



BURGUNDY CLUB

FALL 2023

A FOCUS ON VINTAGE 2021

The latest edition of the Caveau Burgundy Club – a twice-yearly tutored tasting and exploration of the great wines and terroirs of Burgundy – will soon be in your cellar. The wines in each 6-bottle Burgundy Club shipment have been specifically selected to help educate and illuminate – 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!



All the 2021s in your 6-pack mix are gorgeous, but there’s just not many of ‘em! Between spring frost and summertime mildew, just about everyone lost at least half their crop in ‘21, with certain parcels hit even harder (Violot-Guillemard made a total of 12 bottles of their Pommard Clos Derrière-St. Jean 1er - we didn’t even bother asking for an allocation of that one!) For the top wines, production of just two or three barrels was pretty common across the board.

Here’s our general commentary on the wine quality for 2021 though: they are everything that makes Burgundy so magical and unique. These are what Burgundy lovers love about Burgundy - elegance and finesse, the silky textures, the fresh cherry-berry fruit, and the limestone backbone. Simply gorgeous wines that could not come from anywhere else on the planet.

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.

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.





A TRUE CLASSIC

VINTAGE 2021

It's important to stop and remember something sometimes in the wine business. Wine has been romanticized to a point, and maybe more so in Burgundy than anywhere else, that we forget that all these winemakers are running businesses. Being a transformer of a farm product into what many consider an art form is fine and all, but at the end of the day, profits and losses either put dinner on the table, or take it away.

The recent run of funky vintages all throughout France over the last decade, with maybe 3 that were considered abundant, has probably caused a great deal of consternation around many dinner tables. Sure, there are maybe 25 wineries in Burgundy that don't worry about this, with astronomical prices that aren't determined by profit and loss inputs and outputs.

The vintage 2021 was one of those hand-wringers. A horrific springtime frost in early April, followed by a very wet May and June, and culminated by hail storms in July,

pointed to a disaster in the making for many farmers. Yet mother nature relented in August and September, delivering long sunny days and cool, acid-retaining nights. Even though many growers lost up to half their crop in the Spring, what was left by harvest time turned out to be perfect.

Over the course of 20 visits with our suppliers in November 2022, we jotted down the word "classic" more than once. Many of the wines reminded us of the kind of vintage in the 80's and 90's, prior to extreme year to year climate fluctuations, that put Burgundy on the map as a fine, elegant, and complex wine.

For your club package this season, we looked to six winemakers and asked them each for a wine that would best represent this assessment of vintage 2021. They all came through in a big way. Each of the backstories below are from our visits together with them about a year ago.

Let's check them out!

JEAN-JACQUES CONFURON

The Confuron history includes multiple well-known family names in Burgundy--Confuron, Meunier, Noellat--and through those marriages, a formidable composition of vineyard holdings has been assembled in Nuits-St. Georges, Chambolle-Musigny, Vosne-Romanée, as well as the heralded Romanée St. Vivant. On our visit day, the robust Sophie Meunier seemed happy, went on a little about a broken down car, that husband Alain would not be present because he was predictably working in the vineyard, and that son Louis was on his way to taste wines with us.



Eventually, Louis came bounding across the driveway, one of the taller Frenchmen we've ever met. He greeted us efficiently, with little eye contact, grabbed 3 glasses and a pipette, and beckoned us down the cellar stairs. Tasting his range took approximately 22 minutes. As one wine was in our glass, Louis had the next one prepped with the anti-drip disc and ready to go. Comments and compliments were always met the same way--"Oui" or "Oui, c'est ca." Louis' gaze was firmly fixed on the floor for most of the tasting, passing through the tops of our heads maybe, but mostly fiddling with the aiguille on the Coravin contraption.

We were left wondering, does Louis simply not have much to say? Or actually, is there anything really to say here at all? Because when it all was distilled down to why we were there, this was an extraordinarily delicious lineup of wine. From the baby Bourgogne La Jeunesse to the Côtes de Nuits Les Vignottes that is situated next to the house, and right on through to the Vosne-Romanée Beaux Monts and the stunning Grand Cru Romanée-St. Vivant, there was a powerful yet understated purity and focus to each and every wine. Maybe Louis couldn't say much because he preferred to let the wines speak, or maybe he couldn't believe what nature gave them in 2021, but just didn't give very much of.



