



# Burgundy Club

Spring 2020



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](mailto:scott@caveauselections.com)). Also, check out our new **"House Wine" Clubs** if you're interested in a steady supply of delicious Burgs at \$20-25 per bottle.

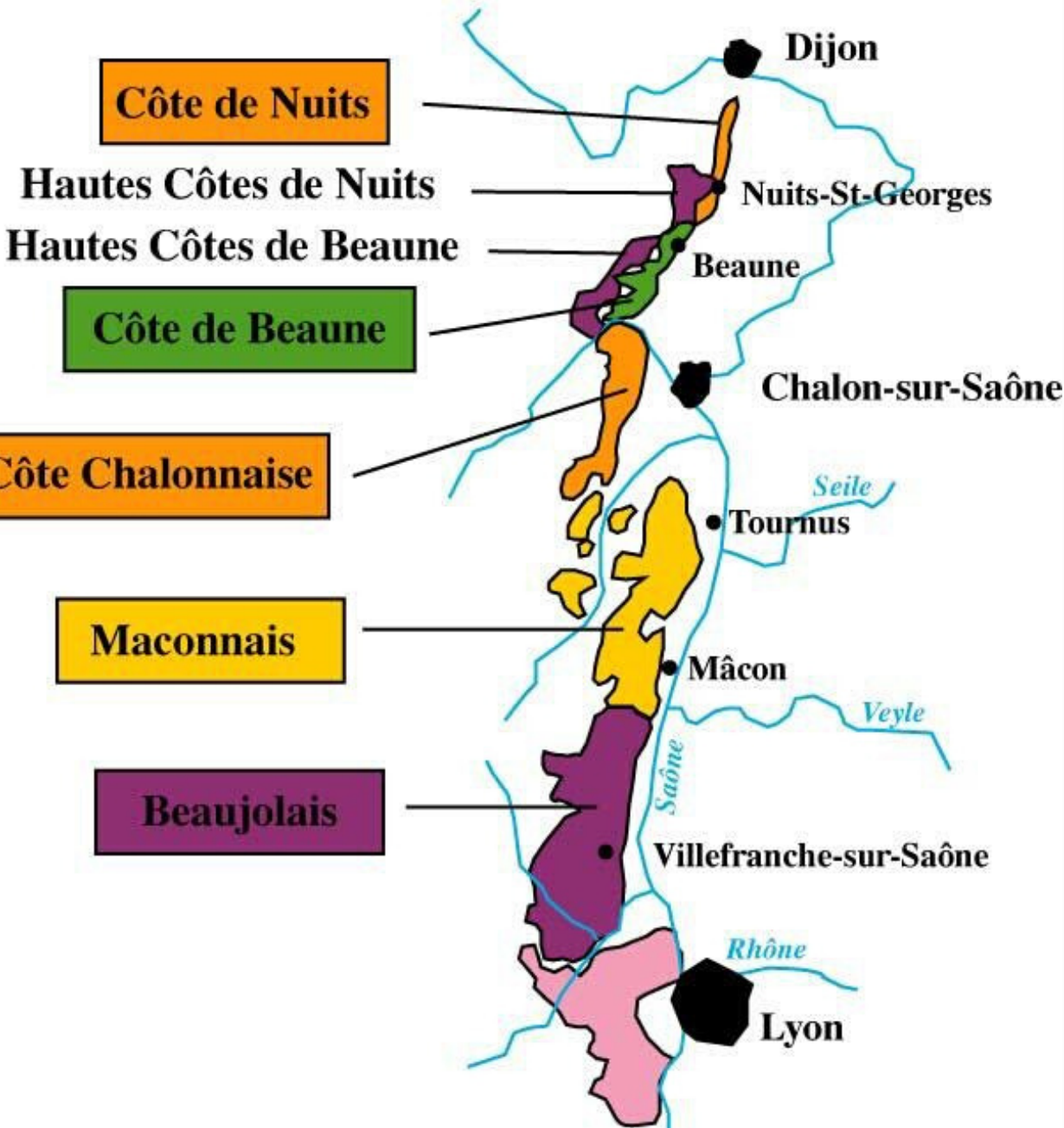
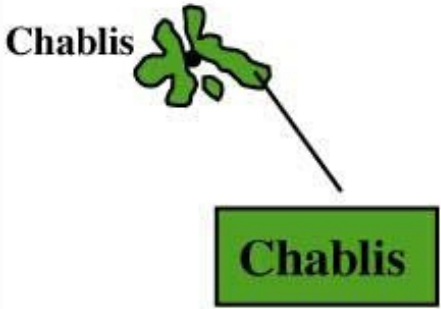
The wines in each 6-bottle Burgundy Club shipment have been specifically selected to help educate and illustrate – each shipment is essentially a Burgundy seminar-in-a-box. You can use all of this to stage your own tasting seminar at home, or of course you can just drink the wines one by one. Whichever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

