



Burgundy Club

FALL 2019



Welcome to the latest edition of the **Caveau Burgundy Club** – a twice-yearly tutored tasting and exploration of the great wines and terroirs of Burgundy.

This club functions just like our **Champagne Club** - (and if you're not already a member, email us - scott@caveauselections.com. to sign-up.) Also, check out our new "**House Wine**" **Clubs** if you're interested in a steady supply of delicious Burgs at around \$20 per bottle.

The wines in each 6-bottle shipment have been specifically selected to help educate and illustrate – each shipment is essentially a Burgundy seminar-in-a-box. You can use all of this to stage your own tasting seminar at home, or of course you can just drink the wines one by one. Whichever path you choose – there's lots of good Burgundy in your future!

Where is the value? Plus, a study in terroir

The crazy demand for top Burgundies around the world started about 20 years ago, and has continued to climb upward exponentially year after year. Most "Blue Chip" Grand Cru Burgs are now out of the reach of all but a few, as the prices seem to have not found a ceiling yet. That said, the overall quality of Burgundy - all Burgundy top to bottom - has never been better at any time in history. The fact that the lower-tier appellations (Bourgogne and Villages) are now consistently excellent is partially due to the fact that producers can now sell those wines for a couple Euros more than they could before, giving them enough of a margin and incentive to put the time, care, and crop-level control into vineyards that did not used to get much love. Climate change has also benefited these wines, and will continue to do so in our lifetimes. Long term, that's a different story, however.

So where is the value? We've been talking about this for years, and the good news is there are more places to look for value than ever. Basically, value can be found just about anywhere - but you still need to know where to look. There are over-priced and under-performing Bourgognes, under-priced and over-performing Grand Crus, and everything in between. So we'll start off with three yummy reds that we find to be excellent values, with examples from across the appellation hierarchy.

Then we'll move on to a deeper dive into the famous Burgundian Village of Nuits-St. Georges, and explore this vaunted terroir with three different wines that showcase the diversity and complexity of the appellation. It's going through a bit of a metamorphosis as we speak, and many of the wines are not what you've been led to expect - and that's a good thing! Suffice it to say, these days it is decidedly not your grandfather's Nuits-St. Georges.

Burgundy Basics

The Burgundy region of France has been producing what are widely considered to be the world's finest Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays for nearly a thousand years. Burgundy is a relatively small area (only about 13,500 acres of vines in Burgundy's Côte d'Or, as opposed to Bordeaux's 235,000 acres or California's 515,000.) Oregon has recently grown larger than Burgundy, with some 18,000 vineyard acres now planted.

As in Oregon, most of the winegrowers and producers in Burgundy are small, family operations. The average estate size is about 15 acres, enough to produce about 3,500 cases of wine each year. Those 15 acres are often split into 10 or more tiny parcels of vineyards scattered around several different vineyards and villages — so production of each wine is often only a few hundred cases or less.

While it can seem quite complicated, even perplexing at times, in reality Burgundy is fairly simple to decipher.

Red = Pinot Noir. If it's a red wine from Burgundy, it is made from the Pinot Noir grape. (Beaujolais, while technically part of the Burgundy region, is truly a different world altogether. Beaujolais reds are made from the Gamay Noir grape.)

White = Chardonnay. If it's a white wine from Burgundy, it's a Chardonnay. (Again, there are minor exceptions you'll rarely see — there's a white grape known as Aligoté that produces some very inexpensive, lower-level wines — but it will not come into play in anything we're discussing here.)

Unlike America, France has legal classifications for their wines. In Burgundy, the actual vineyards themselves, rather than the producer or wines, are given a level of classification. There are four levels:

Grand Cru — The best of the best. There are 32 Grand Cru vineyards in Burgundy, accounting for less than 2% of all Burgundy wine production. Grand Cru wines mention on the label only the producer and name of the vineyard — as in “Montrachet” or “Musigny” — the name of the village is not deemed necessary in the case of these great vineyards.

Premier Cru — (Also written as 1er Cru) One notch below the Grand Crus — there are hundreds at this level, and the quality varies widely. The best Premiers rival the Grand Crus, the lesser ones seem barely deserving of the ranking. These makeup about 10% of total production. A Premier Cru wine will mention the name of the village and possibly an individual vineyard on the label, as in “Pommard-Rugiens” or “Vosne-Romanée - Les Suchots” — if it indeed comes from a single vineyard. It will always bear the mark “Premier Cru” or “1er Cru”.

If the wine is a blend of more than one 1er Cru vineyard within a given village, it will simply bear the designation “1er Cru” without any vineyard designation.

