



## **Burgundy Club!** **Fall 2015**

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, call us at 503-679-6233*). 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 and enjoy them. Whichever path you choose – there's lots of good Burgundy in your future!

### **The Three Worlds of Red Burgundy**

In this package we'll be exploring a couple of examples from each of the three regions, to give you a good general overview of the world of Red Burgundy. The great reds of the **Côte d'Or** are certainly the best known, and reach the highest heights, but they are only part of the picture when talking about Red Burgundy. A lot of excellent red Burgs are produced in the **Côte Chalonnaise**, and a lot of folks tend to forget that the **Beaujolais** region is also part of Burgundy.

If you're new to the club, or would just like to brush up a bit, we'll start off with some good general Burgundy information to help you understand the lay of the land. Otherwise, please feel free to skip ahead for the details and info on the wines in this shipment.

## 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 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.

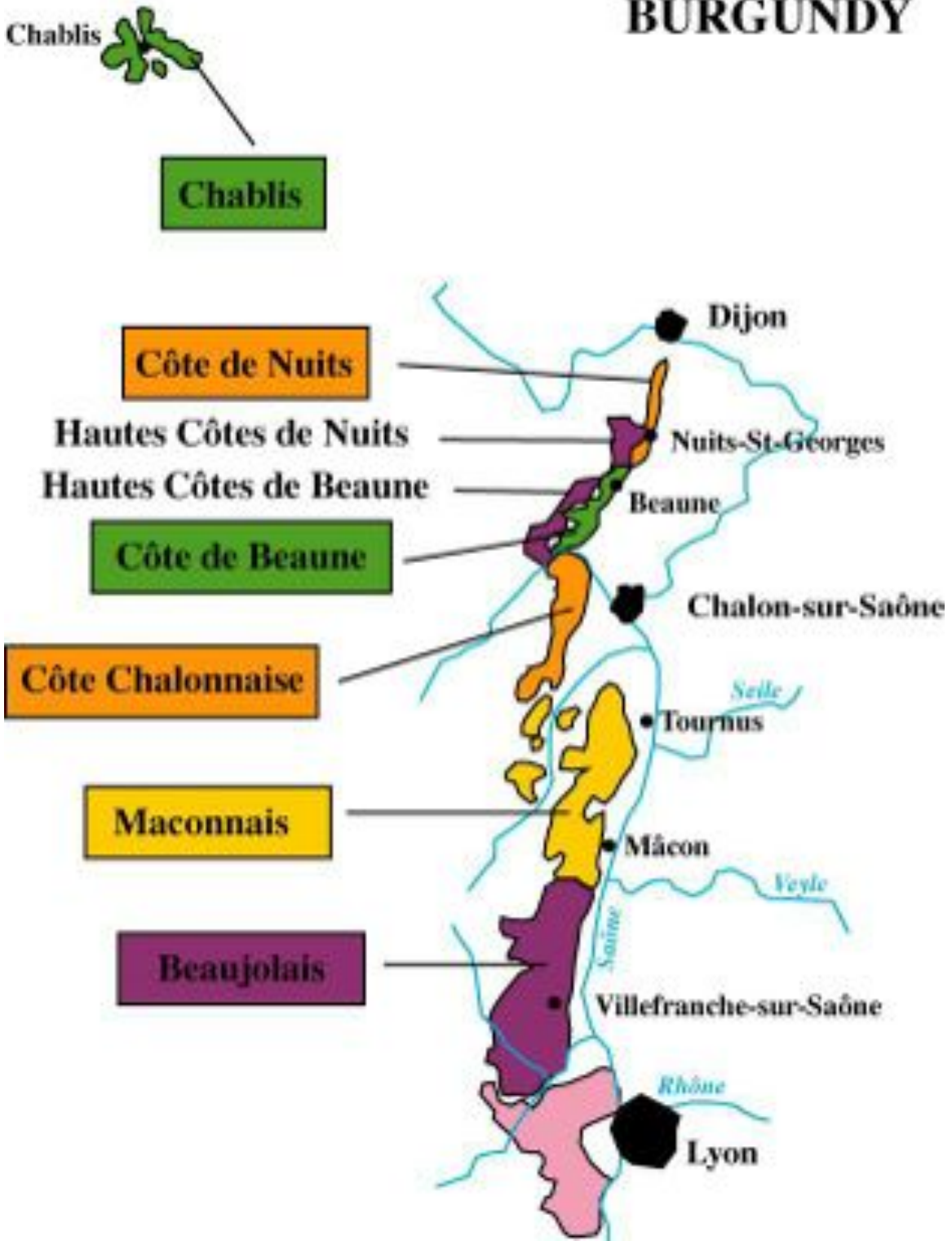
**Premier Cru** — (Also written as 1er Cru) One notch below the Grand Crus — there are hundreds at this level, and the quality varies widely. The best Premiers rival the Grand Crus, the lesser ones seem barely deserving of the ranking. These makeup about 10% of total production. A Premier Cru wine will 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 singly 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 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



