French, I am Catalàn.” This independent streak clearly also extends to the wines of the region, as the glorious bottlings of Rivesaltes that we sampled are utterly unique wines that do not have any true equivalents anywhere else in the world of wine. While the history of the Languedoc is long and fertile, the history of Domaine Cazes only stretches back to 1895- old by many standards, but a baby by the standards of the Languedoc- when Michel Cazes created the firm and began to make his own wines. Prior to 1895, like many of the other farmers in Rivesaltes, Michel Cazes grew grapes as part of his crop mix, but he sold off his grapes to small *négociants* in the town that actually produced the wines of the region.

Domaine Cazes went on at this smaller scale from 1895 until 1927, when Michel’s son, Aimé Cazes, convinced his father to purchase the nearby, eight hectare estate of Mas Joffre, which had been owned by the famous French military figure, Maréchal Joseph Joffre (who was born in Rivesaltes in 1852). The purchase of these eight hectares of vines in 1927 was to lead to a period of steady growth in vineyard parcels for Domaine Cazes over the coming decades, so that by the early 1950s, the domaine had reached forty hectares of vineyard land and today, with two hundred and thirty hectares of vineyards, it is the largest and most important vineyard owner in the appellation. Aimé Cazes was eventually succeeded by his two sons, André and Bernard Cazes in the 1960s and early 1970s. With the arrival of the third generation of Cazes children to oversee the estate, there began a sharing of responsibilities that continues down to this day, with older brother André Cazes overseeing the business side of the property, with marketing and management his fiefdom, while Bernard Cazes taking over sole responsibility for viticulture and winemaking at the property. Bernard Cazes had trained at the University of Bordeaux with the world-famous Professor Emile Peynaud in the late 1960s and arrived back at the family domaine in 1971. Today, it is his son, Emmanuel Cazes who continues on the oversight of the domaine’s viticultural and winemaking needs. He is joined in his direction of the estate by Lionel Lavail, who

arrived at the estate as *Directeur Général* and partner in 2004 and now oversees the commercial aspects of the business that had once been the responsibility of André Cazes.

One of the most important changes undertaken by Domaine Cazes in recent years was the decision to change their method of viticulture to *biodynamique* farming in 1997, and today they are the largest *biodynamie* producer in all of France. As Lionel Lavail observed, “after all of the chemical treatments that were put on the vineyards in the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, we felt that the wines had somehow become ‘flat’ and lacked precision and minerality in their personalities.” Additionally, “all of these treatments were not good for the health of our vineyard workers, not good for the health of our soils, so in the end, it was really a quite easy decision on the part of the domaine to convert to organic farming and then to *biodynamie*.” Their *biodynamique* farming now extends to all two hundred and thirty hectares of their vineyards, so it is not only the dessert wine parcels that are farmed in this manner, but the vineyards that also go into producing their dry wines as well. I have not yet had the pleasure to taste the full range of bottlings produced by the domaine, as in addition to dry white, red and rosé wines from the appellation of Côtes du Roussillon and *Vins du Pays Catalanes*, Domaine Cazes also produces an array of the sweeter wines such as Muscat de Rivesaltes and Banyuls, in addition to the great, old Rivesaltes wines that we tasted here in New York in February.



*Lionel Lavail, Directeur Général of Domaine Cazes, with 200 year-old foudres in the cellars in Rivesaltes.*

Of the beautiful, *Vins Doux Naturels* wines produced under the Rivesaltes appellation, there are actually three different gradations based on the color of the wines: Ambré, Tuilé and Grenat. These wines differ from the Muscat de Rivesaltes in that they are not produced solely from the Muscat d’Alexandria grape, but can be produced from a

