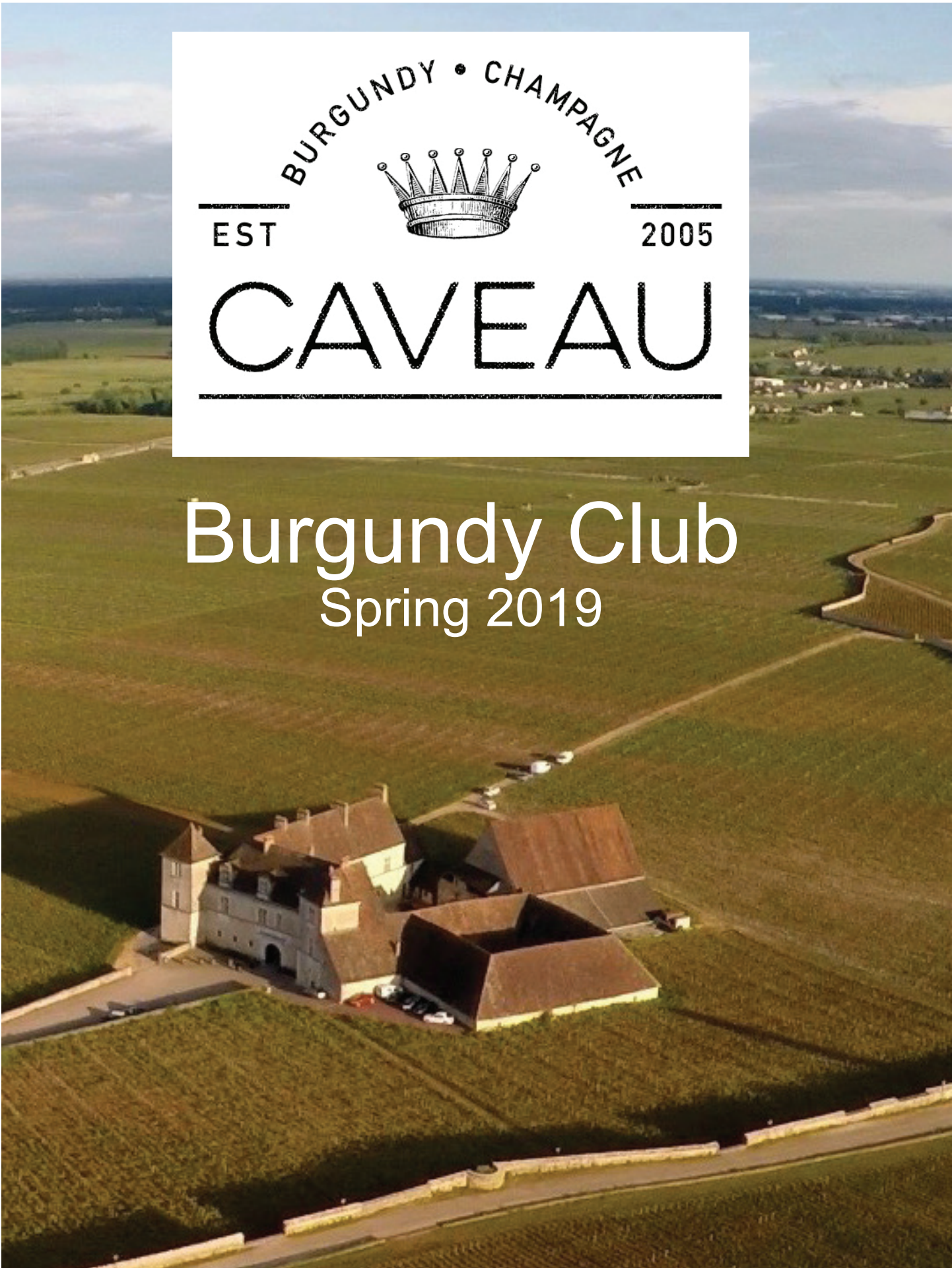




Burgundy Club

Spring 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.