Village — Grapes for a village wine come from one or many vineyards surrounding a specific Burgundian village, for example Vosne-Romanée or Puligny-Montrachet. These are classified below the 1er Cru level, but can often be lovely wines and great values. Village wines are about 43% of the total pie. The label will simply state the name of the village (although in some cases the name of a specific vineyard will also be mentioned, even though it is not of Premier Cru status.)

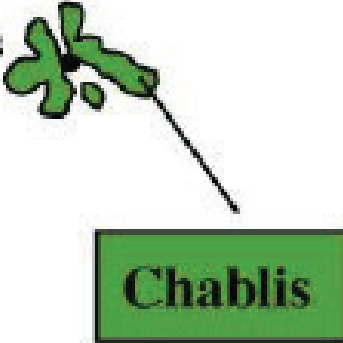
Regional (Bourgogne) — A bit less than half of all Burgundy vineyards (45%) are classified at the regional level. In the hands of dedicated and talented producers these can be lovely wines. In the hands of others they can be thin, weedy, and rather unpleasant. These wines are labeled as Bourgogne Rouge or Bourgogne Blanc, or Bourgogne Pinot Noir or Bourgogne Chardonnay.

Most of the vineyards in Burgundy are owned by multiple owners — as many as 70 or 80 different owners in some cases. (In the rare cases that a single producer owns the entirety of a specific vineyard, this is designated as a “**Monopole.**”) This means that each winery may own only a few rows of the vineyard, and will make only a few barrels of that specific wine each year (but they are likely to own small pieces of several other vineyards as well.) So, not all wines from the same vineyard are created equal. The quality can vary widely from producer to producer. In Burgundy, the most important consideration is in fact the producer. Get to know the styles of different producers, and zero in on the ones you like best. They will likely give you the most enjoyment year in and year out regardless of the classification level.