variety of different grapes, including Grenache (in varying colors, as we will see), Macabeu (a workhorse white grape of great distinction across the frontier in Cataluña), Malvoisie and Petits Grains. For their bottlings of Rivesaltes Ambré, Tuilé and Grenat, Domaine Cazes uses solely grenache for the latter two, with the Ambré bottling often being the cuvée that draws upon a wider panoply of grape varieties. The wines are made in a manner somewhat similar to Port in that the grapes are allowed to ferment on their own up to about five or six percent alcohol, at which point the fermentation is stopped by the addition of grain neutral spirits to raise their finished alcohol level up to between fifteen and sixteen percent and leave behind approximately one hundred grams of residual sugar in the wines. It is the residual sweetness in the wines that protects them during their long *elevage* in old wooden *foudres* for a prolonged period of time, during which the colors of the Ambré and Tuilé bottlings of Rivesaltes to turn more brick, amber or tawny, or as one English wine merchant likes to term the colors of these distinctive wines: “the color of old gold.” The Grenat bottlings of Rivesaltes are not aged in an oxidative environment of old *foudres*, but rather in stainless steel tanks, to protect their dark color, so that they are actually the color of dark red wines, rather than the more amber or dark brick colors of the other two grades of Rivesaltes.

Grenache is one of the most important grape varieties in the Languedoc and it plays a key role in the production of *Vins Doux Naturels* wines at Domaine Cazes. There are variations in the color of the skins of various types of grenache, as it is a grape variety prone to genetic mutations, and the producers in the Languedoc make distinction between *grenache blanc*, *grenache gris* and *grenache noire*. Different colors (if you will) of grenache excel in various vintages, so that their percentage in any blend will depend upon how that particular variety has done in a given year, and also on the type of Rivesaltes that the estate is planning on producing. The various gradations of Rivesaltes: Ambré, Tuilé and Grenat, are made from a different blend of grapes, with many of the permitted varieties listed above going into the Ambré and Tuilé bottlings at Domaine Cazes (no Black Grenache for the Ambré, but it is included in the Tuilé cuvées), but the Rivesaltes Grenat made entirely from Black Grenache grapes to provide the dark, crimson color of this bottling. Rivesaltes Grenat will be bottled from tank and aged for three months in the bottle prior to release, so it is the most forward style of these *Vins Doux Naturels* wines and also the far darkest in color. Both the Rivesaltes Ambré and Tuilé are aged in the ancient, large *foudres* in the Cazes cellars (many two hundred years of age), and though a minimum of two and a half years is required for the AOC of Rivesaltes, the estate typically will keep these wines in *foudre* for a minimum of seven years before they are bottled, with several of the best lots often kept for many, many years longer. During the process of this extended *elevage* in old oak *foudres*, the wines lose a large quantity to evaporation (sometimes up to seventy percent of its volume), while they concentrate and evolve in terms of aromatics and flavors into their very unique and utterly compelling styles.

While a number of different grapes can be used for bottlings of Rivesaltes Ambré or Tuilé, in reality, most of the cuvées produced by Domaine Cazes are made from grenache. The domaine owns some very, very old vineyards of grenache, with many parcels of vines around one hundred years of age, and it is the various colors of grenache



that typically will make up their bottlings of Rivesaltes. For example, their 1999 Rivesaltes Ambré is made entirely from white grenache and their 1995 Rivesaltes Tuilé is made entirely from black grenache grapes. While I have alluded to the different colors of the various gradations of Rivesaltes, I have not described the differences as of yet. In general, the Rivesaltes Ambré is, as the name would suggest, amber or gently orange in color and is often similar in color to a fine honey. Rivesaltes Tuilé is more of a brick red in color, as the presence of the black grenache in the blend gives it a deeper hue. The Rivesaltes Grenat, which is the only gradation of these wines that is made to be drunk in its youth, is a dark red wine in color, though still sweet in style. As I noted above, other than the Rivesaltes Grenat bottlings, these wines are aged for an extended period of time in old *foudres* in the Domaine Cazes cellars to give the wines there mellowed complexity, with the majority of the Ambré and Tuilé bottlings aged for seven years in these big old barrels prior to bottling and preparation for release. The current releases from the estate of these two cuvées are from 1999 and 1995 respectively, showing that even after the wines are bottled, Domaine Cazes is in no hurry to rush them onto the market. In addition to extended aging in old wood (and at two hundred years of age, which is how old most of the *foudres* are here at Domaine Cazes, we do mean old wood!), some lots are also occasionally aged outside of the cellars in glass demi-johns or in smaller barrels to accentuate the aging process and build complexity in the final cuvée. This practice is much more typical with the production of the other great *Vins Doux Naturels* of the Languedoc- Maury and Banyuls- but it is used as part of the aging regimen for a percentage of the lots that are to go into the Rivesaltes bottlings at Domaine Cazes as well. It is not surprising after this type of *elevage*, with some aging in the heat of the day in smaller barrels or glass demi-johns, as well as long (and often very long, as the seven years in *foudre* is often the minimum that these wines will spend in wood prior to bottling) aging in cask gives the wines an impressive resistance to oxidation once they are bottled, and the wines can keep for what seems like forever once bottles are opened and the wines evolve very, very slowly as the years march past.