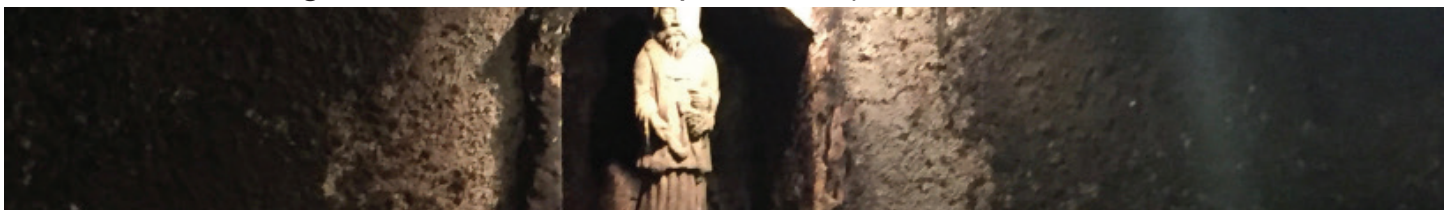
The wines in each 6-bottle shipment have been specifically selected to help educate and illustrate – each shipment is essentially a Burgundy seminar-in-a-box. You can use all of this to stage your own tasting seminar at home, or of course you can just drink the wines one by one. Whichever path you choose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

Burgundy South - in Search of Value

If one wants to drink excellent Red Burgs at anywhere near affordable prices, there's only one direction to go - SOUTH. South, as in the southern reaches of the **Côte de Beaune**, down into the **Côte Chalonnaise**, and all the way down into the **Beaujolais**. The wines from the prestige villages in the northern half of the Burgundy region - Vosne-Romanée, Chambolle-Musigny, Gevrey-Chambertin, etc. - have exploded in price some 15-20 fold in just the past 20 years. I don't know of any other consumer product that has seen such dramatic price increases in such a short time. It is, of course, mostly a function of supply and demand - with supply remaining relatively static and worldwide demand rising exponentially.

I personally remember buying great vintages of Mugnier Musigny for \$150 on release. It now starts at about \$2,500! The wealth of less than one-tenth of one percent of the planet is now chasing all the same prized "trophy" bottles, and the rest of us are relegated to ooh-ing and ahh-ing and "I-wishing" over wines that have become beyond the means of most mere mortals.

Even some former "insiders' secret" great-value appellations like Savigny-lès-Beaune are now far from the bargains they used to be. All of this does not have to be as grim as it may seem, however. We can still drink exceptionally well for a lot less money - we just need to be smarter. Time to head South. First, to make sure we're all on the same page - so here's some info you need for a good simple grounding (longtime Club members and Burg-heads feel free to skip ahead...)



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.)

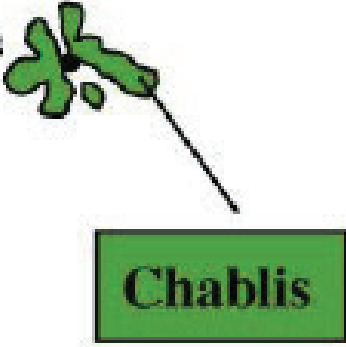
Regional (Bourgogne) — A bit less than half of all Burgundy vineyards (45%) are classified at the regional level. In the hands of dedicated and talented producers these can be lovely wines. In the hands of others they can be thin, weedy, and rather unpleasant. These wines are labeled as Bourgogne Rouge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