## A Study in Terroir

In this package we're featuring **three different producers**, and have selected **two different wines from each** of them to showcase the concept of terroir. **Terroir** is a word that really has no direct, concrete translation (in English or in French). The notion of terroir encompasses all of the elements that can make one parcel of vineyard land produce a wine that is distinctly different from a wine made from another parcel - even if the two parcels are directly adjacent.



# BURGUNDY



## **The concept of terroir is the very essence of Burgundy.**

It was the Cistercian Monks in the Middle Ages who first discovered that different pieces of land - when planted with the same vine material, farmed in the same manner, and with the same winemaking procedures, would consistently produce wines different from each other. Through centuries of experimentation - paths or walls were built to mark boundary lines between different terroirs. Many of those walls and paths exist today, and were ultimately the basis for the appellation laws that were put into place with the creation of the AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlé) in 1935.

Terroir includes the nature of the soils and subsoils of course, but it's so much more than that. It also takes into account things like elevation, slope, exposition, micro-climate, sun and wind patterns - essentially anything and everything that could affect the characteristics of the grapes grown on that specific spot.

For those who don't believe in terroir, all it takes is to taste a **DRC Romanée-Conti** and a **DRC Richebourg** from the same vintage side-by-side. The viticulture and winemaking is absolutely identical. Those two vineyards are separated by a footpath about 8 feet wide - yet the wines are undeniably worlds apart. (That tasting would run you about \$12,000+ for the two bottles, so maybe not a great example!) We can accomplish the same thing in a much more approachable manner right here.

So let's jump in! Before we get to the wines, have a look at the **Burgundy Basics** section below if you'd like to brush up on how to make sense out of what can seem a complex and confusing region. If you're good to go, you can just jump ahead to page 7 and dive in.

## 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.



Farming "old-school" style at Domaine Chevrot



**Pablo & Vincent Chevrot**

**Domaine Chevrot 2018 Maranges 1er Cru "Les Clos Roussots"**

Brothers <sup>\$44</sup> Pablo and Vincent Chevrot are the 3rd generation in charge of the family's 49-acre estate in the southern reaches of the Côte de Beaune. Most of their vineyard holdings are in the adjacent villages of **Santenay** and **Maranges** - appellations that historically been overlooked but have recently been gaining the notoriety they deserve.



Most of the producers in the region still sell most of their grapes to the large negotiant houses, and very few have been focused on quality. The Chevrots have proven that when you apply the same meticulous care in the vineyards and the winery that are typical of top producers in the more famous appellations, the quality of the Santenay and Maranges terroir is clearly evident.