It was the great longevity of the top cuvées of Rivesaltes that was the focal point of the tasting I attended of Domaine Cazes wines here in New York in February, as the domaine had decided to bottle up a few examples of some of the oldest casks that they still had in the cellars in Rivesaltes to demonstrate how long these wines last and how their complexity grows exponentially with long aging. For one of the great traditions of the wines from this region is that not all of the old wines are bottled up once they have seen seven, ten or even twenty years of aging in old *foudres*, and most top domaines in Rivesaltes will keep casks of wines that stretch back many, many decades without bottling them. These reserve wines, which have the official AOC of Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age” (though this moniker can be a bit deceiving, as a wine must only be aged a minimum of five years to receive this appellation- which is two years less than what Domaine Cazes ages their Ambré and Tuilé bottlings) and will vary from producer to producer. One can find great old casks of reserve wines like this in places such as Porto as well, though there these old Tawny Ports are generally only used as blending backbones for bottlings of thirty or forty year-old Tawny Ports, and they are very, very rarely bottled on their own, as was the case with all of these great old Rivesaltes on display in New York. As Lionel Lavail observed at our tasting, “we wanted to put on a

series of tastings of these old vintages to help keep the tradition of great aged *Vins Doux Naturels* alive in the Languedoc- for it is a tradition that we value very much- and to keep in people's minds just how great these old sweet wines can be from top *terroirs* and dedicated *vignerons*. " These old vintages are not necessarily Ambré or Tuilé when they start out life, as decisions on which casks to hold back for extended aging in the cellars are made from impressions of the quality and structure of the wine after seven or eight years in *foudre*, and consequently, not all are made from the same blends, with some vintages relying more on white grenache and others on black grenache. As the long barrel aging tends to move all of these wines in a similar direction of spicy and mellowed complexity over the decades, the distinctions between Ambré and Tuilé begin to narrow in any case (though as the photo below will attest, they do not disappear even after more than a half century of aging the colors can vary quite a bit) and the Hors d'Age classification makes no distinction between the various gradations that the wines may have started out their lives.

The estate produced a special, commemorative bottling of Rivesaltes in the 1978 vintage, called "Cuvee Aimé", that was produced during the direction of the brothers André and Bernard Cazes and dedicated to their father, Aimé Cazes, who did so much during his tenure to expand and firmly establish this estate as one of the leaders of great, aged Rivesaltes. The wine was aged for twenty-two years in those two hundred year-old *foudres* in the Cazes cellars and bottled in the year 2000. It is an utterly spectacular wine that is really still fairly young in its evolutionary arc and fully underscores that one type of grenache is not superior to another when it comes to fashioning great and long-lived Rivesaltes, as the wine is comprised of a blend of eighty percent grenache *blanc* and twenty percent grenache *noir*. It is clearly the next legendary effort to be released from Domaine Cazes (who knows how many of these "legends in waiting" are aging comfortably in *foudre* in the estate's cellars?) and is clearly in the same magical league as the greatest of the old vintages that I have tasted from the domaine, such as the 1933, 1943 and 1949! I do not know how many bottles the estate still has of this great wine, but it has to be decidedly more than they have of the truly old bottles from the vintages produced before and during the second world war, and it is a wine that I would make every effort to latch onto in the next few years, before the stocks at the domaine start to get whittled down a bit.