BURGUNDY

Chablis



Chablis

Côte de Nuits

Hautes Côtes de Nuits

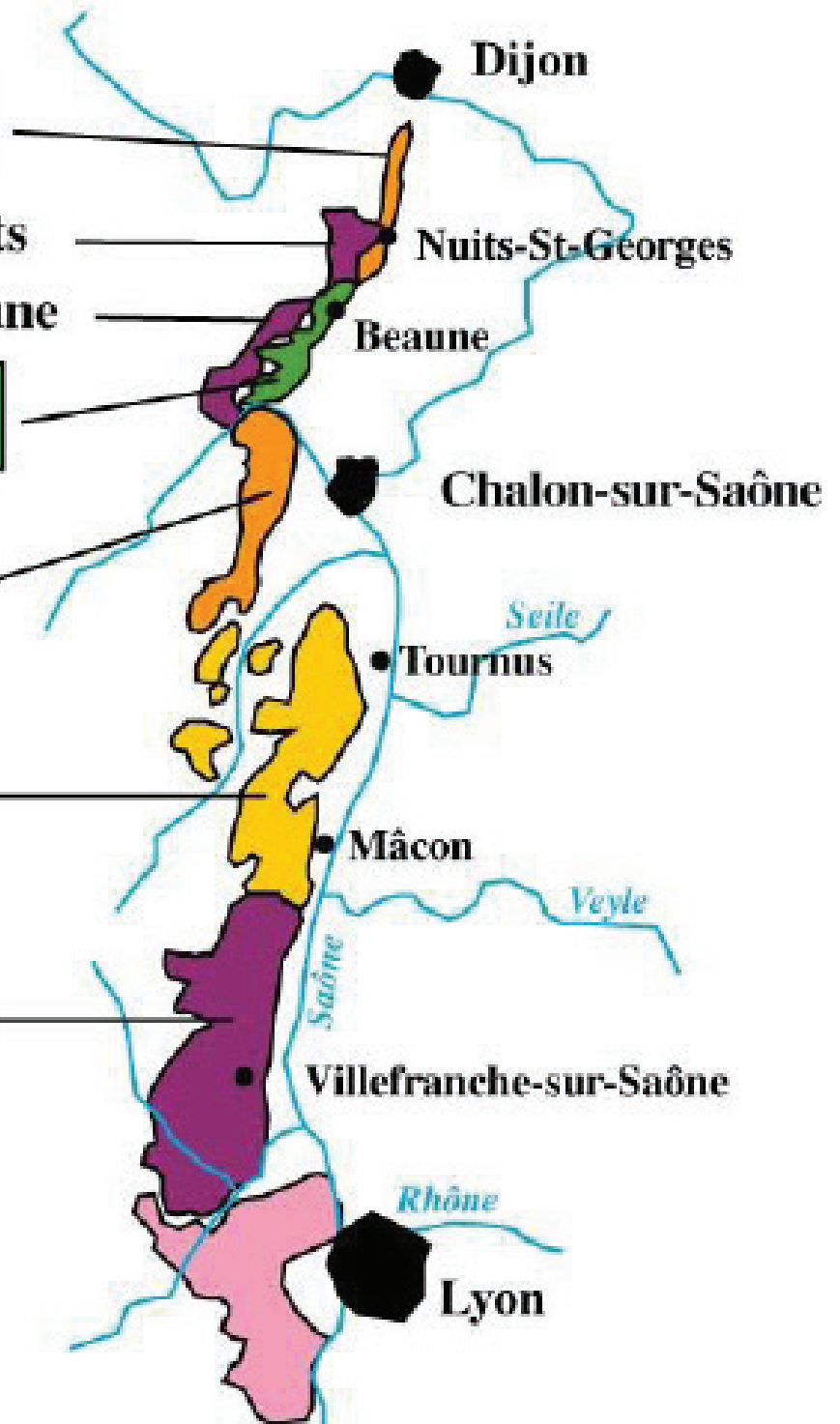
Hautes Côtes de Beaune

Côte de Beaune

Côte Chalonnaise

Maconnais

Beaujolais



Generic Burgundy - "Bourgogne"

Across the board, the quality in Burgundy is better than it's ever been. Better farming, better equipment, and a hungrier market have all contributed to making Burgundy consistently excellent - this in a region where three years out of ten were good historically, and another three out of ten could be pretty mediocre at best. The warming climate over the last 25 years has also been a boost - especially in the regional "Bourgogne" level vineyards, where achieving sufficient ripeness was a rather regular problem for the past 100+ years. At the same time, a concerted effort to reduce the yields in these parcels has completed the picture. From the better producers, a generic "Bourgogne Rouge" can be a very pleasurable bottle AND even offer a good measure of complexity these days. It is now one of the first places to look for delicious, under \$40 red Burgs.

When harvest begins each year in Burgundy, the producers typically start with their Grand Cru and best 1er Cru holdings - if they're lucky enough to have any. These sites are the most well situated to get fully ripe every year, even in the more difficult years, and thus they are usually the first to ripen. Then, the vigneron will move on down the hierarchy of their holdings, often getting around to picking the Bourgogne sites when they've finished with everything else. This can often be 8-10 days after they started picking. By that time the Bourgogne grapes could have become over-ripe, or started to rot, or succumbed to mildew or botrytis, or finally achieved a full beautiful ripeness. Back when the Bourgogne wines could only command a price of a measly 2 or 3 Euros, they didn't really care that much - these parcels were almost an afterthought.

Now, with these parcels ripening nicely every year, they're more top of mind, and the effort is being made to pick when the grapes are ready, rather than getting to them "whenever". You can drive up and down RN74, the main road through the Côte d'Or, and see mile after mile of manicured, well-tended vineyards on the east side of the road (generally the dividing line between Village and Bourgogne appellation boundaries). 20 years ago those parcels looked as if they'd been barely tended to, if not virtually neglected.



The Wines

1. 2017 Bourgogne Pinot Noir Domaine Heresztyn-Mazzini \$35

This is from a nice 1.87-acre parcel in the lieu-dit “Champ Franc” on the eastern edge of Gevrey-Chambertin. Florence Heresztyn and her husband Simon have taken over her family estate, the former Domaine Heresztyn, and have taken the wines to new heights in a short amount of time. They’ve dramatically improved the viticulture, eliminating herbicides and moving to organic and Biodynamic practices.

The soil gets much deeper and richer as one moves away from the slope and out into the plane, and Champ Franc has a good foot or two of rich topsoil before reaching the Comblanchien limestone bedrock. The result is a wine that, in the warm 2017 vintage, shows an exceptional level of richness as well as a distinct minerality - a combination that is not often found at the Bourgogne level.

Florence typically uses a varying percentage of whole-cluster in her vinifications, but she de-stemmed 100% for this '17 Bourgogne, to accentuate the beautiful plum and dark-cherry fruit that the sunny, warm ripening period brought to the vintage. There's good depth and persistence on the finish - which long-time Burg-lovers will be surprised to find on a wine at this level. Not long ago most Bourgogne Rouge was rather washed-out, limp and short. It's a whole new world, and this is a great example of just how good a “humble” Bourgogne can be. Absolutely delicious now, and should be enjoyed over the next 2-3 years - this is a wine built for pleasure and for now!