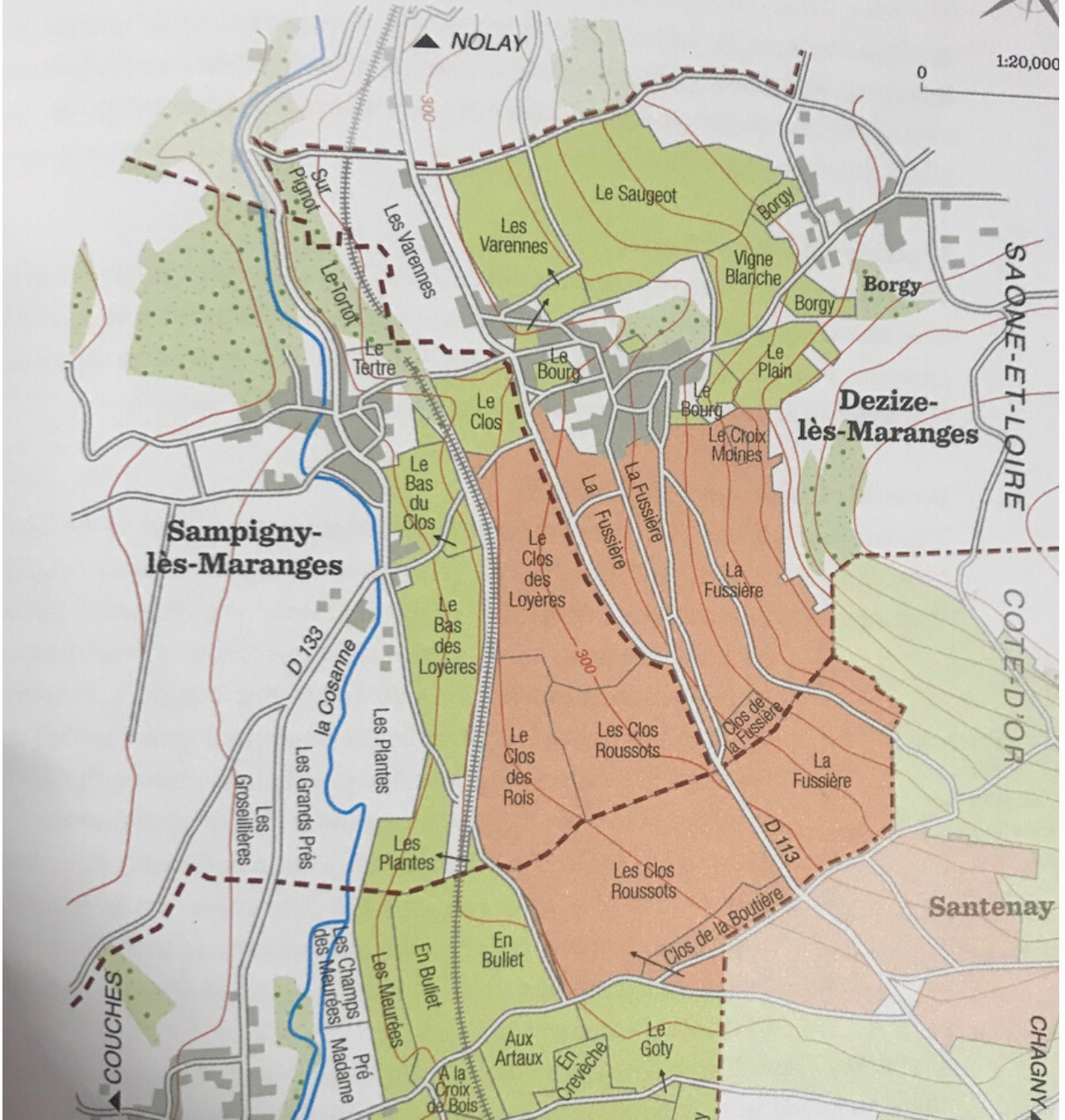
The entire Chevrot estate is farmed organically, and the focus is on keeping yields low. The result is a lineup of truly delicious and elegant wines, from terroir that can tend to produce rather rustic and tannic wines if not treated with the utmost care.