The style of these great old Rivesaltes is very interesting, as they share some aromatic and flavor elements with great old, sweeter-styled Madeira, as well as some elements that remind me of really old Vouvrays from years where *passerillage* is the defining factor (rather than botrytis) and others that are more like the spicy nuances of hundred year-old Port or great old Cognacs that have been aged forever in casks. But, none of these comparisons really do the wines justice, as in essence great old Rivesaltes is a wine unto itself, as its alcohol level tends to be lower than either Port or Madeira, but its gently fortified nature gives its aromatic and flavor profile a distinct vibrancy that is unique and utterly appealing. Like all wines that are aged for an extended period in cask, the color pigments tend to fall out of the wines over this long aging process and most of the really old Rivesaltes wines are gentle tawny and varying shades of orange, copper or bronze. One finds that invariably, the darker wines from the forties or fifties were wines



that contain a percentage of black grenache in their original *cépages*, while those that are more amber or “old gold” in color relied more on grenache *blanc* or *gris* in their blends. The other interesting variation on these old vintages of Rivesaltes is that they do vary quite a bit in how much sweetness has lasted in them down through the years, and while they are all still decidedly sweet wines, some are more dessert wine-like than others, and vintages such as the beautifully light on its feet and quite modestly sweet 1960 Rivesaltes is quite a bit drier than a vintage such as the 1954. Typically, there is a great potpourri of spice tones in these wines (sometimes with a bit of *rancio* such as one finds in great old Cognac), with notes such as orange zest or orange peel augmenting fruit tones such as fig, apricot or dried cherries. There can also be lovely savory notes in the wines (such as celery seed- which I often find in really old Port as well), caramel or honey tones, and really lovely soil tones from the impressive *terroirs* found in this area of the Languedoc.

As I noted at the outset, old Rivesaltes strikes me as one of the most flexible sweet wines at the table that I have ever crossed paths with in my years of tasting, and particularly some of the less sweet old vintages like the 1960 or the 1943 really do work well with savory dishes (and would be great fun to prepare dishes to match with), we found at our tasting that these wines can be overwhelmed with cheeses that are too strong and are probably not particularly good matches with strong blue cheeses in general (and certainly did not work with the one we had on our plates at the tasting, which completely overpowered the complexity in these great wines). I would still really like these old vintages with a cheese course at the end of the meal- which I think might be the very best moment in a tasting dinner to highlight their stunning complexity and breed- but, one should choose more mild cheeses to go along with these wines. I would think that they would go beautifully with the gentle nuttiness of aged Comté or Manchego (or a similar, refined hard cheese), and I would love to try pairing them up with elegant soft cheeses such as Brillat de Saverin (with truffles, perhaps?) or Pierre Robert. If I were going to be adventurous and try a blue-veined cheese with these wines, it would have to be a very delicate one such as Humboldt Fog from northern California, rather than a strong one such as Roquefort or Cabrales. These wines would also work very well with a properly matched dessert, like a *Tart Tatin* or a similar, gently-caramelized fruit tart, but I would be cautious not to serve something too sweet with them and would studiously avoid chocolate, which is often suggested as a pairing with another great sweet wine from the Languedoc- Banyuls- and which I have never thought was a successful food and wine pairing.

In the lineup that was assembled here in New York by Domaine Cazes, examples of several of the greatest old wines in the cellar were bottled up to be put on display, but this was not a “museum tasting” (though in fact, it was held at the restaurant at the Museum of Modern Art here in New York!) of wines that are not commercially available, as each and every one of these old vintages that the domaine chose to show at the tasting is also available for purchase from the estate. Though the prices of the oldest and rarest vintages are not cheap, they struck me as eminently fair for the age of the wines and their absolute, transcendent brilliance, and in the over-heated pricing structure of so many of the world’s older wines, these really are absolute steals! If the notes that follow pique your interest in the wines, I urge you to contact the domaine directly (for folks in Europe

or Asia) or their American importer, Robert Kacher, for those of use marooned in the American wine market. I am sure that there are not large quantities of the oldest vintages, but these old *foudres* that the wine are aged in do contain at least two thousand liters when full, so there is some quantity to start with prior to the long aging process. I should also mention that though I have listed all of the older vintages below as Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”, Domaine Cazes does not actually use this term on their front labels, which only list them as Rivesaltes with the vintage from which they hail. The projected windows of drinkability for all these old vintages is pretty much the same (2013-2060), as I really had no idea when these great old wines are going to slow down. They all clearly had forty or fifty more years of potential longevity ahead of them, but given the timeless nature of old Rivesaltes, perhaps that is underestimating their true life spans! As the notes below will attest, these are utterly distinct and unique wines of brilliant complexity and character, and though they may not be as well known in the wine world at large as their superb quality deserves, they are truly some of the wine world’s greatest treasures.