## Beaujolais

We'll start our explorations about 90 minutes south of the Côte d'Or – in the large area known as the Beaujolais (with about 26,000 acres of planted vineyards.) It is technically a part of Burgundy, though geologically and historically it has always been considered its own separate world. While all of the Burgundian viticultural land north of Beaujolais is on limestone-based soils, that band of soils comes to an abrupt end at the southern limit of the Mâconnais. One just needs to cross the road at the edge of the Pouilly-Fuissé appellation, and you'll be on granite-based soils. Here begins the Beaujolais.

As the soil changes, so does the grape. Red Burgs from all of the other regions are of course made from Pinot Noir. Once you cross the line into Beaujolais, the grape grown is **Gamay Noir**, which is much better suited to the granitic soils and warmer climate of Beaujolais. Gamay was widely planted in the rest of Burgundy over the centuries – though was outlawed in the Côte d'Or on two different occasions by the Dukes of Burgundy in the Middle Ages, who deemed the grape “Vulgar and Disloyal”! (There remains a small amount of Gamay planted in the Côte d'Or, but it is allowed only in wines labeled as **Bourgogne Passetoutgrains**, a cheap blend of Gamay and Pinot.)

Yes, Beaujolais is home to an insipid wine known as Beaujolais Nouveau – but please don't hold that against it. Beaujolais Nouveau was a hugely successful marketing strategy propagated by the mega-negotiant **Georges Duboeuf**. “Nouveau” refers to wines that are bottled and released just weeks after harvest, and were always released in the 3rd week of November every year. They were cheap, but not terribly good (mostly pretty awful, in fact.) Nonetheless the novelty caught on, and Nouveau became quite the “thing” for many years. It peaked in the late 90s-early 2000s, and is now (thankfully) down to a fraction of what it once was.

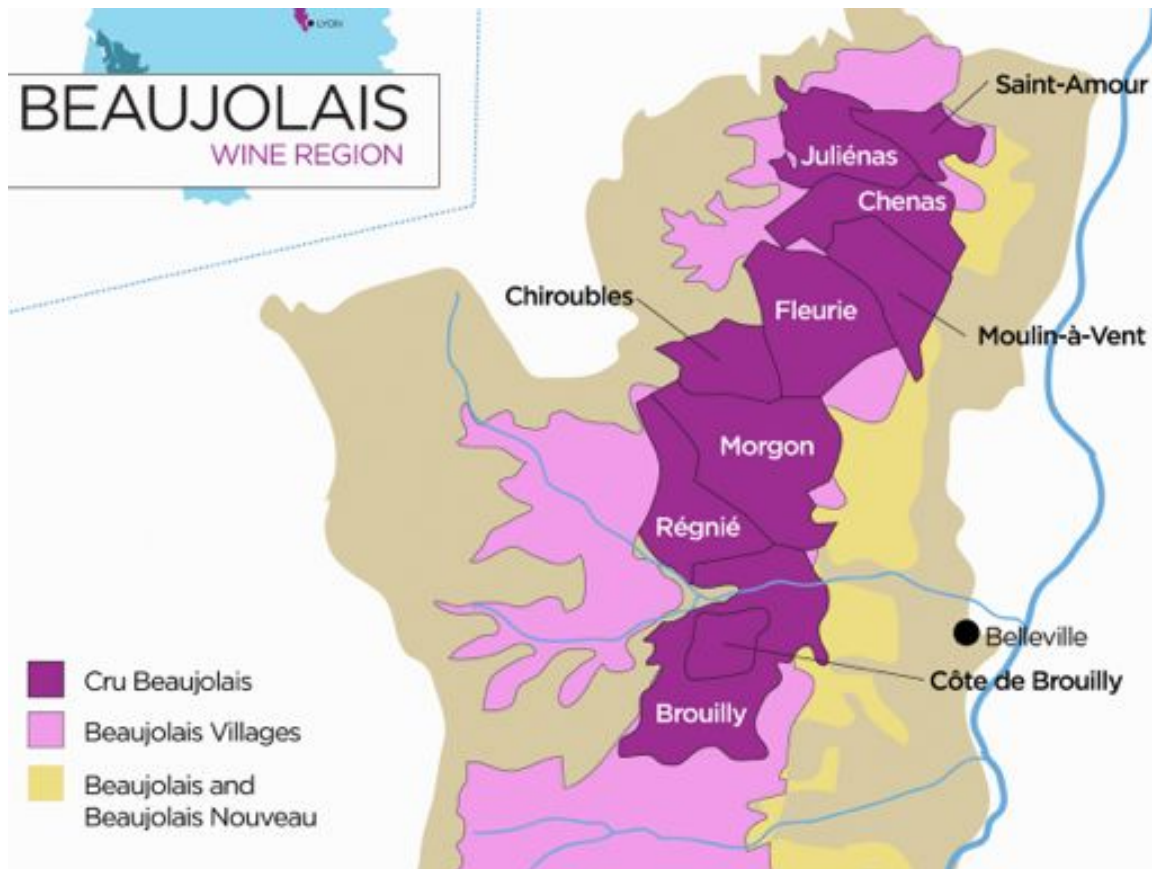
Nouveau's worldwide success had a major downside, however. The world of wine drinkers came to think of Nouveau as being the *only* wine from Beaujolais, and that Beaujolais was a cheap, forgettable wine that one drank once a year in late November. The top wines from Beaujolais, however, can be some of the world's best values for truly excellent wines.



