

CHEVALIER

THE STATE OF
BURGUNDY

SEPTEMBER 2019



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In spite of the glorious imagery and romanticism associated with Burgundy's top wines, things have been a little bit less rosy on the Côte in recent times. The weather—never a guaranteed ally in this marginal climate—has been especially capricious, producing a string of vintages that could be characterized, speaking nicely, as *difficult*.

Hail, frost, drought, heat wave . . . you name it, and Burgundy has likely experienced it in the last five years. No grower has gone unharmed, with most reporting moderate to severe losses due to one or more of these viticultural menaces. The struggle to stay in business has led some to obtain a *négociant* license in order to purchase fruit to meet normal production numbers; others have begun holding back wine to have stock to sell in the event of another catastrophe; all have raised their prices.

Much discussion has taken place to appraise the issue at hand and prevent future hardship. Hail nets have finally been approved by the INAO, French wine's governing body, and their use will be regulated by each individual AOC. Cannons whose loud blasts send shock waves into the clouds above, possibly disrupting the formation of hailstones, are also a fixture in some areas of Burgundy, but their effectiveness is yet to be proven. Irrigation is another important question to arise; while it is banned in most AOCs, recent hot, dry summers have spawned debate as to the necessity of strictly regulated "emergency irrigation." The picturesque, yet eerie anti-frost candles, widely used in Burgundy in 2016, 2017, and 2019, represent another desperate measure growers have employed to save their harvest; while effective in the moment, they certainly do not represent a long-term solution.

More than anything, these tumultuous growing seasons are proof that climate change is real and its consequences are palpable. Farmers whose records date back many generations will be the first to say that times are changing, and with one's livelihood on the line, sitting back and accepting it is simply not an option. Adapting viticultural methods is crucial, even if it means going against traditional grape-growing dogma. Instead of seeking ripeness at all costs, for example, vigneronns must protect their grapes from the sun in hot years. They can prune later to delay budbreak

and diminish the risk of spring frost, and they can encourage grass or cover crop between the rows to force vine roots to dig deeper for moisture.

The good news is that even the most "difficult" vintage can produce outstanding wines. Take 2017 in Chablis, for example, a year in which below-freezing temperatures in late April caused 60 percent loss at Domaine Lavantureux. The surviving fruit was endowed with concentrated acidity and structure, along with intense aromatics. Luckily, just farther south in the Côte d'Or, the drier air and slight breeze allowed vigneronns to get through the cold spell unscathed, so their 2017s were not only delicious but, for the first time in years, abundant. The same is true of 2018, allowing Burgundians to breathe a big sigh of relief.

While the 2019 crop approaches full maturity, Burgundy and its vigneronns find themselves at a crossroads. This region, so rich with history and singular traditions, must prepare for the future in order to honor its illustrious past. Fortunately, given the number of passionate, forward-thinking vigneronns so deeply tied to their land—six of whom you will meet with this month's shipment—Burgundy appears to be in good hands.

—ANTHONY LYNCH



© David Lavantureux

Candles in the vineyard create warm air currents to combat frost.

2018 MARSANNAY ROSÉ

◆ RÉGIS BOUVIER \$28

HARD TO BELIEVE, but there was a time when Burgundians had to make an actual effort to sell their wines. Unlike today, when clients come begging for drops, vigneron of a century ago often had to go door to door and pitch their goods on the cheap. One such vigneron in Marsannay, just after the First World War, had the novel idea to make rosé. No one was doing it, no one wanted to buy his *rouge* when they could go to Gevrey-Chambertin down the street, and he figured Pinot Noir had the potential for aromatic and delicate rosé. So off he went, and the village soon followed his lead. Before long, it was the beverage of choice for movers and shakers, and all wanted to be seen *en terrasse* in Dijon sipping Marsannay rosé. Given that this happened long before social media, it took a while for the trend to spread, but spread it did and continues to do so. Now exported around the world, Marsannay rosé is recognized not as a novelty but as a serious wine built for the table. Ice cubes need not apply. Think of it as a pale, delicious Burgundy. Remember, all the great Burgundies of yore were once pale, as revealed in texts from the eighteenth century that sing the praises of Romanée-Conti's clear, pink hue. It's not the color, it's the content that counts!