NUITS-SAINT- GEORGES

'LES FLEURIERES' 2021, \$68

Winemaker Alain Meunier-Confuron and his son Louis have been working in tandem at J-J Confuron for seven vintages now, and the 2021 vintage has given us wines that show the father-son team really hitting their groove. Not that that's any surprise, of course. Confuron is one of those domaines that is amazingly consistent. The style, the elegance, the finesse, the terroir transparency, the purity of fruit - they shine through year after year.

We've never been about the big names, having built our stable on seeking out the smaller and lesser-known producers, those who were over-achievers and under the radar. But there was no way to pass up the opportunity to work with Confuron. They're lovely people, the wines make me swoon, and they're one of the great unpretentious and down to earth families in all of Burgundy.

Among the six wines in your box, this Nuits-Saint-Georges Les Fleurieres is the most rich and ample on the palate, stuffed with the ripe black fruits that typify this part of the appellation. It's utterly delicious, and has the structure to evolve nicely in the bottle for many years to come.

HUBER- VERDEREAU

Thiébault Huber is a force of nature. He's about 50-something, but with the kind of energy that is hard to imagine. It's not all just physical energy though. This dude is involved in a LOT of different things. On the day we visited him, he had two Americans coming to see him later to taste their Hospices barrels that he was babying to completion.



Additionally, Thiébault is in the middle of a 4-year term as president of CAVB, the Confederation of Appellations and Burgundy Winemakers, which in many ways makes him a politician.

He is deeply involved in all things Burgundy and his cheerleading around the world for Burgundy is an important part of the region's notoriety (in today terms anyway). Burgundy has had its share of noisy champions over the years that has built its mystique, lore, and economics. Thiébault Huber is clearly a part of that long history today.

At the core of it all though, he has a business to run. The Domaine Huber-Verdereau has been a centerpiece of Caveau's importing work for nearly 15 years, and it is easy to understand why. Despite all the above, Thiébault is first and foremost, a winemaker. And with one of the nicest collections of vines in the Côtes-de-Beaune, covering Monthelie, Volnay, Pommard, Auxey-Duresses and Meursault, his name must be considered one of the most important on the Côte.

POMMARD

'EN VAUMURIENS HAUT' 2021,
\$65

Thiébaaults style is one more of prettiness, high-toned aromatics, and finesse than say nearby Violot-Guillemard. The color of his wines are brilliant and bright, and the lift in the palate with a focus on acidity and lower pH creates a mouth-watering element to all his bottlings.

All of the 2021s that we sampled from tank, including all his Pommard and Volnay (both village and cru) were extraordinary. But it was this Pommard that really stood out as the obvious wine to include in the club. It is a classically beautiful wine, deeply layered with fruit, saturated with Pinot-ness, and ready for drinking early, or cellaring into something even more refined.

As you might guess from the name, it comes from a high-elevation south-east facing old-vine Pommard site at the top of the hill - with a view all the way to Mont Blanc on a clear day. In some ways this is the minerally and earthy face of Pommard.

A complex and complete bottle of Burgundy through and through.

JOANNÈS VIOLOT-GUILLEMARD

Joannès arrived like ricochet rabbit, quilted ski vest flapping open, and hair on fire. There is nothing quite like the energy of a 25-year old. We were joined at the tasting by some other young dude that coordinated his visit at the same time. He and Joannes seemed previously acquainted, and about the same age. But the other guy was staid, well-coiffed, pressed, and straight-laced. Joannès darted in and out of the room, remembering something he forgot moments earlier, and returning as he had left, empty-handed. It wasn't nerves. He was just jacked up.



The tasting commenced, with all wines in tiny sample bottles (brut de cuve) he had drawn and assembled for us earlier that day. It was a lineup that progressed from strength to strength. It might be odd to use words like 'masculine' and 'muscular' for Pinot Noir, but here our notes are filled with them. However, the wines are still approachable, bright, and complex. Certain of his bottles can sometimes take awhile to unfold in a glass once they have been bottled, shipped around the world, and then reopened on a new continent. We should maybe attach a warning sticker!