**"Les Clos Roussots"** is a rather large appellation at just over 69 acres total - the tiny piece owned and farmed by Chevrot however is less than an acre, .86 to be exact. There's a solid band of hard limestone just beneath the soil surface - with more clay in the topsoil further up the hill, and more marl as you come downslope, where the Chevrot piece is situated.

The result is a wine that exhibits nice earthy berry notes on the nose, bursting into extremely pretty fruit on a fat and rich mid-palate, culminating in a satisfying and well-structured finish. Now compare this with the next wine, from a vineyard less than 100 yards away.

# Maranges

-  Premiers Crus
-  Appellation Maranges





**Domaine Chevrot 2017 Maranges 1er Cru "Le Croix Moines"**

\$64

This tiny 1er Cru is just 2.5 acres in total, and the Chevrot piece is less than a half-acre (.46, for those who are counting.) It's just about 75 meters to the east and slightly further up the hill from Les Clos Roussots.

And what a difference those 75 meters can make. The soil here consists of chunks of fractured limestone over marl and clay and a limestone bedrock. Its south-eastern exposure gives it maximum sun throughout the day, and it's protected by rock outcroppings from the winds that swirl around the top of the hill.

Put all of that together, and you end up with a wine in the glass that is clearly silkier in texture, more refined and focused than the Clos Roussots. The fruit seems a bit fresher, the finish a touch more persistent, the aromas more fine and precise. Same viticulture, same winemaking, the only difference is the place. That, dear reader, is **terroir**.



Tasting in the cellar at Domaine Ninot



**Erell and Flavien Ninot**

**Domaine Ninot** 2018 Mercurey Vieilles Vignes \$32

Moving south from Maranges, we enter the Côte Chalonnaise, the section of Burgundy just south of the Côte de Beaune. Rully, Mercurey, Givry and Bouzeron are the major villages here, and no one does it better than Domaine Ninot.

This estate is run by another sibling duo, with winemaker **Erell** and her viticulturist brother **Flavien** comprising the umpteenth generation of the family - the Ninots have been farming these lands and making wines here since 1313!