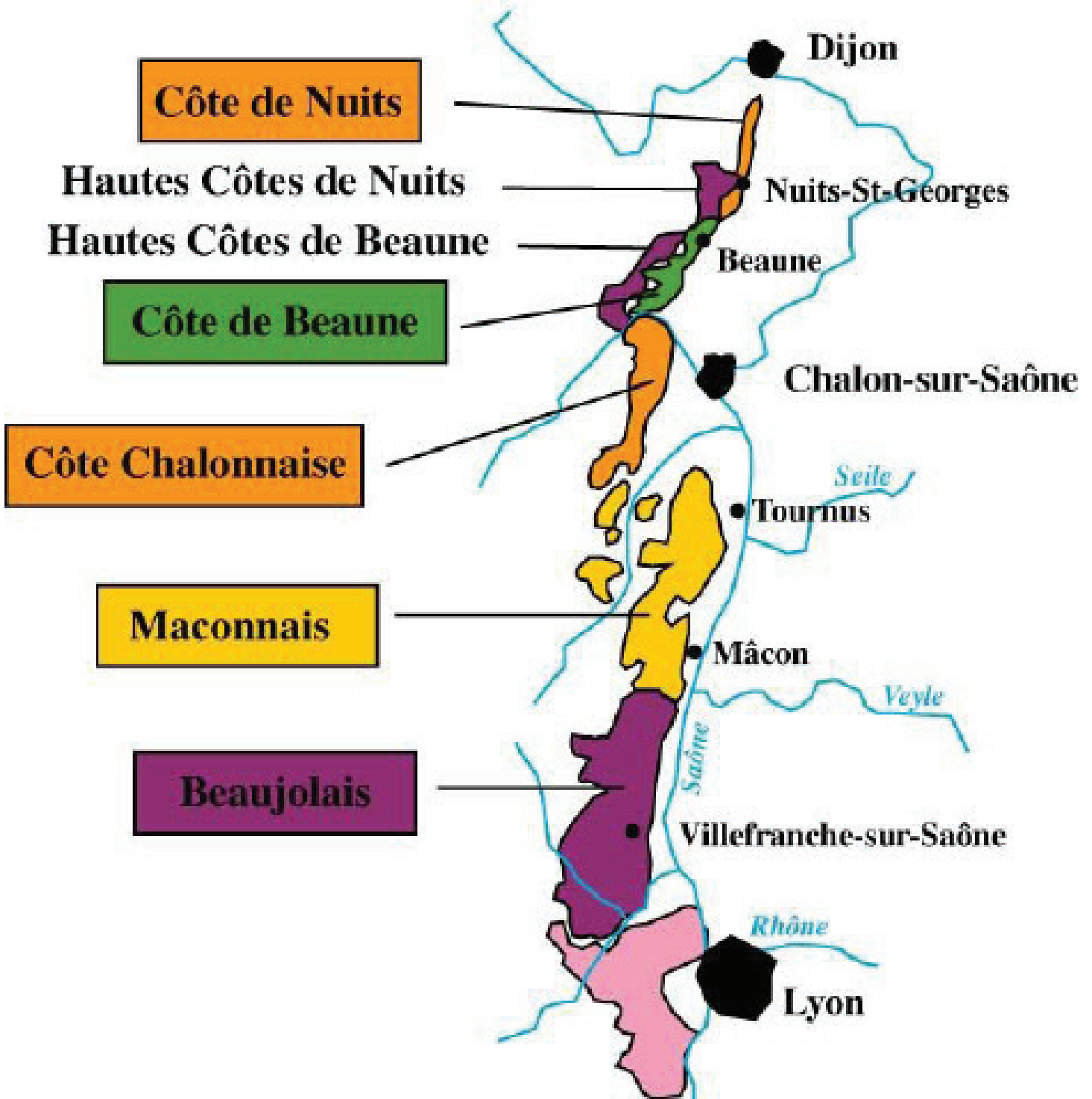


BURGUNDY

Chablis



Chablis



Going South - the Côte de Beaune

As you head south of Beaune, the wine capitol of Burgundy, you're still in pretty expensive territory as you pass through Pommard, Volnay, Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet. Wines from these villages can offer good value when compared to their Côte de Nuits counterparts, but you're still looking at a lot of \$75-\$150+ wines - not exactly "daily-drinkers" for most folks.

The Values tend to be either in the villages that wrap around the lower slopes of the Hill of Corton, or the lesser-known appellations like Monthelie, tucked into the valleys between Volnay and Meursault, or the villages at the far southern end of the Côte - especially Santenay and Maranges. Quality is, of course, quite varied in these spots - the diligence, dedication and talent of the individual producer means everything in these areas - perhaps more so here than anywhere else in Burgundy.