There are four levels of classification for wine from Beaujolais:

- **Beaujolais Nouveau** – In my view, not worth your time or consideration for any reason
- **Beaujolais** – Wine that can come from anywhere in the region, and generally not of interest, though at least slightly better than Nouveau
- **Beaujolais Villages** – Wine from grapes grown in designated sectors, clearly a step up in quality. The best examples can be delicious. Most are mediocre, however.
- **Cru Beaujolais** – Wine from grapes grown in the 10 designated villages in Beaujolais that have the right to use the name of the village on the label. These wines would be labeled as “Fleurie” or “Morgon” or “Moulin-à-Vent”, for example, and the word “Beaujolais” appears nowhere on the label.

So it is these “Cru” Beaujolais that we are concerned with here. They can be truly wonderful wines, and the best can compete with the better Village and some 1er Cru wines from the Côte d’Or – for a small fraction of the price.





In the hills above Morgon there is a miniscule hamlet called Avenas. In Avenas there is one of the wine world's best-kept secrets – a brilliant young vigneron named **Julien Sunier**. Julien was not born into the wine business. His mother was a hairstylist who happened to have Christophe Roumier (a rock-star winemaker in Chambolle-Musigny) as a client. Julien had the opportunity to intern for Roumier, where he caught the “wine bug” and his path began. It was a path that took him to New Zealand, California, and back to Burgundy – where he worked in the cellars and vineyards for Nicolas Potel and honed his passion for organic and Biodynamic viticulture. He went on to manage a large negociant operation in Beaujolais for five years, striking out on his own in 2008 with a few small parcels in Fleurie, Morgon, and Regnié.

The Sunier estate consists of just over 12 acres, from which Julien produces three outstanding wines. I was turned onto his wines years back by Laurent “Lolo” Brelin, who at the time was the proprietor of one of my favorite restaurants - Caves Madeleine in Beaune. (Lolo has since sold the resto and opened **La Dilletante** – my fave wine bar in Beaune. Do not miss it when you visit!)



*Julien Sunier at his kitchen-table tasting room*

Julien's wines are exquisite examples of just how wonderful great Cru Beaujolais can be. He's been written up in the New York Times and all the major wine magazines now, so the "cat is out of the bag" so to speak. We've had the opportunity to feature some of his wines in our club packages previously, but this time we were able to snag two of his new releases for the club. I highly recommend you drink these side-by-side and get a little insight into the terroir of two of Beaujolais' top villages.

**1. 2014 Fleurie – Julien Sunier \$31**

**CLUB PRICE \$26**

- From a steep, rocky 5.9-acre parcel on pure Pink Granite
- Old-vine Gamay Noir, planted in 1962
- Whole-Cluster, wild-yeast fermentation in Concrete tanks
- 10 months ageing in used Burgundy barrels
- 315 cases produced

Fleurie has the reputation for producing the most elegant wines made from Gamay Noir, and with good reason. Fleurie is the "Volnay" or "Chambolle-Musigny" of the south – the Beaujolais village where the wines reach the peak of finesse. Lacy and delicate, floral and perfumed, and always rich with ripe fruit, it is usually my favorite appellation in Beaujolais.