### **1999 Rivesaltes “Ambré”- Domaine Cazes**

As I noted in the introduction, most bottlings of Ambré from Domaine Cazes are aged a minimum of seven years in *foudre* prior to bottling, but the superb 1999 was not bottled until the end of 2012 and spent nearly thirteen years in old cask. The bouquet seems deeper and more developed than the 1998 version, offering up a complex and quite classy nose of cherries, orange peel, incipient notes of brown butter, lovely soil tones and a gentle topnote of caramel. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with fine focus, bright acids and very good length and grip on the still quite primary finish. Like the 1998, I would tuck this wine away in the cellar for five or six years to allow some of its secondary layers of complexity to start to emerge, as it is still very early days for this fine wine. 2018-2075. **91+**.

### **1998 Rivesaltes “Ambré”- Domaine Cazes (375 ml.)**

The 1998 Ambré from Domaine Cazes was produced entirely from grenache *blanc* grapes and is really a beautiful wine, offering up a pure and complex nose of tangerine, apricot, new leather, a hint of the tea leaves to come, honeycomb, chalky soil tones, brown sugar and orange peel. On the palate the wine is pure, complex and still fairly young, with its full-bodied format still fairly primary, with a very good core of fruit, lovely focus and balance and a long, youthful finish. At this stage in the wine’s evolution, it still shows a touch of its spirit on the backend (or at least the 1998 is at this stage), which I would fully expect to be subsumed into the other structural elements of the wine with more bottle age. I love the color of this wine, which is a very pretty, melon-like orange tone. A lovely wine. 2018-2075. **92+**.

### **1996 Rivesaltes “Ambré”- Domaine Cazes (375 ml.)**

The Domaine Cazes 1996 Rivesaltes Ambré has moved beyond its youthful, primary stage and is starting to show plenty of secondary layers of complexity on both the nose and palate at age seventeen. The outstanding bouquet jumps from the glass in a mix of white cherries, orange peel, a touch of the smokiness to come, a beautifully complex base of soil (that will turn salty as the wine evolves further), honeyed nuts, incipient spice tones and a touch of leather. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and beautifully balanced, with its spirit seamlessly woven into the tapestry of the wine, with lovely complexity, fine mid-palate depth, crisp acids and outstanding length and grip

on the focused and classy finish that closes with a nice touch of orange peel. This is really a lovely vintage for this wine. 2013-2070+. **93.**

**1995 Rivesaltes “Ambré”- Domaine Cazes**

I do not know for how long Domaine Cazes has been making their Ambré bottling solely from grenache *blanc*, but the 1995 is again produced entirely from that single varietal. The wine is just beginning to show some movement in its color, with its orange tone starting to deepen a bit and be flecked with notes of amber. I note that both this and the 1999 vintage are fifteen percent alcohol, whereas the 1996 Ambré is sixteen percent. The bouquet is superb, wafting from the glass in a complex constellation of orange zest, raspberries, brown butter, tea leaves, a bit of almond, a lovely base of soil tones, hints of nutmeg and other gentle spice tones and honey. On the palate the wine is deep, pure, complex and very elegant, with its full-bodied format nicely delineated and light on its feet. The core is excellent here and the wine is beautifully balanced, with outstanding length and grip on the dancing finish. A classic in the making. 2013-2075. **94.**