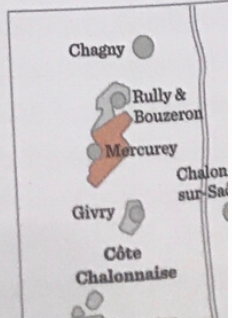
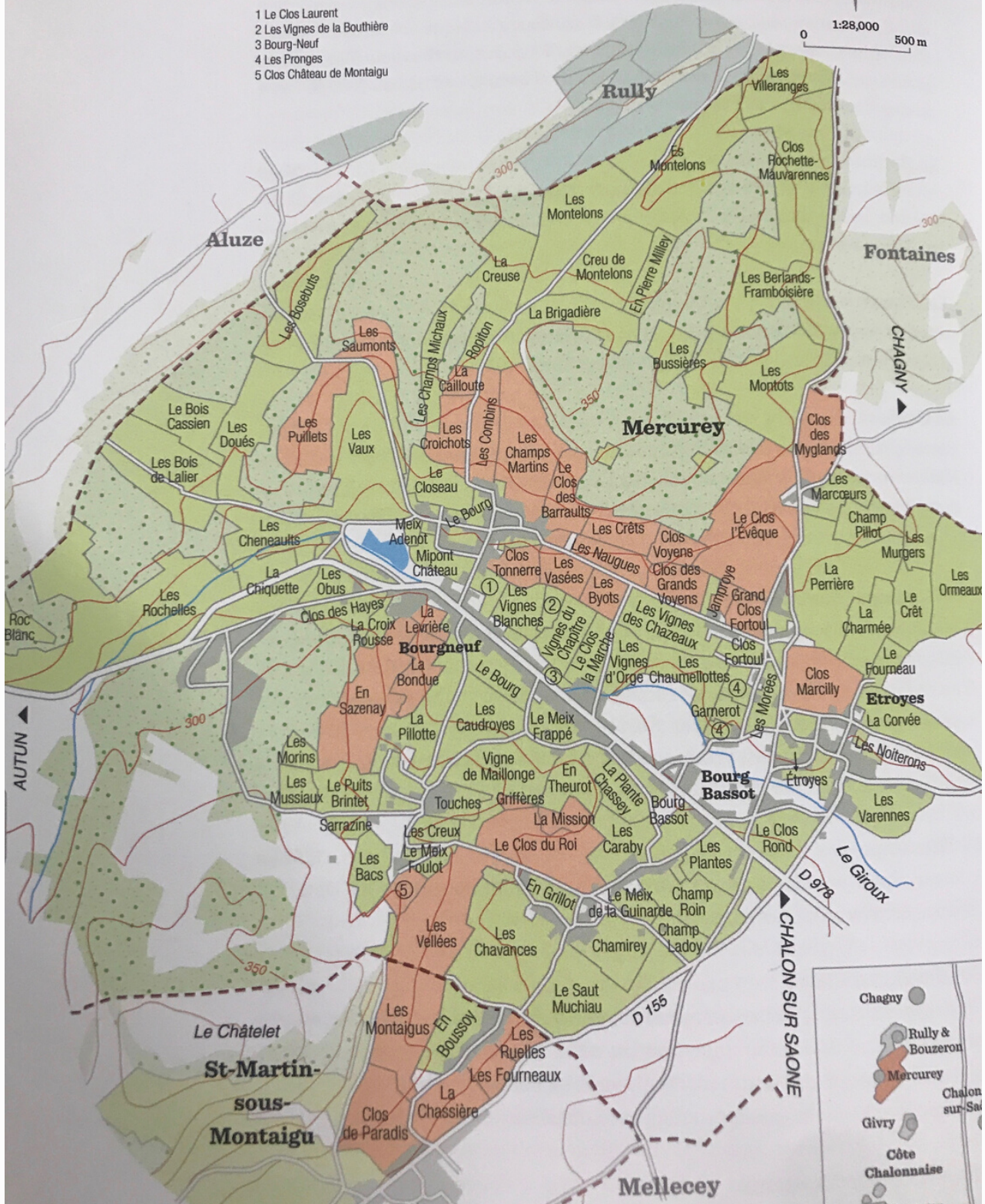
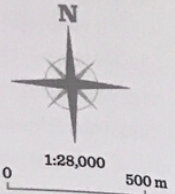
**Mercurey** is considered the “senior” village in the region - its are generally the most complex and the most highly thought of. Mercurey produces the deepest, richest reds, and in the hands of talented vigneron like the Ninots there is a lot of elegance and finesse to be found as well.

We’ll start our exploration of Mercurey with the Ninot “**Vieilles Vignes**” (Old Vines) bottling. This is comprised of 5 different parcels spread across the village, with an average vine age now over 70 years. These old vines with deep roots beautifully express the essence of Village-level Mercurey. An earthy, heady perfume opens up in the glass the minute you pour it. It shows very lovely black fruits - think ripe blackberry and black cherry - and has a seductive round richness to the mouthfeel. This is a whole lot of wine for the \$\$, which is why it has consistently been one of our most popular offerings for the last 12 years straight.

# Mercurey

- Mercury Premier Cru
- Mercury

- 1 Le Clos Laurent
- 2 Les Vignes de la Bouthière
- 3 Bourg-Neuf
- 4 Les Pronges
- 5 Clos Château de Montaigu



## Domaine Ninot 2018 Mercurey 1er Cru "Les Velleys" \$47

Only 15% of the nearly 2500 acres of vineyard land in Mercurey is classified at the 1er Cru level, with the first designations being granted in 1943 and subsequent upgrades decreed in 1988. The Mercurey 1er Crus are scattered across several different hillsides with varying exposures, so it is quite a mixed bag.