The overarching topic of this visit though regarded whole cluster vs. destemmed cluster vinification. We noted this as a change Joannes has advanced over the previous few years as something he is doing clearly differently than his father Thierry. Whole cluster fermentation puts an awful lot of junk in the trunk sometimes, but with a vintage like 2021—low yielding, tinier bunches, and high maturity levels—it seemed to work. All of Joannès' wines sport high-toned fruit aromas, but on the attack are pretty darned dense and woody. But then, after just another 10 seconds, the fruit sweetness comes back in the middle. They are classic reds and it will be interesting to observe how the young, fast-talking Joannès hones his style over the years. At least he's not a NextGen that has bailed for a life in Paris, leaving this fine domaine in less capable hands.



HAUTES CÔTES- DE-BEAUNE

'PINOT NOIRIEN' 2021, \$39

When we started working with the estate back in 2005, Joannès Violot-Guillemard was a middle-schooler, terrorizing the vineyard roads on his souped-up Motobike. We've watched him grow up, working alongside his dad Thierry since finishing his viticulture and enology studies.

Joannès officially took charge of the domaine and vinified the 2019s on his own, and as of that vintage the label now reads simply "Joannès Violot-Guillemard". That said - the gentle soul and guiding hand of Papa is clearly behind every drop of juice.

The Hautes-Côtes has become a hot-spot of late - or at least a much warmer spot due to climate change - and the wines are now consistently ripe, lush and delicious. "Pinot Noirien" was the local old-school name for Pinot Noir back in the 1800s.

When we first tasted this wine, and then considered the price, which seems too low for what's in the bottle, we knew immediately that EVERY club member should get one.

Mission accomplished!

DOMAINE NINOT

The Côte Chalonnaise is the very southern end of the Côte-de-Beaune, where heavy duty vine density subsides into a more polycultural patchwork of grains, orchards, and grazing animals. The Ninot cellars are in the village of Rully, well-known to have one of the largest Crèmant aging facilities in the Côte, and also with a history of barrel making.



The latter was the original métier of the Ninot family, with their lineage in Rully going back to the, ahem, 1300's. But today, Errell Ninot doesn't seem to care too much for barrels, with her wines focused on fruit attack and fresh aromatics. Her forefathers tradition be damned.

Along with her brother Flavien, a constantly smiling, but rather quiet chap, Errel Ninot makes wines from two appellations--Rully and Mercurey. Both are part of what is known as the Côte Chalonnaise, and are neighbors on the map.

Mercrey vineyards point toward the Maconnais and Beaujolais to the south where granite enters the picture. In the glass, her Rully reds are indeed more rich and mineral-laden, while the Mercurey reds are affairs of red and black fruits, with just a slightly rocky kiss on the lips of fine salinity.

How's that for some wine poetry?



MERCUREY ROUGE

'VIEILLES VIGNES 2021, \$35

Erell keeps her yields way low (about 2 tons to the acre for the Pinot, under three tons for the Chardonnay), and uses a judiciously small amount of new oak – a maximum of 15% for the 1er Crus.

Bravo to Erell and Flavien for this superlative effort - all the rich, layered black cherry and raspberry flavors you've come to know and love, wrapped around a velvety core and an underlying mineral-rich backbone that make this a full-on pleasure to drink.

There is simply no wrong moment for a bottle of Burgundy like this. The price is right, the quality punches way above its weight, and it is a bottle that is lovable friend maker. We don't know of ANY Red Burg that delivers this much for so little.

Lots of Caveau regulars have made this a staple in their home. Now it's your turn!

MICHEL MALLARD

Michel Mallard greeted us with a serious look, grim pursed lips, and positioned himself face to face with Scott, maybe 10 inches apart at the nose. We have a problem, he explained. Things are no good.

Was Mallard going out of business? Or worse, had they found a national US importer??!! None of the above thankfully. This particular crisis had to do with his village-level wines of Aloxe-Corton, Chorey-lès-Beaune, Ladoix, and more. There will be none, Michel explained, until I release the 2021's next summer. So, you will only be able to buy the premier cru and grand cru wines today Scott. I'm sorry.




This was last November, and we've patiently waited 9 months to tell that story, and to release this wine. Like many of the '21s, it is a wine that is classic and magical--a refined, gorgeous example of why pinot noir remains the pinnacle of greatness in the red wine world.

Michel Mallard is one of those magicians, blessed with nice chunks of four of the greatest Grand Crus on the storied Hill of Corton, as well as plum sites in the surrounding villages of Ladoix, Chorey-lès-Beaune, and Aloxe-Corton.