The Côte Chalonnaise - the “Third” Côte

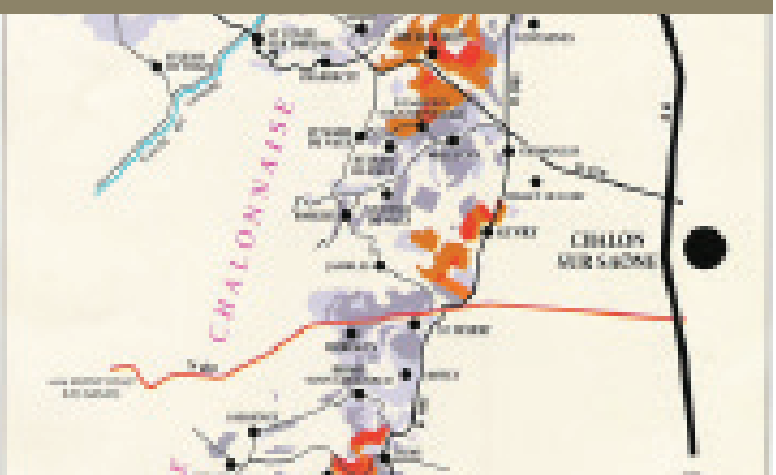
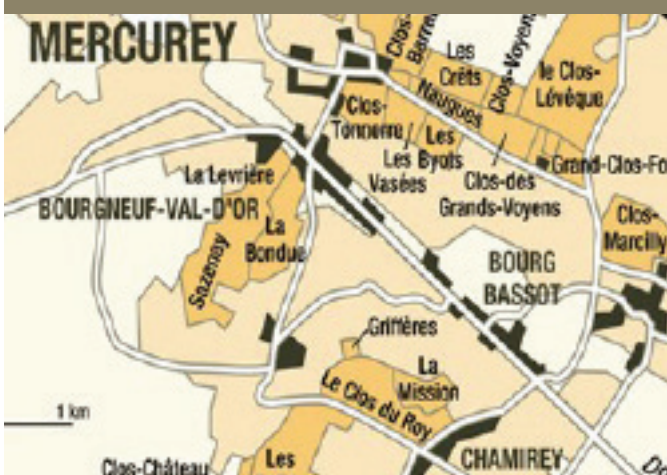
The Côte de Nuits and the Côte de Beaune are the most “famous” parts of Burgundy - with the Côte Chalonnaise having long been considered a step-child that didn’t merit the same level of consideration. It actually was quite highly thought of in the 1800s, but after phylloxera wiped out all of the vineyards in Europe, the Côte Chalonnaise was replanted decades later than the rest of Burgundy. That was primarily because much of the vineyard area was devastated in the two world wars, so a lot of it did not return to production until the 1950s or later.

When it did get back in action, it was in the shadow of the rest of Burgundy. While the wines were often quite good, they never commanded a price that enabled the vigneron to invest in their estates - they were making a living but certainly no more than that. (Pretty much all of Burgundy suffered very hard economic times in the decades after WWII - it was lowly, almost peasant-level occupation to be a winegrower in the 50s, 60s, 70s, even into the 80s. The world-wide demand for the wines and the exalted status of Burgundy is absolutely a new phenomenon in the big picture.)

Fast-forward to the climate-changed world of the 21st century, where Burgundy is now king of the wine world. And the Côte Chalonnaise? Now more than ever it is THE insiders secret for the best bang-for-the-buck wines in all of Burgundy. As in the “Bourgogne” parcels in the Côte d’Or, the value of the Chalonnaise wines has increased enough that they are now profitable to produce and sell, and the vigneron can afford to upgrade their farming, their facilities and their winemaking. All that results in the wines only being better and better, yet there remains a glass ceiling in terms of pricing. “Yes, the wines are delicious, but it’s only the Côte Chalonnaise...” - that’s the attitude that keeps these wines notably affordable but in fact tremendous values. We’re the lucky beneficiaries, because in fact these wines should cost a whole lot more.

The Côte Chalonnaise is essentially the southern extension of the Côte de Beaune, and shares the same limestone bedrock underpinning the vineyards. Overall there’s more clay and marl in the soils here, which tends to give the wines a more earthy edge, more of a wild, open-country feel, rather than the refined silk and lace of its cousins further north.

There are excellent wines to be had from the villages of Rully, Mercurey, Givry, Bouzeron and Montagny, with superb values in abundance throughout, both in red and white. There are over 5,000 acres under vine in the Chalonnaise - roughly 55%-45% red-to-white. There is nowhere else in Burgundy with so many delicious Village wines under \$30, and Premier Crus at under \$40!!! Yes, for QPR Burgundy, this is the motherlode!





"Les Crêts" is a 1er Cru vineyard at the top of the slope just above the village - and it's one of the rare ones that produces excellent wines in both colors. It's a very stony soil, which lends a nice minerals streak to the reds and whites. About 40% of the 8.5 acres is planted to Chardonnay, but Domaine Ninot's 1.2-acre piece is pure old-vine Pinot Noir.