**Les Velleys** (sometimes spelled Velley or Velées) is on a lower slope south of the village, with ideal south-southeast exposure. It tends to ripen early, as it's situated so as to catch full sunlight and heat throughout the growing season. The entirety of Les Velleys is just under 23 acres, with Ninot's portion accounting for just over 2 acres. From this parcel (also old vines, planted in the 1960s), you immediately see why this land was bumped up to 1er Cru.

There's a whole new level of refinement, and so many more layers of aromas and flavors. One of the key distinguishing elements is length on the palate - the finish glides on seamlessly for an extended period. This wine sees a tiny portion (about 15%) of new oak during *élevage*, but it is not evident in any obvious way. It is beautifully integrated and balanced throughout. This is one of the great 1er Cru values in all of Burgundy - enjoy!



In the tasting room at Ninot with Erell



**Domaine Michel Mallard** 2017 Ladoix 1er Cru “La Corvée” \$59

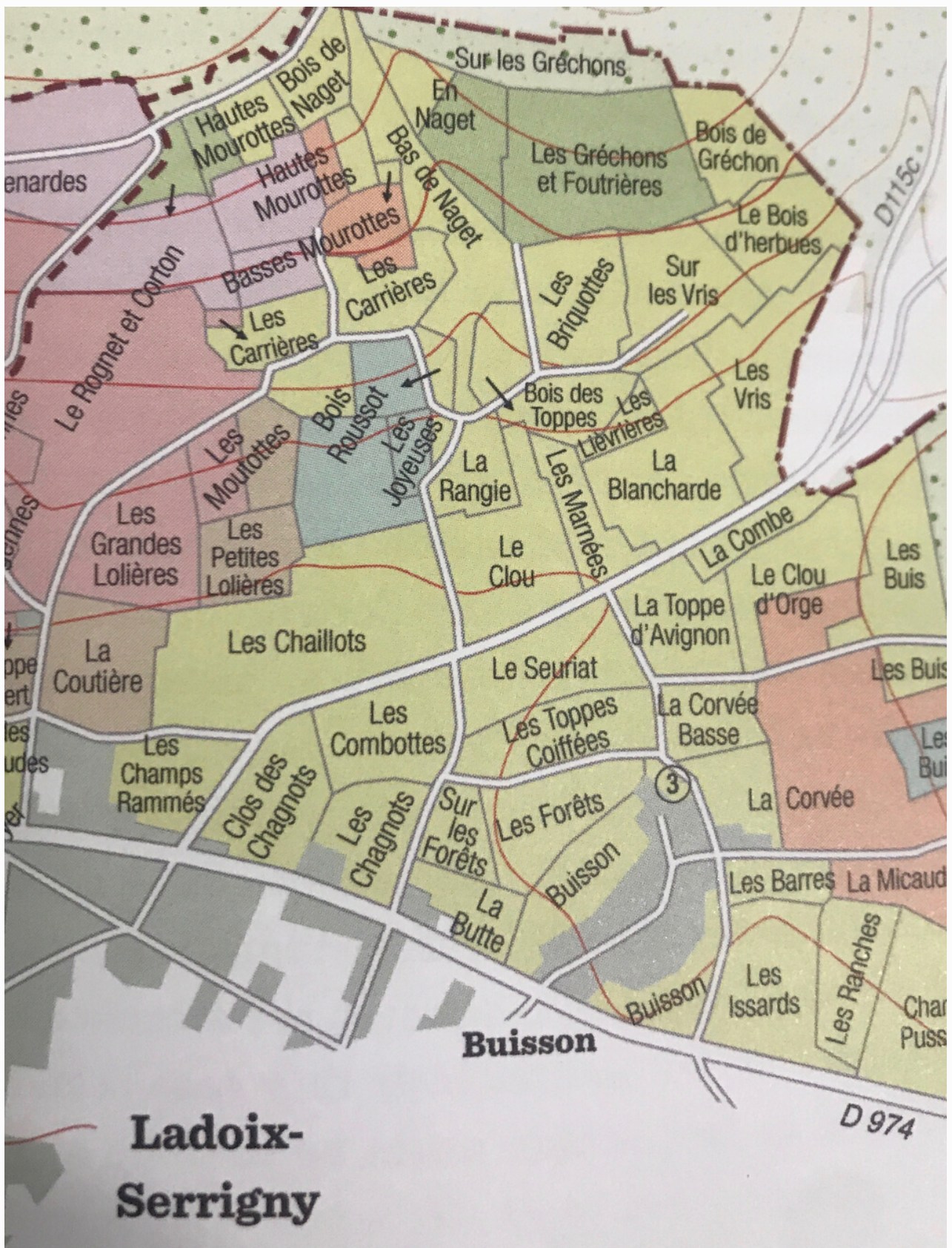
Now we move to the northern end of the Côte de Beaune for our final pairing. Winemaker **Michel Mallard** and his father Patrick run this impressive 27-acre estate based in Ladoix-Serrigny, one of the three villages that make up the famous Hill of Corton (the others being Aloxe-Corton and Pernand-Vergelesses.)