This particular vineyard is so steep and so remote that it cannot be farmed by tractor. Julien does all the work by hand, with a hoe and a pick-axe. It not only keeps him in shape, it makes amazing wine. This version is a stunner. Violets on the nose, wild strawberries and raspberries in the mouth, bursting with freshness and a distinct minerality. It's open for business and ready to enjoy now, but you could hold it for a few more years if you were somehow able to keep your hands off.

**2. 2014 Morgon – Julien Sunier \$31**

**CLUB PRICE \$26**

- From two parcels totaling 3.58 acres
- Average vine age 60+
- Whole-Cluster wild-yeast fermentation in Concrete tanks
- 10 months ageing in used Burgundy barrels
- Less than 200 cases produced

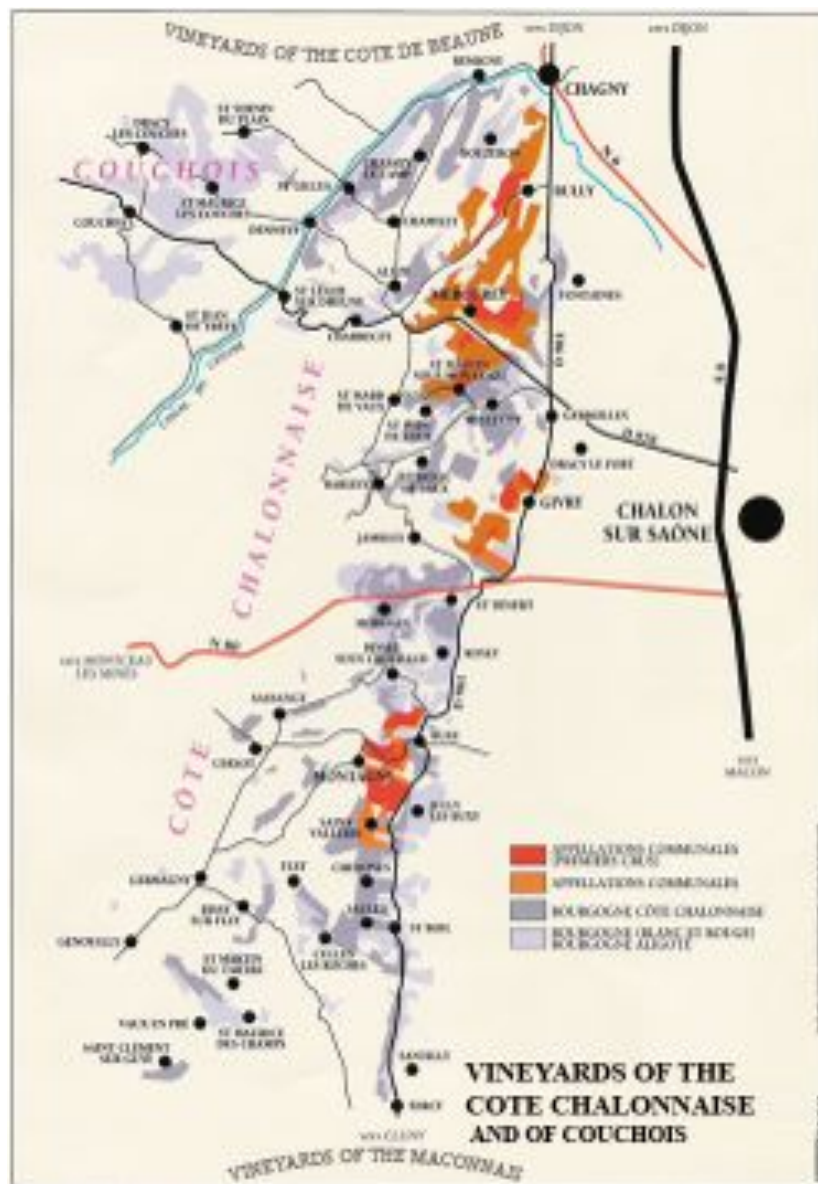
Morgon is the "Yin" to Fleurie's "Yang", the Beaujolais Cru that brings power, density, and more structure to the wines. Well-made Morgon such as this has the capacity to age beautifully for 10-15 years or more – contradicting the notion that Beaujolais wines are best consumed young. I'm of the mind that Morgon truly deserves a few years in the bottle, but again it totally rocks right now.



This one is dominated by dark cherries and spice notes on the nose, and it is richer, rounder, “bigger” and more structured than its stable mate from Fleurie. Bravo!

## The Côte Chalonnaise

Now we’ll head north, and focus our attention on the **Côte Chalonnaise**. The main Chalonnaise wine villages of **Bouzeron, Rully, Mercurey, Givry and Montagny** string out from north to south, starting just below the town of Chagny (which is just below Santenay, the southern terminus of the Côte d’Or).