Winemaker Erell Ninot (above) is the current proprietor and winemaker, running the estate with her brother Flavien in charge of viticulture. They don't know exactly how many generations - some of the vineyard holdings have been in the family since the 1300s!

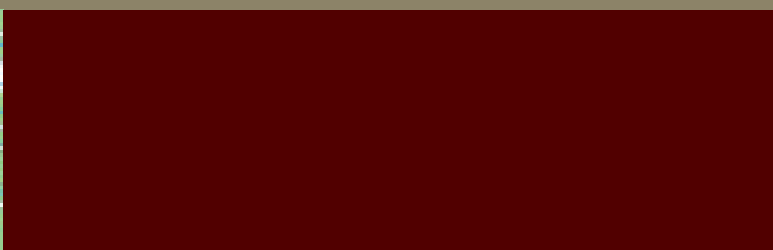
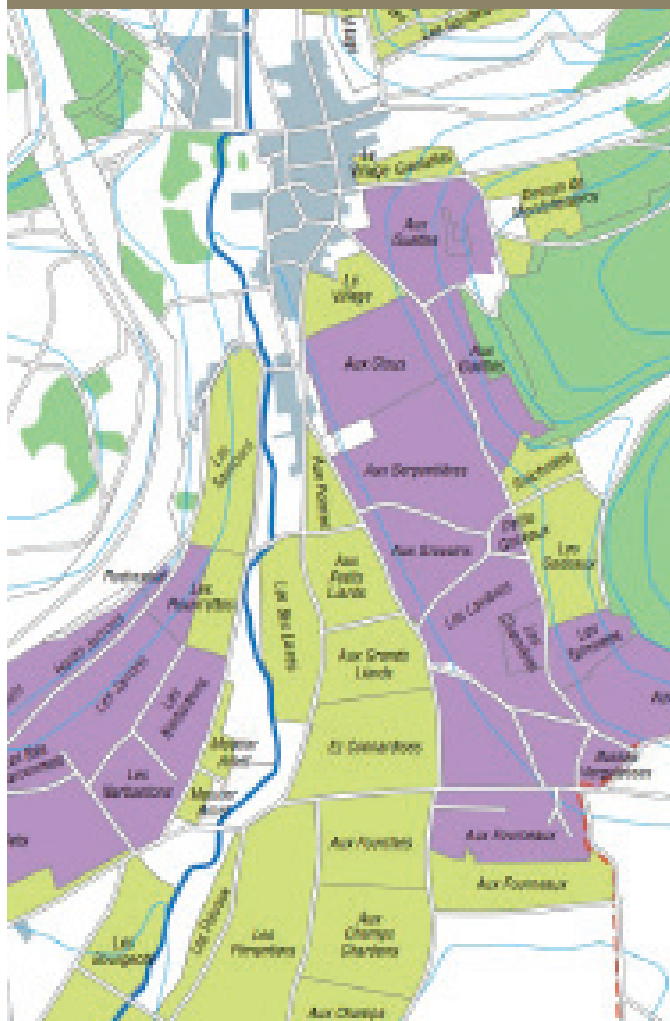
There's a very appealing freshness to the '17 reds throughout Burgundy, and this one really jumped out at me when tasting in the cellar with Erell back in May. I love the vibrant blackberry fruit, and the way the supple acidity holds it all together throughout a fairly refined and lengthy finish. There is not a better deal on well-made 1er Cru red Burgundy around. This is the one to show folks who think that Burgundy "is too expensive"!



Savigny-lès-Beaune

Not long ago, the village of Savigny-lès-Beaune was the insiders secret for where to look for excellent Burgs at excellent prices. That cat has been out of the bag for a number of years now, and with everybody rushing in to grab some Savigny, the prices went up according to demand. They are no longer the amazing bargains they once were. That said, it is still the only village in the Côte d'Or where you can find top 1er Crus for the same prices the more revered appellations charge for their simple Village wines. Vosne-Romanée, Chambolle, Meursault, Gevrey - basic village wines are routinely \$65-90 these days, and superstar producers command even more. One can drink better, I firmly believe, by hunting down top Savigny 1er Cru. The wines are more complex, have more of a distinct voice, and deliver more pleasure on many different levels.

It's a largish appellation of some 875 acres, not all of which is first rate. The better 1er Crus, however, can be quite distinguished. There's an overall earthiness and a touch of rusticity in most Savigny, but the better producers have been able to find a level of elegance and finesse. I actually prefer a good Savigny 1er to most of the Beaune 1er Crus, which I often find over-rated and under-wined.