Mallard has quite a range of holdings, including four magnificent Grand Crus and six different 1er Crus. The quality here has dramatically improved since Michel took control, and they are now recognized as one of the benchmark producers on the hill.

“**La Corvée**” is the northern-most 1er Cru in the Côte de Beaune - the Côte de Nuits starts just a few hundred yards up the road. It always produces a wine of majesty and power - think of it as a junior version of Corton.

Mallard has just under 2 acres of the 17.63 total in the appellation, with vine age now at 50 years+. Like all the Mallard wines, it's something you could cellar for many years - this is a terroir that reveals its fullest beauty with many years of bottle age. I definitely recommend decanting if you're going to drink it young. Big, bold black fruits, ample structure and a firm backbone - this is a full-on food wine, meant to be enjoyed with big roasts and wild game.



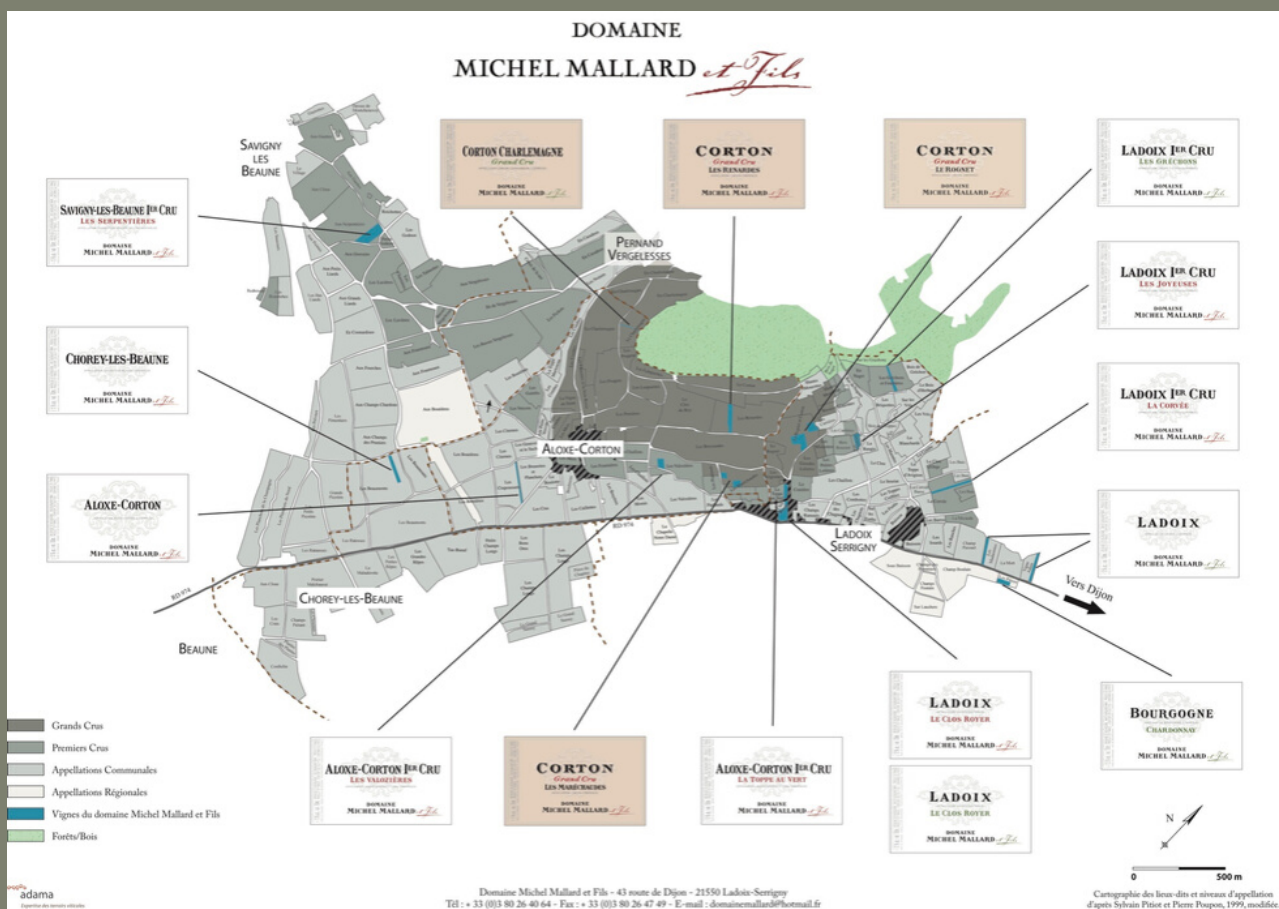


## Domaine Michel Mallard 2017 Ladoix 1er Cru "Les Joyeuses" \$57

**Les Joyeuses** (the Happy Ones - with the spelling indicating that the happy ones are female) is a tiny 1er Cru mid-slope, and an extension of the same terroir as Grand Cru Corton Rognets. It measures just 1.87 acres in its entirety, and the Mallard portion is a mere .91 acres of 45 year-old vines.