The Côte Chalonnaise has been called Burgundy's "lost" region. It was well-known and thriving through the end of the 1800s, and then was devastated by phylloxera, like everywhere else in Europe. A lot of vineyard land on the Côte was not replanted until after World War II. The local market for the wines collapsed after WWI, and the demarcation line between occupied France and the Free Zone during the German occupation in WWII sliced right through the vineyard regions of the Côte. So they lost about 50 years of production, and re-planting didn't gear up in earnest until the 1960s and 70s.

There are nearly 5,200 acres of vines on the Côte now, and in terms of production about 56% is red. The grapes here are the same as in the Côte d'Or – Pinot Noir for red and Chardonnay for the white (with the usual exceptions for Aligoté and Gamay and a few lesser varieties.)

While there are yet no true "rock star" producers in the region, the wines are enjoying a renaissance in popularity and reputation. With prices for Côte d'Or wines continuing to spiral upward, the Côte Chalonnaise has become one of my go-to spots to seek out yummy reds at more affordable prices.

There is some red wine just about everywhere in the Chalonnaise, but the stars are the villages of Mercurey, Givry, and Rully. Of those, Mercurey is consistently the best in my view. Balancing the fruit and the tannins correctly is goal #1 – the wines can have a tendency to earthiness and can get a bit heavy if extraction is not properly managed.



*The Côte Chalonnaise*

I first discovered the wines of **Domaine Ninot** in 2008, when **Erell Ninot** was nominated for (and subsequently won) the award for Burgundy's Best Young Winemaker. She took over the family domaine in 2005 at the age of 24. The estate dates to the 1300s – her ancestors have been vigneronns and tonneliers for over 700 years! Her younger brother Flavien has joined her as well, and they now farm 29 acres in Rully and Mercurey.



***Erell Ninot***

Here are two excellent examples of Côte Chalonaise reds, both from the village of Mercurey...

### **3. 2013 Mercurey Vieilles Vignes – Domaine Ninot \$31 CLUB PRICE \$26**

- From five different parcels, average vine age 65+
- Organically farmed
- Fermentation and élevage in concrete tank
- 1,100 cases produced

The Mercurey appellation covers over 2,000 acres, though not all of that is currently planted (a little more than half is presently under vine.) The soils here are basically a continuation of the Jurassic limestone that runs through most of the Côte d’Or, with varying degrees of clay mixed in. Mercurey is defined by several fault lines and a number of small hillsides, with vineyard expositions facing all different directions. The best sites tend to be on the east and south-facing hills north of the village. The Ninots have parcels spread across the village, and are fortunate that the vines are older and mature throughout. The oldest pieces were planted in the mid 1940s, with most dating to the 60s. These old vines produce deeply concentrated wines that beautifully showcase the Mercurey terroir. Rich black fruits, dominated by blackberries and black cherry are in the forefront. This wine has never seen any wood, allowing the fruit to shine through, soaring over the earthy structure subtly underneath it all.

This is mouth-filling juice, ripe and delicious, and it loves steaks or sausages on the grill to go with it. Definitely a big-bang-for-the-buck bottle. Enjoy!

### **4. 2013 Mercurey 1er Cru “les Crêts” – Domaine Ninot \$35.50 CLUB PRICE \$30**

- From 2.87 acres, planted in 1966
- Organically farmed
- Fermentation in concrete tank
- Élevage in tank and neutral barrels (25% in barrel)
- 175 cases produced