DOMAINE A.-F. GROS
POMMARD, COTE-D'OR, FRANCE
WWW.AF-GROS.COM

Savigny-lès-Beaune
Clos des Guettes
PREMIER CRU
Appellation Contrôlée

MIS EN BOUTEILLE AU DOMAINE

13% vol. PRODUCE OF FRANCE - GRAND VIN DE BOURGOGNE
CONTAINS SULFITES - LSAC 750 ml



3. Savigny-lès-Beaune “Clos des Guettes” 1er – Domaine A-F Gros \$67 \$40

We’ve featured previous vintages of this one in the Club packages over the years, and we’re thrilled to have been able to secure an ample allocation for you again from the stellar 2017 vintage.

A-F (Anne-Françoise) Gros is a superstar domaine, with top-shelf Grand Cru holdings in Richebourg and Echezeaux, as well as several stellar pieces of Vosne-Romanée and Chambolle-Musigny. When Anne-Françoise married vigneron François Parent from Pommard, they combined their winemaking operations in one facility in Beaune, and the wines of both domaines are now made by their son Mathias as of the 2015 vintage.

The “Clos des Guettes” is a sub-section of the lieu-dit “Aux Guettes”, situated at the top of the hill facing due south, with a clay-rich soil over limestone bedrock. Mathias Parent’s winemaking skill is in full flower here - there’s an awful lot going on with this wine, and it keeps getting more interesting as it sits in the glass. Really pretty ripe plums, red currants and violet notes predominate, with a rich mouth-filling texture and impressive length. This will likely hit its peak of complexity in another 5-6 years, but can be enjoyed with pleasure anytime between now and then - I think it’s especially appealing right now!



Caroline and Mathias Parent of A-F Gros



Nuits-St. Georges

The famed Côte de Nuits takes its name from the village of Nuits-St. Georges - which didn't actually become known as Nuits-St. Georges until 1892, when the town added the name of its most famous vineyard to the name of the village. (Just as Vosne had become Vosne-Romanée, Gevrey became Gevrey-Chambertin, etc.) But I digress.

There are no Grand Crus in the Nuits-St. Georges appellation, though many of the 1er Crus were, and are, highly thought of - perhaps more so in the 1800s than today. The dossier has been prepared and recently submitted proposing the "Les St. Georges" vineyard for an upgrade to Grand Cru. It will be many years until we hear an answer on this, so don't hold your breath. Whether it receives the upgrade or not, it is widely accepted that it is the finest vineyard in the appellation, an opinion that's been held consistently for some 300+ years.

The appellation encompasses some 795 acres of vines, stretching out to the north and south of the town. The terroir is traditionally thought of as being in three distinct different sectors - the northern section which abuts Vosne-Romanée, the portion south of town on the slopes below the quarries, and the southernmost sector that actually sits in the village of Premeaux-Prissey (Yes, it's confusing, I know. There's no test at the end, no need to stress...)