**1995 Rivesaltes “Tuilé”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1995 Rivesaltes “Tuilé” from Domaine Cazes was produced entirely from black grenache and is a bit more evolved aromatically than the 1995 Ambré. The wine offers up a refined and complex nose of oranges, cloves, a touch of caramelized banana, incipient notes of honey, citrus peel and a bit of spiciness that seems almost cedar-like in complexion. On the palate the wine is complex, full-bodied and nicely transparent, with fine focus and balance, good, but not quite the same superb depth at the core that is found in the '95 Ambré, with sound acids and lovely length and grip on the fine finish. I like this very much, but it seems that 1995 was a bit better of a vintage for grenache *blanc* and the Ambré from this year will live longer and reach a bit higher level on the quality ladder over the course of its long life. That is not to say that this wine is not excellent, but if I had to choose only one wine in this vintage, it would be the Ambré. 2013-2050. **90.**

**1978 Rivesaltes “Cuvee Aimé”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1978 Rivesaltes “Cuvee Aimé” from Domaine Cazes was produced by the brothers Cazes, Bernard and André, in tribute to their father Aimé and was aged in *foudre* for fully twenty-two years prior to its bottling! The wine is a blend of eighty percent white grenache and twenty percent black grenache and has evolved very little in terms of color, now taking on a deep and brilliant hue of orange. The wine is absolutely brilliant on both the nose and palate, with the bouquet offering up a magical blend of oranges, fresh figs, white cherries, brown butter, salty soil tones, a touch of hazelnut, a touch of honey, citrus peel and a potpourri of spice tones that include cardamom and allspice. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and racy, with a rock solid core of fruit, dazzling complexity, laser-like focus, zesty acidity and simply stunning length and grip on the pure and perfectly balanced finish. This is a legend in the making! 2013-2075+. **97.**

**1962 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1962 Hors d’Age was the first really old wine that we tasted in our lineup at the Modern here in New York and it was a lovely way to start off what would turn out to be an utterly spectacular tasting! The color on this wine was a deep, golden brown, which indicates that there is more black grenache in this blend and the wine started out its long life as a Tuilé cuvée. The bouquet is a lovely and quite spicy blend of desiccated cherries, honey, brown butter, allspice, a hint of cedar and a *rancio* topnote. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, complex and nicely balanced, with bright acids, fine focus and grip

and a very long, classy finish. This is really a lovely bottle that has decades and decades of life still ahead of it, but in the constellation of great old vintages of Rivesaltes from Domaine Cazes, one has to put this excellent wine in the “good, but not great” camp, as there are older vintages here that are a notable step up in complexity! 2013-2060+. **90.**

**1960 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

1960 is my birth year and I have had only a few truly memorable bottles from this vintage, and never any truly great wines until this stunning bottle of Hors d’Age from Domaine Cazes. This is one of the lighter-colored old vintages from the estate, indicating that it began life as an Ambré, and it is a touch drier than some of these old wines, but stunningly complex and poised. The color is a tawny amber, flecked with green at the rim (and quite reminiscent of some old Madeiras that I have had the pleasure to taste). The bouquet is vibrant and absolutely stunning in its complexity, jumping from the glass in a superb blend of white cherries, orange peel, savory elements that recall celery seed, cloves, salty soil tones and a nice dollop of clover honey. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied, beautifully complex and quite light on its feet, with less sweetness than the 1962, but more precision and soil inflection, laser-like focus, a rock solid core and outstanding length and grip on the perfectly balanced, moderately sweet and tangy finish. This is one of these great old vintages of Rivesaltes that I would love to serve with a savory course! 2013-2060. **95.**



*Note the rather dramatic variations in color of the very oldest vintages of Rivesaltes served at the tasting.*

#### **1954 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1954 Hors d’Age is significantly darker-colored than the 1960 and shows that there is plenty of black grenache in the blend. This is a broader-shouldered and slightly sweeter style than the 1960, but equally superb on both the nose and palate. The beautiful bouquet offers up a stunning blend of brown sugar, apricot, orange peel, a touch of cinnamon stick, caramel and a marvelously complex base of soil tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and again very, very pure, with superb mid-palate concentration, bright acids and outstanding length and grip on the focused and utterly classic finish. This is decidedly more of a dessert wine in style than the drier 1960, or it would be utterly magical to finish up a tasting dinner with the cheese course! A great wine by any stretch of the imagination, but I have to give a very slight nod to the sentimental favorite of the 1960, which is even a tad more transparent at its slightly less intense level of sweetness. The two wines make a fascinating contrast in the variations of style of great old Rivesaltes! 2013-2060. **94.**