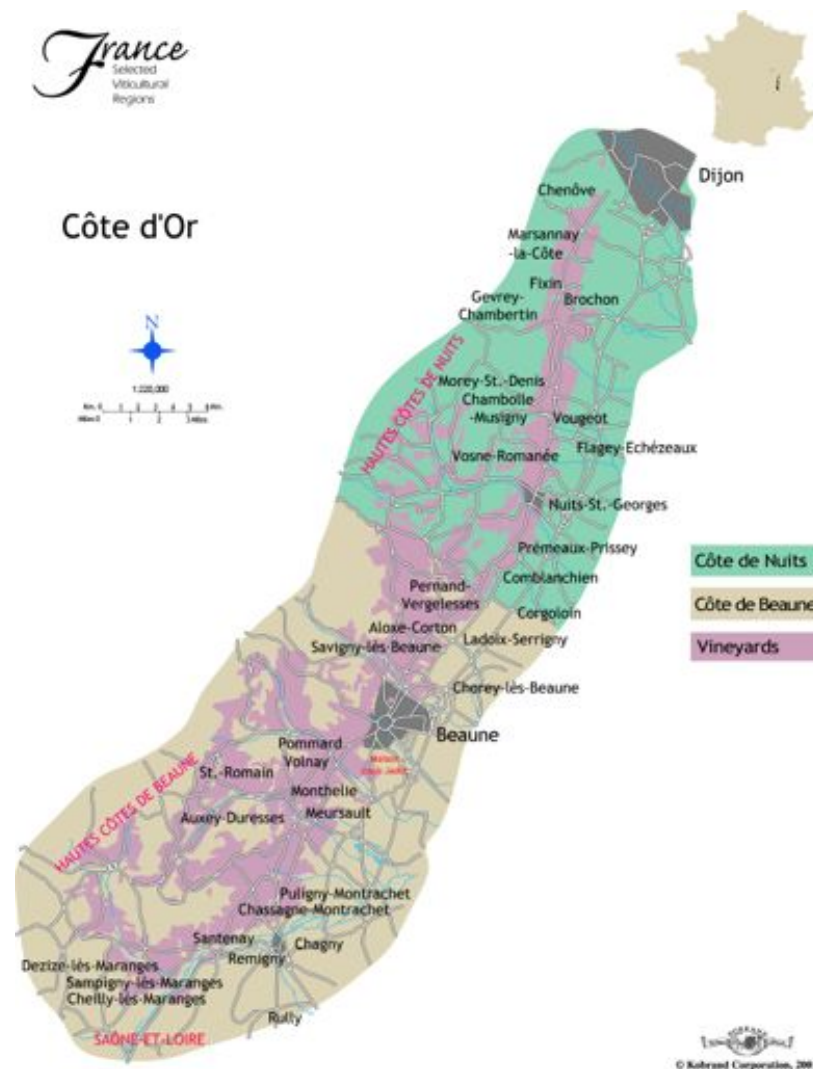
There are 380 acres entitled to 1er Cru status in Mercurey, and over 90% of it is planted. “les Crêts” is a site at the top of the slope on a hill just north of the village – one of the “sweet spots” in Mercurey. The soil is thin and stony, and the upper reaches are planted mostly to Chardonnay. The Ninot parcel of Pinot Noir is mid-slope, ideally situated to show off how good Mercurey 1er Cru can be.

Drink this alongside the Mercurey VV and you’ll immediately see the main markers of increased quality – a more refined texture, more complex aromas, deeper flavors, and a clearly longer finish. The overall fruit profile is very similar to the VV bottling, but there’s simply a lot more going on.

A portion of this was aged in neutral barrels (barrels that have been used three or more times previously) – which adds to the textural complexity you’ll notice on the mid-palate and the finish – without any trace of “wood” in evidence. Another tremendous value.

## The Côte d’Or

Just a few minutes’ north and we’re in the **Côte d’Or** – the hallowed ground that is home to the most famous and revered wines on the planet. Here, the soils are just a little more interesting and complex, the vineyard expositions just a little bit more ideal, and the prevailing sun and wind patterns and overall weather more ideally suited to producing Pinot Noir that knows no equal. (And Chardonnay, for that matter. Montrachet, arguably the world’s greatest white wine, also hails from here.)



The Côte d'Or is actually two distinctly different sub-regions, with the **Côte de Nuits** in the north and the **Côte de Beaune** in the south. In this package you have one example from each, so we can take a broad look at the differences between the two sub-regions.

Are Romanée-Conti, Musigny and La Tâche the greatest Pinot Noir wines on earth? Over thousands of years, humankind has not found anything that even comes close, that much is clear. There is just something about the confluence of soils, climate, elevation and exposition that make these sites somewhat magical.

Apart from these exalted Grand Crus, the rest of the vineyard land in the Côte d'Or is pretty darned special as well. The Côte de Nuits is almost entirely planted to Pinot Noir, while it's more of a split between red and white in the Côte de Beaune. All but one of the white Grand Crus are in the Côte de Beaune, and all but one of the red Grand Crus are in the Côte de Nuits. This did not happen by accident or by someone's preference for Pinot over Chardonnay hundreds of years ago. Dozens of different grape varieties were grown here over the centuries, and over time Pinot and Chardonnay found their ideal homes in these narrow hillsides that run for some 35 miles from just below Dijon to a few miles past Beaune.