The father and son team of Patrick and Michel Mallard jointly run the estate, which is named for Michel's grandfather. Michel makes the wines, and he has an interesting side-hustle - he's also the winemaker for the revered Domaine d'Eugénie in Vosne-Romanée.

Caveau disciples that have traveled to Burgundy with us always comment that a tasting at Chez Mallard is the highlight of their trip. A LOT of bottles are opened over the course of three hours, and that little spittoon just doesn't do the trick!



CHOREY-LÈS- BEAUNE

BEAUX MONTS 2021, \$42

Chorey-lès-Beaune, just north of Beaune and across the road from Savigny, has long been a source of some of Burgundy's best-value reds, and has benefited greatly from the consistently warmer weather there over the last 20 years.

This beauty comes from Mallard's 1.25-acre parcel of 55 year-old vines, on deeper, heavier clay and limestone soils on a gentle south-east facing slope facing the village of Aloxe-Corton. It immediately hits you with a captivating nose of blackberries and a hint of licorice, and then it picks up depth on the mid-palate with a lovely wallop of red and black fruits on a texture of brushed velvet. Ready to drink at your table now, and over the next several years (the Mallard wines are all built to age gracefully) - this may be the most red Burg your money can buy for around \$40.

We love a wine's attack, both on the lips and on the nose, and we're always looking for *longueur en bouche* to see what the wine continues giving. But, there has never been a great wine that has a hollow middle. For us, this beauty has it all--a silky sweet, oh so subtle fruit explosion right through the mid-palate. Damn.

DOMAINE ALBERT JOLY

During any visit, Sylvie Prevost-Joly will apologize no less than 3 or 4 times for how small their winery is. She calls their place “just a traditional old winery”. It’s not clear why she is underselling it. We love these kinds of places where one pulls into the driveway, barely knowing if they’ve found an actual winery, with little sign of anything grape-related—barrels, presses, tanks. Nothing. The only give away at Chez Joly is a small pallet jack in the driveway. The rest could have been a small unassuming house on the edge of any of 40000 villages in France.



The door of the garage was cracked and we found Sylvie inside, working silently with son Quentin, and brother-in-law Gilles, preparing some other importer’s order onto a palette in a clean, well-lit winery. Introductions were made, with very few extra words, and Sylvie invited us to the cellar for a tasting.

The tasting began in the same way they all did when faced with the diminished quantity of 2021, with a discussion that there really was no wine available to sell. But with a little persistence we managed to wrestle away enough of one Puligny Montrachet to satisfy our entire club. Not bad!

Sylvie and Gilles told us that as soon as his viticulture and enology studies in Beaune are complete, they will begin transitioning the business responsibilities to Quentin. With what looks to be about 20 years of life under his belt, he is getting handed something pretty interesting I think. Over the last 75 years or so, the Joly family have focused mostly on their vines, selling all their fruit to negociants until Sylvie arrived on the scene in 2007. Since then she has taken the VERY gradual approach of reserving more and more of their fruit each year to dedicate to their own bottling. Still, in 2021, they retained only about 15% of their whole production. If Quentin keeps up with it, maybe by 2050 they will be keeping a whopping 50%!



PULIGNY- MONTRACHET

LES TREMBLOTS 2021, \$89

We include a white wine in the Burgundy club mix just once or twice every five years. When something singular and magical presents itself, we jump!

There are just four wines made at Chez Joly—a Bourgogne Chardonnay, and three different Puligny Montrachet. Again Sylvie was apologetic, explaining that they don't have the big range of other wineries, focusing really on one grape, and almost exclusively in one village. There is a focus only on Puligny, and only Puligny.

Les Tremblots jumps out of the glass with textbook laser-pure freshness, electric energy, and limestone intensity. It leans more Chevalier or Pucelles in style - that inimitable minerality that can only come from Puligny. There's some tropical intensity here too, with some mango and pineapple aromas, but then a nice tart acid hit to the back palate. Lively acid and salinity pop and the textbook calcaire wet rockiness pulsing through the mouth.

If this is what passes for a simple and traditional winery, we're all in.

THE LAST DROP



Thanks for joining us on our exploration of the great wines of Burgundy! Watch your email for information on our next Caveau Burgundy Club shipment coming in spring 2024, and for pre-arrival offerings on all the magnificent Bubbly and Burgundies headed your way throughout the year. All the latest information is always available on our website:

www.CaveauSelections.com

Enjoy!