

Côte de Nuits

This northern part of the Côte d'Or is better known for reds than whites, with approximately 80% of production being Pinot Noir. The Côte de Nuits is 13 miles total north to south and boasts 24 Grand Crus that form a patchwork on the eastern-facing slopes looking toward the Valley of the Saone River. The Grand Crus of the Côte de Nuits are some of the smallest appellations in France (due to structure of post French Revolution inheritance laws). The village of Gevrey-Chambertin has nine Grand Crus, more than any other village in the Côte d'Or. Côte de Nuits Grand Crus tend to be Burgundy's most powerful and long-lived Pinot Noirs, as well as its most famous.

Gevrey-Chambertin

General Characteristics - Largest wine-producing village in Burgundy's Côte d'Or, with vineyards spilling over into the next door (to the north) commune of Brochon. Classic Gevrey-Chambertin is typically deeper in color, firmer in body and more tannic in structure than most red Burgundy. The best can develop into the richest, most regal, most complete and long-lived Pinot Noir in the world. This is largely thanks to the iron-rich clay soils, though much depends on whether the vineyard is located on either the steeper slopes (Clos St Jacques) or the deeper, flatter soils (Clos Prieur, Combottes).

Grand Crus - Chambertin, Chambertin-Clos de Bèze, Charmes-Chambertin, Mazoyères-Chambertin, Chapelle-Chambertin, Griotte-Chambertin, Latricières-Chambertin, Mazis-Chambertin and Ruchottes-Chambertin. The 1er Cru of "Clos St Jacques" is often considered a "super 1er Cru" which can approach the quality of a Grand Cru (especially chez Rousseau).

Benchmark Producers – Denis Bachelet, Dugat-Py, Fourrier, Mortet, Rousseau, Jean-Louis Trapet

Morey-Saint Denis

General Characteristics - Morey is sometimes ignored between its two famous (and larger) neighbors, Chambolle-Musigny and Gevrey-Chambertin, but its wines are of equal class, combining the power of Gevrey with the finesse of Chambolle, and often a lovely earthy/spicy/irony quality as well to the aromatics. Morey St Denis, being that it is bit less famous, can often provide excellent value, especially on the villages and 1er Cru levels.

Grand Crus - Clos St Denis and Clos de la Roche the most widely available. Clos des Lambrays (almost) and Clos de Tart (entirely) are monopolies of the domains which bear the same names.

Benchmark Producers - Dujac, Ponsot, Clos de Tart, Domaines des Lambrays, Hubert Lignier, Truchot-Martin (now sold)

Chambolle-Musigny

General Characteristics - Chambolle produces the most elegant wines in the Côte de Nuits, having more active chalk and less clay in the soil than the other villages. The wines may be a little lighter in color and less tannic than say Gevrey-Chambertin, but they are fine, elegant and floral. Often the chalk itself comes through in the texture and aromatics of the wines.

Grand Crus - Le Musigny is one of the absolute top vineyards in all of Burgundy, producing wines of extraordinary complexity and intensity and yet with a magical velvety character. Bonnes Mares tends to have a firmer structure and ages very well. The 1er Cru of Les Amoureuses, which is right next to Musigny, is often considered one of the "Super 1er's", a wonderfully sensual wine which often approaches grand cru status.

Benchmark Producers - Comte Georges de Vogüé, Mugnier, Roumier, and Ghislaine Barthod.

Vougeot

General Characteristics - Most of the wine produced in this small village comes from one single walled grand cru vineyard, the famous Clos de Vougeot. The vineyard in its present form dates from 1336 (when it was first planted by monks of the Citeaux) although it was not until the following century that it was entirely enclosed by stone walls. The wines tend to be a bit rustic in their youth, but age beautifully.

Grand Crus - Clos de Vougeot. It is both the smallest commune and largest clos in the Cote d'Or. Generally, the vineyards near the middle and upper part of the Clos are considered better than the vineyards on the lower slope that abut the RN74.

Benchmark Producers - Anne Gros, Grivot, Liger-Belair, Meo-Camuzet, Château de la Tour, and René Engel (now sold)

Vosne-Romanée

General Characteristics - The small commune of Vosne-Romanée is the Côte de Nuits' brightest star and produces some of the finest and most expensive Pinot Noir wines in the world. Its wines have an extraordinary intensity of fruit which manages to combine power and finesse more magically than in any other part of the Côte d'Or. The best balance extraordinary depth, a haunting, often floral/violet perfume, plus richness with elegance and breeding.

Grand Crus - Situated just north of Nuits St Georges, Vosne-Romanée boasts 6 Grand Cru vineyards, 3 of which include the suffix Romanée to which the village of Vosne appended its name in 1866. In 1760 the property was bought by Prince de Conti, and subsequently became known as Romanée-Conti. There is also La Romanée, La Tache, Richebourg, Romanée St-Vivant, and La Grande Rue.

Benchmark Producers – Arnoux-Lascaux, Domaine de la Romanée Conti (DRC), Leroy, Cathiard, Grivot, Liger-Belair, Meo-Camuzet, Mugneret-Gibourg (Georges Mugneret), Emmanuel Rouget, Henri Jayer (now deceased)