Continuing our exploration of the world of Red Burgs – let's take a look at the Côte de Nuits vs the Côte de Beaune. Generally speaking, the **reds hit higher heights in the Côte de Nuits**. There is nothing in the Côte de Beaune to equal the magnificence of the best of the Côte de Nuits. The main red wine villages of the Côte de Beaune – Pommard, Volnay, Beaune, and Savigny-lès-Beaune - produce lots of great wines, but there's not a Richebourg or a Chambertin among them. There are many fabulous Côte de Beaune reds that I adore, and drink with great regularity, and are thankfully a lot more affordable than the best of the Côte de Nuits (which are seemingly only within reach of Russian oligarchs and Dubai billionaires these days.)

There is elegance and finesse in Volnay, power and intensity in Pommard, and a cross between those two in Beaune and Savigny. All of those can be fabulous, and one could argue that the best 1er Crus of the Côte de Beaune (Volnay Clos des Ducs, Pommard Rugiens, for example) are legit candidates for upgrade to Grand Cru. They just might be better than some of the "lesser" Grand Crus of the Côte de Nuits (plenty examples of Échezeaux and Clos Vougeot come to mind.) What they don't have that the best wines of the Côte de Nuits do have is a pronounced and precise minerality, a particular expression of Pinot Noir that is really only found in the area stretching from the northern limits of Nuits-St. Georges to the northern half of Chambolle-Musigny. If I were a Pinot Noir grape, that's where I'd want to grow.

So let's taste. Pour these two side-by-side if you'd like for a great illustration of terroir...



**5. 2013 Nuits-St. Georges “les Fleurières” – J-J Confuron \$62 CLUB PRICE \$52**

- From a 3-acre parcel, organically farmed
- Average vine age 40+
- Vinified in Concrete tank
- Aged in oak barrels for 14 months, about 33% new
- 225 cases produced

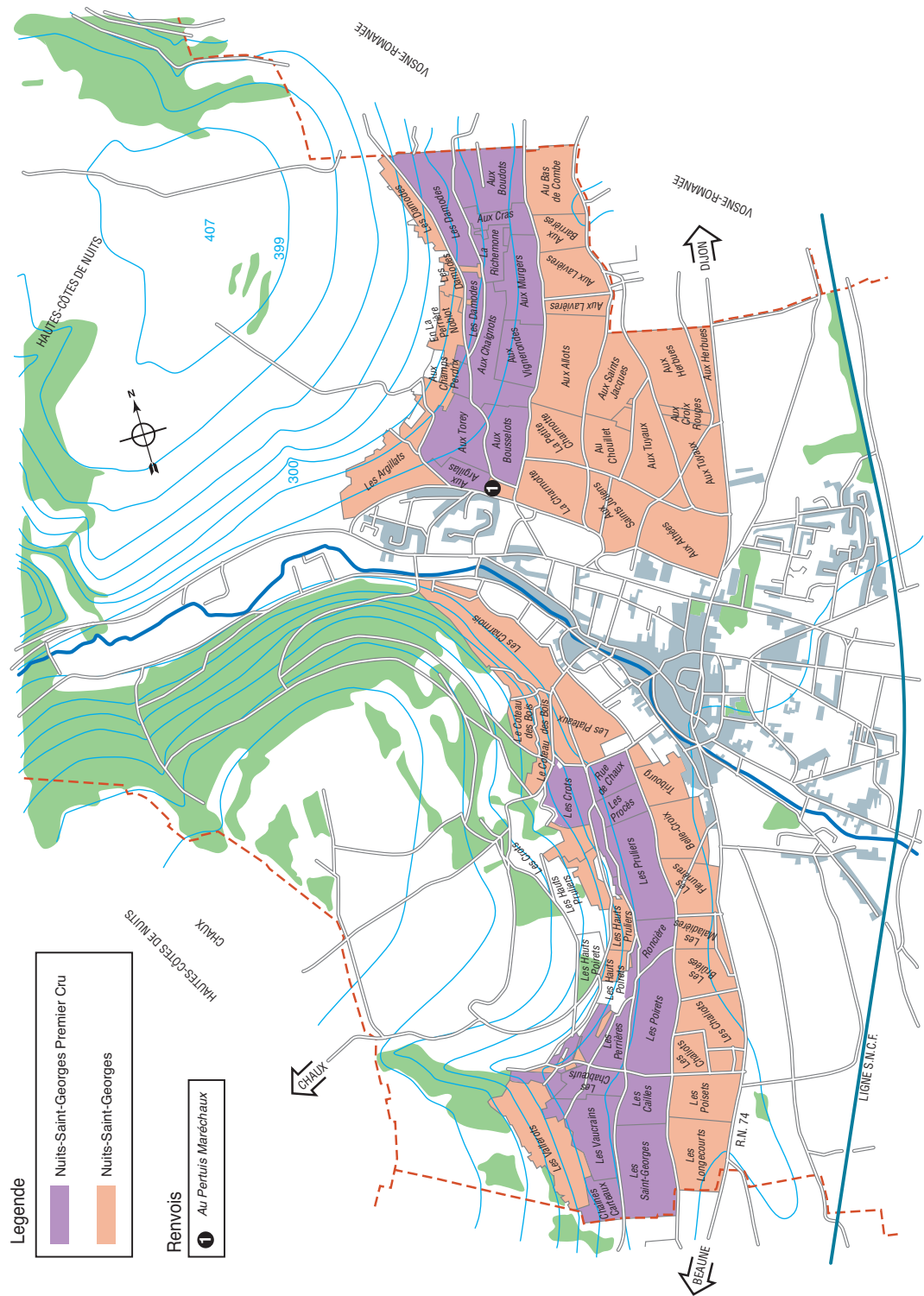
Alain Meunier and his wife Sophie Meunier-Confuron have been in charge of this spectacular domaine since the 1980s. They converted all the vineyards to organic viticulture right away, and have earned a reputation as one of the most admired producers on the Côte. They have two Grand Crus (Romanée-St. Vivant and Clos Vougeot) excellent 1er Cru holdings in Vosne-Romanée, Chambolle-Musigny and Nuits-St. Georges, and several well-placed Village parcels as well. This 3-acre piece of les Fleurières is their largest individual parcel. We’ve featured this wine in our Club selections a couple of times previously – it’s the only wine Confuron makes enough of that we can feature in the club!