#### **1949 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1949 Hors d’Age from Domaine Cazes is again a touch less dark than the 1954, with more of an orange-amber color that promises great things, and indeed, this is an utterly profound and magical bottle of old wine (if this is indeed an old wine by the timeless standards of Rivesaltes!) with stunning complexity on the nose and perfect pitch on the palate. The utterly spectacular bouquet wafts from the glass in a blaze of *rancio* spice tones, oranges, white cherries, cloves, a touch of cigar smoke, citrus peel, vanilla bean, a dollop of salty soil and star anise. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and magically complex, with a great core, racy acids, gem-like precision and a nearly endless finish of seamless balance and outstanding grip. This is one of the greatest dessert wines I have ever had the pleasure to taste, and though I actually drank this glorious wine with the duck course at our tasting (and with which it worked perfectly, by the way!), I would tend to want to serve this with a cheese course or on its own before dessert to allow all of its complexity to take center stage. A brilliant wine. 2013-2060. **98.**

#### **1945 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1945 Hors d’Age is another beautiful old dessert wine, but it shows just a whisper of volatile acidity on both the nose and palate (which I suppose is not too surprising, given how long it stayed in old *foudre* prior to be bottled up for release). The lovely old nose offers up a blend of orange peel, brown sugar, salty soil tones, *rancio*, tobacco smoke and gently caramelized nutty tones. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with excellent complexity, fine focus and grip and a very long, concentrated and palate-staining finish. This is a darker color than some of these old vintages and probably started out life as a Tuilé with plenty of black grenache in the blend. Fine old juice with plenty of life still ahead of it. 2013-2060. **93.**

#### **1943 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1943 Hors d’Age from Domaine Cazes is a very deep amber color, but not as dark as the 1945. The wine is absolutely stunning on both the nose and palate and clearly one of the great old vintages for this estate. The magical bouquet is a seamless and vibrant mix of honey, cloves and similar spice tones, honeyed cherries, smoke, orange zest, a lovely base of soil and again, like the 1960, plenty of savory elements reminiscent of things like celery seed. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and stunningly complex, with great elegance and transparency down to the soil, outstanding focus and

balance and lovely bounce on the very, very long and tangy finish. This bears quite a bit of resemblance to the lovely 1960, but is a shade deeper at the core and perhaps just a touch more caramelized in style. What a brilliant wine! 2013-2060. **96.**

**1933 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

When one thinks of all the things that were going on in the world in 1933-a particularly crazy time in France in the simmering era of the Third Republic- it is amazing that this great wine was not only made, but has been able to withstand the vicissitudes of time and is with us today! The color on the 1933 is dark amber and one of the darkest in the lineup, but I am not sure if this indicative of having started out life as a Tuilé with black grenache, or simply a function of its long aging in cask. In any event, the wine is flat out brilliant, soaring from the glass in a great mélange of white cherries, orange peel, brown butter, celery seed, salty soil tones, honey and a topnote of new leather. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and remarkably refined, with superb mid-palate concentration, great acidity and focus, seamless balance and endless length on the dancing and magical finish. Another utterly profound old wine, and like all of these other old vintages of Rivesaltes, it seems like it could go on at this brilliant level forever! 2013-2060. **98.**

**1931 Rivesaltes “Hors d’Age”- Domaine Cazes**

The 1931 Hors d’Age is again quite a dark amber in color and the wine is a bit deeper-pitched both aromatically and flavor-wise than the 1933 that was served alongside of it. This is another beautiful wine, offering up a stunning bouquet of orange, caramelized bananas, brown butter, smoke, salty soil tones, honey and just a whisper of celery seed somewhere in the upper register. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and brilliantly complex, with a more evolved flavor profile than the timeless 1933 version, but still plenty of structural integrity, great focus and balance and a very long, complex finish that closes with impressive grip and precision. Another absolutely stunning old wine. 2013-2060. **95.**