This is pretty much the polar opposite of La Corvée, in that it's a wine focused on very elegant fruit. Silky on the entrance to the palate, and bursting with pretty raspberries and cherries and a hint of clove. There's structure, to be sure, but it doesn't dominate the wine as in the predecessor. This is probably the most refined and finesse-driven wine on the Corton Hill, really exceptional stuff. Approachable now, but would be at its peak of expression 5-7+ years down the line.

Once again, a clear example of the same vine material grown the same way and vinified the same way by the same hands - but the magic of terroir provides all the difference.



## 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](http://www.caveauselections.com)

Please let us know if we need to make any changes to your account. You can update us on our secure form online at <https://www.caveauselections.com/credit-card-update-form>

- If you have a new or updated credit card
- If you have a change of billing or shipping address
- If you want to change your order from "ship" to "pick-up", or vice-versa
- If you have any questions about your Club membership

Launched in 2005, Caveau Selections is owned and operated by Martha & Scott Wright, importers and winemakers in Oregon, Burgundy and Campagne since 1999. Scott has been drinking and studying the wines and regions of Burgundy and Champagne since the 1970s, and visiting regularly since the 1980s. He Co-produced and directed the award winning Burgundy documentary film **Three Days of Glory**, leads annual Insiders' Tours of both Burgundy and Champagne, and teaches seminars here and abroad. Email [Scott@caveauselections.com](mailto:Scott@caveauselections.com) for more information.