Les Fleurières is in the southern half of Nuits-St. Georges (see map below), the sector generally considered to be the part that produces the firmer, more tannic wines of the village. Les Fleurières is an exception to that, however, as it is one of the sites on the south side that leans more toward elegance and perfume. It’s a seductive wine, with powerful aromas of sweet black fruits, earth and spice notes. In the mouth it is rich and supple, muscular, and moderately tannic, with a clear limestone minerality holding it all together. We love it with flavorful patés and cheeses, and it rocks with grilled Salmon too.



***Winemaker Alain Meunier in the cellar at Confuron***

# NUIITS-SAINT-GEORGES



## Legende

- Nuits-Saint-Georges Premier Cru
- Nuits-Saint-Georges

## Renvois

- Au Pertuis Marechaux

**6. 2013 Savigny-lès-Beaune 1er Clos des Guettes – A-F Gros \$81 CLUB PRICE \$69**

- From a 1.64-acre parcel, planted in the 1970s
- Vinified in Concrete tank
- Aged in oak barrels 16 months, 50% new
- 150 cases produced

**Domaine A-F Gros** is one of four prominent domaines bearing the name Gros. This is the one owned and run by **Anne-Françoise Gros**. Her brother Bernard runs Domaine Gros Frère et Soeur, her brother Michel has Domaine Michel Gros, and their cousin Anne has Domaine Anne Gros. Other than that, it's very simple!

Domaine A-F Gros is one of the few estates in Burgundy to have significant holdings in both the Côte de Nuits and the Côte de Beaune. Anne-Françoise is married to François Parent, a prominent vigneron in Pommard, and their estates are married together as well. Wine for both labels is produced at their shared facility in Beaune.

In 1995 Anne-Françoise and François jointly purchased a small piece of the Savigny-lès-Beaune 1er Cru "Clos des Guettes", which they share between the two estates. The Clos was once a monopole, owned entirely by the Pinoteau de Rodinger family – but was sold off in five different pieces in '95. You can see the outline of the Clos in the uppermost section of Aux Guettes in the Savigny vineyard map below –





*Anne-Françoise Gros and François Parent*

Savigny has long been considered the source of some of the best values in Burgundy. The wines are typically generous, well-balanced, with good fruit and minerality in harmony with a robust earthiness. The better 1er Crus, like Clos des Guettes, can deliver great pleasure for about half the cost of Chambolle and Vosne 1ers. The prices for everything in Savigny have more than doubled in the last 10 years, but they remain excellent values vis-à-vis their peers.

Clos des Guettes is a north-facing site, so generally ripens later than most parcels, and is typically the last vineyard harvested at Gros every year. The cooler temperatures at the site contribute to the nice acidity, even in hotter years like 2003 or 2009. The nose is lovely, with griotte cherries, cassis and raspberries up front, and nicely integrated acid and tannins come together in a fairly silky finish. This is the one to have with red meats and game birds this fall and winter. Yes, please!

## **Next shipment in the Spring...**

I hope you've enjoyed our little tour through the three different worlds of Red Burgs. 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](http://www.caveauselections.com)