Going further South - the Côte Chalonnaise

Just past the southern tip of Maranges you cross into the Côte Chalonnaise, and this long overlooked sub-region is finally coming into its own. From Givry to Rully to Mercurey and Bouzeron - this is the spot for some of the best values in all of Burgundy, with the caveat that there is an ocean of mediocre wine here - just like everywhere in Burgundy. The best 10% of producers here are making some really excellent wines, and the QPR - quality-to-price ratio - is off the charts.

Keep Going - all the way down

Below the Côte Chalonnaise lies the Mâconnais - a vast area that is home to some absolutely fabulous value Whites (Chablis and the Mâconnains vie for the title of best-value White Burgs overall. I'd give a slight edge to Chablis just for the uniqueness of their terroir.) But we're focusing on REDs in this package, so we need to keep going further south, all the way down to the **Beaujolais**, which ends just north of Lyon. It's technically part of Burgundy, but philosophically and geologically differs drastically with all other Burgundy sub-regions. The red grape here in **Gamay Noir**, not Pinot Noir, and the soils are based on granite, not limestone. It's a whole different world, but it's one of my choices for the region producing the most exciting reds at the best prices anywhere on the planet. So - let's dive in!



The Wines

1. 2017 Moulin-à-Vent A-F Gros \$28

At the close of 2016, Domaine A-F Gros, one of the superstars of the Côte de Nuits, purchased a prime parcel in Beaujolais in the prestigious village of Moulin-à-Vent (“windmill”). Of the 10 villages entitled to Cru Beaujolais status (the highest designation), land in Moulin-à-Vent is the most valuable and enjoys the best overall reputation. A number of leading Burgundian producers from the Côte d’Or have been expanding into Beaujolais in recent years (Lafarge, Jadot, Drouhin among them), with vineyard prices there just a fraction of the costs compared to up north. There are only a handful of domaines that can afford to purchase vineyard parcels in the Côte d’Or these days, which is why you see more and more transactions going to large international luxury goods conglomerates. If one wants to expand their vineyard holdings, heading down to the Beaujolais is the only affordable way to go.

“En Mortperay” is the name of the lieu-dit purchased by Gros - perfectly situated on the south-facing slopes on Moulin-à-Vent’s unique terroir. The soils here are pink granite, with a vein of manganese running through it - something that does not exist elsewhere in the Beaujolais. Manganese is actually somewhat toxic to grapevines, so as a result the vines naturally have lower yields here, and produce exceptionally concentrated fruit.

The grapes were trucked to Beaune, where the wine was made in the A-F Gros winery by winemaker Mathias Parent, and bottled there in July of 2018. I’ve had the pleasure of following this wine through its evolution from grape to the finished product, and it’s been lovely every step of the way. Very heady aromas of ripe fruits, rich, velvety texture on the palate, blackberry and dark cherry flavors throughout - it’s a wine that delivers maximum pleasure for the \$\$.



Caroline Parent-Gros and her brother Mathias, now at the helm of A-F Gros, and the famous windmill atop Moulin-à-Vent



Winemaker **Erell Ninot** (above) and her viticulturist brother Flavien continue to make some of the very best wines in the Côte Chalonnais, year after year. A longtime connection to the land may have something to do with it - the family has been farming some of the same vineyards since 1313!

Rully (ruh-ye) is an appellation that produces both red and white wines, and the quality can be excellent in both colors. Whites outnumber reds here about two-to-one, and there are 1er Crus in both colors as well. Marissou is a 1er Cru on the East-facing slope above the village.

The best red wines of Côte Chalonnaise have a lot in common with some of the better reds of the Côte de Beaune - they can be quite rich and fruity, and stylistically fall somewhere on the spectrum between the perfumed silkiness of Volnay and the power and muscularity of Pommard. This one leans more toward the finesse and elegance end of the scale, with a lovely silky texture, fresh and ripe red and black cherry fruit, and an incredibly classy finish for a wine at this price.



3. 2017 Maranges 1er Cru, les Clos Roussots – Domaine Chevrot

\$40

Now we head north a bit from Rully, just across the line into the Côte de Beaune, where at the very southern tip lie the villages of Cheilly-lès-Maranges, Dezize-lès-Maranges, and Sampigny-lès-Maranges - which collectively make up the appellation Maranges. (Very confusing, we know. Don't worry, you don't need to memorize this, and there is no quiz at the end!) The entirety of Maranges is 412 acres under vine, half of which is classified as 1er Cru. It's a relatively new appellation, granted AOC status in 1988.