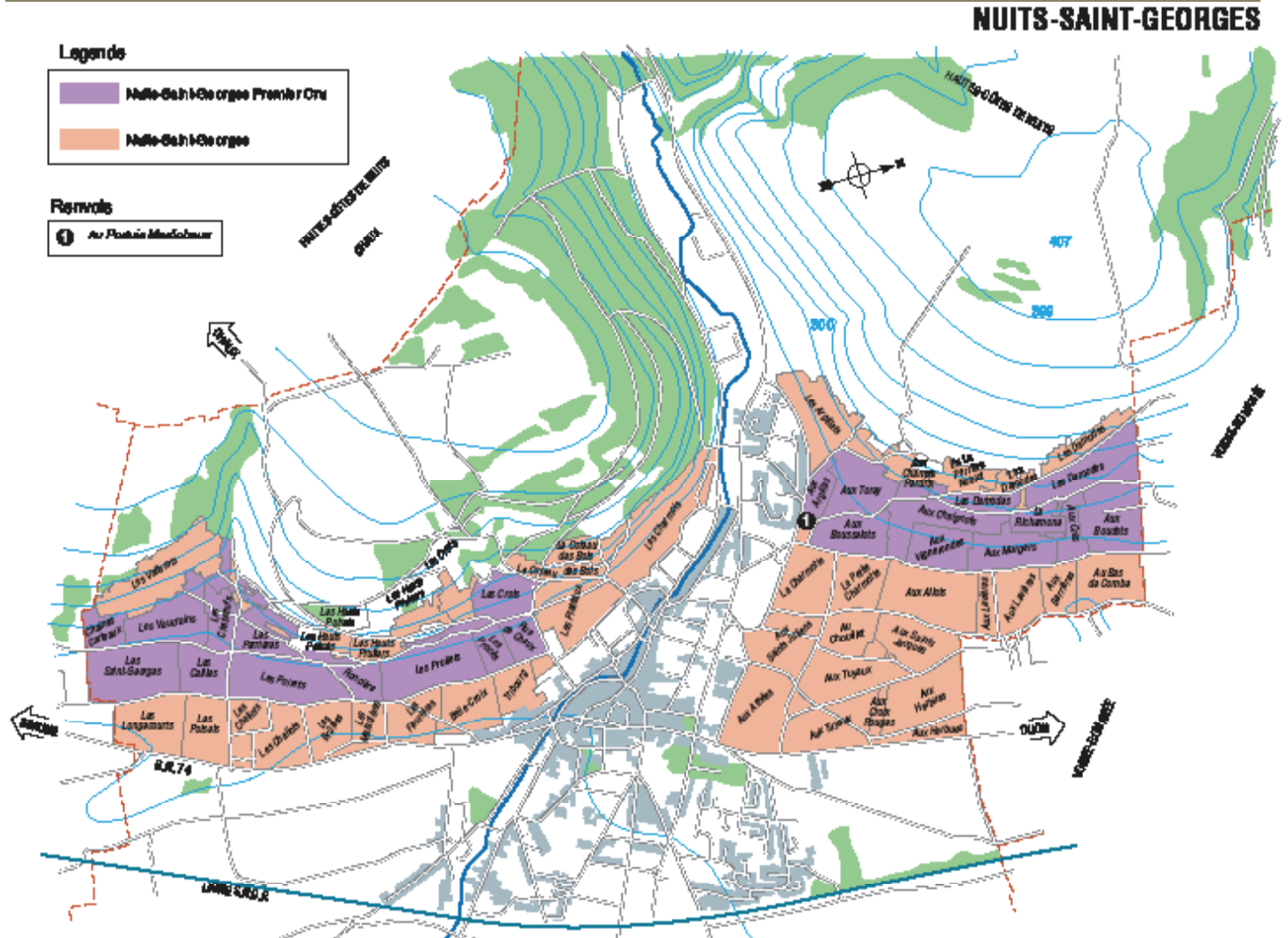
Regardless of sector, the wines from Nuits have a tendency to be structured, black-fruited and somewhat earthy. A deft hand at winemaking is really required here - any attempt to over-extract usually results in some rather harsh and gritty tannins. That said, well made wines from here can be things of beauty, and have long had the reputation for aging extremely well over the long haul.

In general, the wines from the northern part are more refined, though there are certain vineyards in this part that produce wines that are decidedly muscular and powerful. The section just south of town is where the most powerful, richest examples can be found - but like everywhere else in Burgundy, there are many exceptions. Finally, the wines from the part of the appellation in Premeaux-Prissey are generally a bit lighter-bodied, but still firmly structured, to be sure.

We'll now explore three different single-vineyard Village wines from Nuits-St. Georges - an interesting study in terroir, and a nice basic overview of what this appellation is all about.

4. 2017 Nuits-St. Georges “Les Terrasses de Vallerots” – Bertrand & Axelle Machard de Gramont \$55

At the very top of the hill, in the southern sector of Nuits, **Les Vallerots** is a site with very little topsoil, the vines are essentially growing directly into the bedrock. Even more so in this piece called “**Les Terrasses**” - the steep, uppermost portion of vineyard land, that had in fact remained unplanted and abandoned since phylloxera ravaged Europe’s vineyards in the late 1800s. Winemaker **Axelle Machard de Gramont** is now fully in charge, though her father Bertrand is still active in the vineyards at age 76. He removed the boulders and the trees and the scrub in order to plant les Vallerots in 2000, and his labors have been rewarded. This is a fine, extremely elegant example of Nuits-St.Georges - in fact perhaps this most finesse-driven NSG you’re likely to encounter. There’s a beautiful, silky texture on the mid-palate that makes you think of Chambolle or Volnay, and makes it an absolute joy the drink over the next 3-5 years.