Domaine Chevrot is in the hands of brothers **Pablo and Vincent Chevrot**, who are dedicated to organic farming, low yields, and non-invasive winemaking. They are one of the domaines leading the way for a new generation of vignerons, showing how good the quality can be from appellations that had been long overlooked or undervalued.

“Les Clos Roussots” (not to be confused with “Les Clos Rousseau” just across the border in the neighboring village of Santenay, which the Chevrots also own and produce) is one of just seven 1er Cru vineyards in Maranges. There's an unexpected element of finesse in this wine - unexpected as Maranges has historically been thought of as producing more rustic, earthy reds. Great farming and purist cellar practices in the hands of the brothers clearly makes the difference. I don't know of a 1er Cru red Burg that comes anywhere close to this level of quality at this price level. \$40 is not cheap, but I think you'll find that it really delivers, big time.



Pablo and Vincent Chevrot

4. 2017 Bourgogne, Maisons Dieu – Thierry Violot-Guillemard \$26

We've been working with Thierry and his wines since we started our importing adventures in 2005. He's one of the great true characters in all of Burgundy, and is one of the featured winemakers in our documentary film **Three Days of Glory**.

If you've been with us for a bit, you likely know this wine already - it's been massively popular every year, and has been featured in the Club package in previous years. With a return to normal crop levels in 2017, we were able to get our hands on enough to include it again. Yay!

It's a single-vineyard Bourgogne, which makes it a bit of a rarity (Most "Bourgogne" wines are blends from several vineyards, and often from several different villages as well.) Wine from this site was historically sold as Pommard, until the appellation laws took effect in 1935 and the official Pommard borderline was drawn just across the path from "Maisons Dieu". (The name refers to a small charity medical facility that at one time was on this site, pre-dating the famous Hospices de Beaune which was constructed in the mid 1400s.)

Year-in, year-out this is my absolute favorite Bourgogne. It's not often one finds the layers, complexity, refined texture, and overall polish in a wine from such "humble" origins. Once again, the QPR is superb.



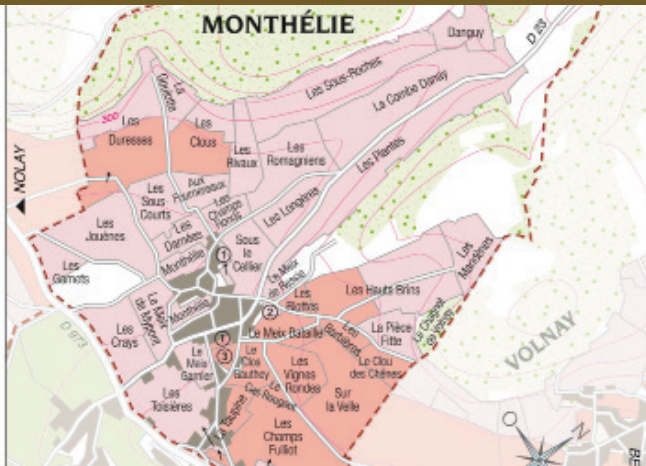
Joannès and Thierry Violot-Guillemard

5. 2017 Monthélie 1er Cru, Les Vignes Rondes – Huber-Verdereau \$45

Thiébauld Huber is another of the producers who've been with us from the beginning, and he's also a major part of our movie. His charisma, passion, and energetic personality shine through in his wines as well as everything he does. Last year he was elected President of the Burgundy Winegrowers Association, and is in charge of an ambitious effort to end, or drastically reduce, the use of herbicides and pesticides throughout the region. He committed to organic farming from the day he took over the family estate in 1994, and he's been fully certified Biodynamic since 2005.

Monthélie is a village that's tucked up in the valley between Volnay and Meursault, and has never received the ink or respect of its more famous neighbors. I've always thought it to be rather under-valued, as the wines, especially at the 1er Cru level, can be very interesting indeed. It's tiny appellation at just over 300 acres total, with about 86 acres designated as 1er Cru.

Les Vignes Rondes is a vineyard mid-slope on the hill as it turns the corner just past Volnay, and geologically it's a continuation of Volnay Clos des Chênes. It faces south however, rather than east, so to gets more warmth and light and the resulting wines tend to be more robust, and lack the mineral backbone of its neighbor.

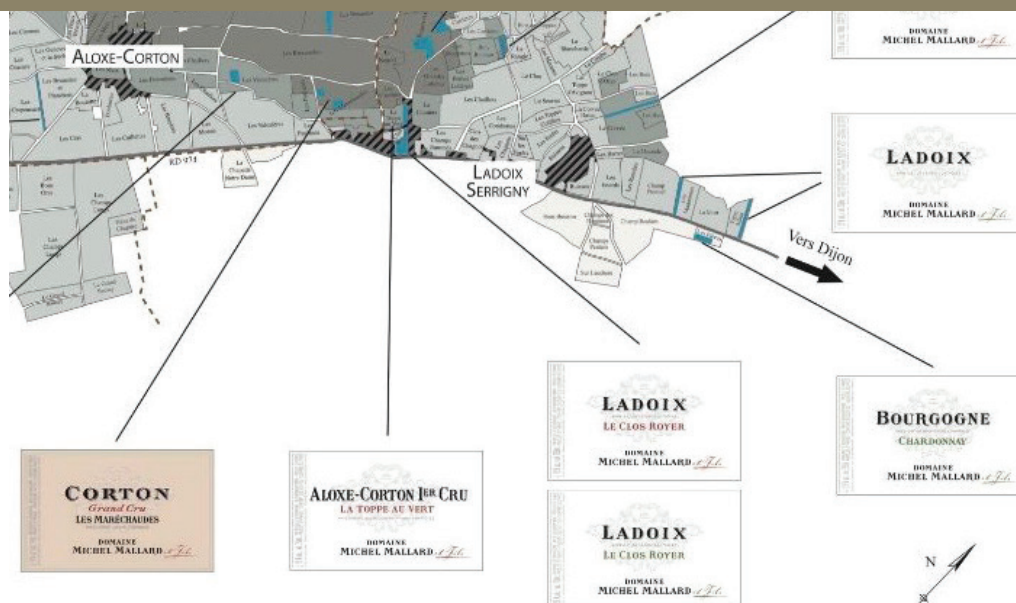


Another rockin' good value for a 1er Cru, it's very nicely balanced. When I tasted the entire Huber-Verdereau 2017 range at the winery with Thiébauld in November, this was **the** wine that really jumped out at me for pure, unadulterated deliciousness. I immediately ordered it for the Club, and I'm excited to turn you onto it here.



6. 2012 Aloxe-Corton 1er Cru, La Toppe au Vert - Michel Mallard

Yes, that says 2012! One of the many great things about Domaine Michel Mallard is that, starting three generations ago, they have always held back a good portion of their wines to release many years down the road, when the wines are at or nearing maturity. Every time I taste at the domaine with Michel, he always pulls out several older wines that they've kept deep in the cellar, and the opportunity to grab one for the Club has always been on my mind. Often he's not had enough of the older wines to to sell me to include in a Club package, but when I tasted this one, I knew I had to talk him into it. (Initially I was told that they didn't have enough, but he came back to me in a few days after talking it over with his dad, and they agreed to grab some from the family's personal reserve for us. Et voilà!)



La Toppe au Vert is a small 1er Cru in the village of Ladoix, on the lower slopes of the Hill of Corton, just below the Grand Cru Corton Rognets. It packs a big flavor punch, with ripe tannins that have mellowed over the 8+ years, and bring a silky, elegant edge to a beautifully maturing wine. There is still a ton of primary fruit, but a rainbow of secondary aromas and flavors have started to emerge. Here you can see why it pays to lay your 1er and Grand Cru burgs down for a good long rest - this is why we age red Burgs! As lovely as it is now, it easily has another 5-7+ years ahead of it, and will continue to gain in complexity for some time to come. Enjoy this special treat!



Next shipment in the Fall...

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 fall, 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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