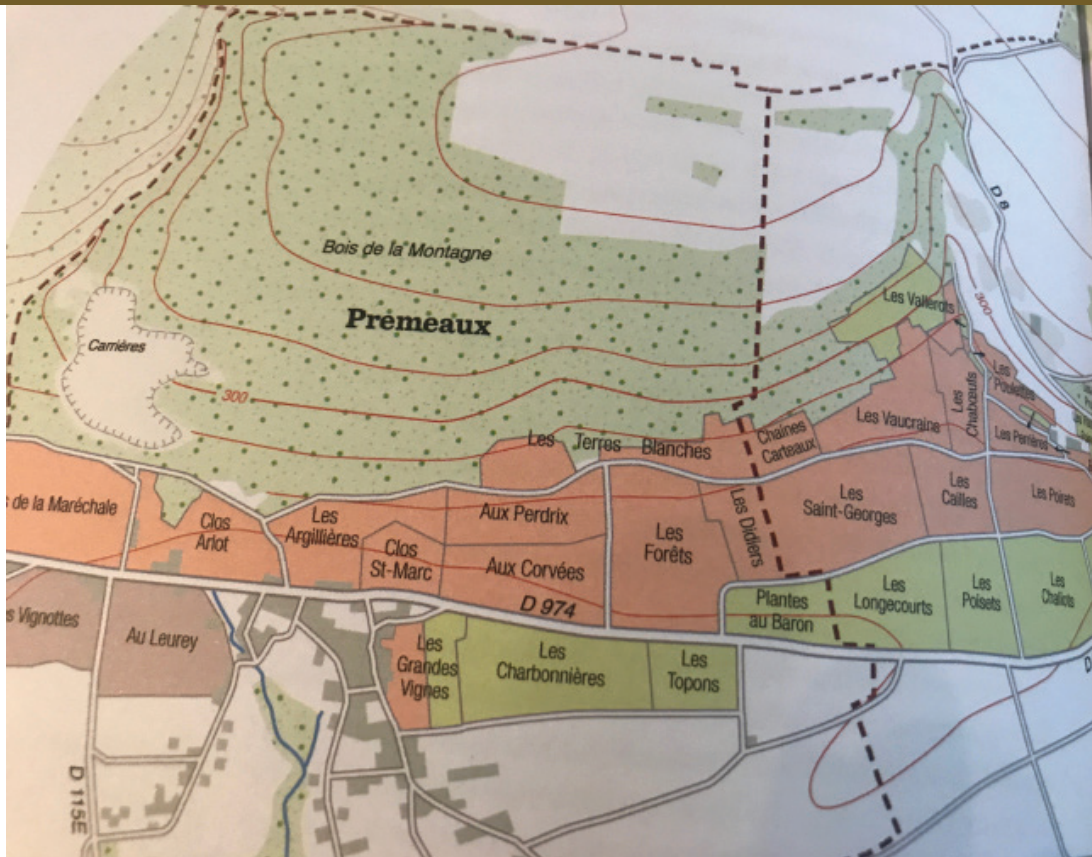


5. 2017 Nuits-St. Georges "Les Fleurières" – J-J Confuron \$56

Previous vintages of this one have been featured in Club packages as well - it's the only Confuron wine we can get enough of to include in the Club! If you've been with us for a while, you may have a nice little vertical of this one in your cellar.

As you drive south out of the town, Les Fleurières is the vineyard on the righthand side of the road as you head toward Beaune, juts below the 1er Cru Les Pruliers. As you might expect, there's more structure and power here, but it's still quite understated and refined compared to much of Nuits-St. Georges.

It kicks off with a dark, earthy and wild nose, redolent of black fruits, plums, and some nice floral notes as well. There's a beautiful energy to it, lifting the stony-liquid mineral flavors across the palate, and it finishes exceptionally long for Village juice. A yummy, direct, to-the-point NSG from winemaker Alain Meunier and his son Louis.



Above - the southernmost sector of Nuits-St. Georges - in the village of Premeaux-Prissey!



6. 2017 Nuits-St. Georges “Aux Allots” Bertrand & Axelle Machard de Gramont \$69

And now we move to the northern half of the appellation. “Aux Allots” is set at the top of the slope just below the 1er Crus, with rich clay soils kept moist by underground springs. (Hence the name - probably a reference to water - “à l’eau”...)

We’re getting close to the Vosne-Romanée terroir here, and you’ll see a decidedly more spice and mineral driven palate than in the previous two NSG examples. At the same time, there’s more overall structure - bigger bones and heftier muscles to flesh it out. This wine has blown me away several vintages in a row. Tasting with Axelle in her cellar in June, this was the star of the show that day. The minerality is incredibly clear - the limestone is right there in your face. The nose is floral and pretty and seductive, and it’s one of those wines with a sneaky-long finish - you think it’s done, and then it just keeps on coming at you. Drink this beauty now and over the next 5-7 years - it should be fresh and lively at any step along the way.



Axelle Machard de Gramont - a new star in Nuits-St. Georges



Next shipment in the Spring...

I hope you've enjoyed our continuing exploration of all things Burgundian. Thanks for joining us! Watch your email for information on our next Caveau Burgundy Club shipment coming in the spring, and for pre-arrival offerings on all the yummy wines headed your way throughout the year. All the latest information is always available on our website: www.CaveauSelections.com



Launched in 2005, Caveau Selections is owned and operated by Martha & Scott Wright, the founders and former owners of top Oregon Pinot Noir producer Scott Paul Wines. Scott has been drinking and studying the wines and regions of Burgundy and Champagne since the 1970s, and visiting regularly since the 1980s. He leads annual Insiders' Tours of both Burgundy and Champagne, and teaches seminars here and abroad. Email Scott@caveauselections.com for more information.

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