2017 CHABLIS 1ER CRU "BEAUROY"

◆ ROLAND LAVANTUREUX \$52

WITH EACH PASSING VINTAGE, brothers Arnaud and David Lavantureux further cement their family domaine among the most exciting and reliable names in Chablis. In addition to bottling new cuvées from *premier* and *grand cru* sites, the youngsters have enacted changes to vineyard and cellar management resulting in the most pure, precise, expressive wines the domaine has ever released. While collectors and sommeliers chase after highly allocated Chablis from the appellation's most illustrious names, the Lavantureux brothers quietly toil away in their stony vineyards, producing wines that rival the best at a fraction of the price. Their 2017 releases epitomize everything we look for in this appellation: lively, citrusy aromatics, deep layers of texture and flavor, loads of Kimmeridgian minerality, and scintillating refreshment with every sip.

A new wine in the Lavantureux stable, the *premier cru* Beauroy is a round, ample expression of Chablis from a south-facing parcel. Silky and suave on the palate, it finishes with a whisper of salinity. Drink it over the next eight years.

2017 SAINT-AUBIN 1ER CRU “MURGERS DES DENTS
DE CHIEN” ♦ DOMAINE LARUE \$62



THE MOST PRIZED *TERROIR* OF Saint-Aubin, Les Murgers sits at the highest point of the appellation on a solid limestone plateau with an impregnable view of the Côte d’Or below. Situated above En Remilly with south to southeast exposure, it lies between twenty and sixty meters directly above Chevalier-Montrachet. Picture a brighter, higher-altitude ver-

sion of this storied *grand cru*! A firm nose leads to a beautiful richness on the palate, then a finish with a persistent and mighty stony grip. The longest ager of the Larue stable, this is a real thoroughbred that you should classify along with the great *premiers crus* of Chassagne, Puligny, and Meursault.

➤ *Long-timers might remember how from the start I looked in all the nooks and crannies for bargain white Burgundies. I needed them for myself and for some of you. I was struck by the potential at Saint-Aubin. I visited several domaines over the years—something kept clicking for me and bringing me back. When Saint-Aubin succeeds, it makes one of white Burgundy’s most charming wines.* —KERMIT LYNCH, 2016

2017 CÔTE DE NUITS-VILLAGES

♦ DOMAINE GACHOT-MONOT \$37

DAMIEN GACHOT’S WINERY is in Corgoloin, one of the five villages in the Côte de Nuits that comprise this appellation. These villages are scattered in between those whose reputation precedes them, such as Nuits, Vosne, Chambolle, Vougeot, Morey, and Gevrey. Corgoloin is on the southern end of the Côte de Nuits, and we find great value here in addition to the dark, meaty Pinot that we expect from the Côte d’Or’s northern slice. Vigilant pruning, de-budding, and green harvesting limit yields to ensure richly perfumed wines with lovely, concentrated flavor. Damien also manages finesse in this bottling, which is no small achievement and the reason that he has such a devoted following.



2017 MARANGES 1ER CRU “LA FUSSIÈRE”

◆ JEAN-CLAUDE REGNAUDOT & FILS \$37



MARANGES IS the southernmost appellation in the Côte de Beaune, and its reds have a long history of overachieving. From ancient Pinot vines farmed with great care and precision high on these south-facing slopes, the Regnaudots make deep, structured, powerhouse reds that taste much more expensive than they are. One of the appellation's staunch traditionalists, Didier Regnaudot opts for long macerations

without adding cultured yeast, and eschews fining and filtration to protect the pulpy flesh that coats his wines' chewy tannins. The *lieu-dit* La Fussièrre yields a thick, dense Pinot Noir with the guts to age like the Maranges of old, but with enough voluptuous fruit to provide pleasure in the near term.

2017 VOLNAY ◆ DOMAINE LUCIEN BOILLOT & FILS \$73

PIERRE BOILLOT inherited very old vines from his father in the Côte de Nuits and from his great-grandfather Henri, originally from Volnay, in the Côte de Beaune. Accordingly, tasting with the gracious and soft-spoken Pierre and his wife, Sophie, is an educational and often transcendental experience spanning the appellations of Volnay, Pommard, Gevrey, and Nuits-Saint-Georges.

This is traditionalist red Burgundy at its best, and 2017 is one for the ages: perfectly ripe, elegant Pinot Noir with balance, purity, and great *terroir* transparency. Best of all, yields finally returned to normal after a string of challenging vintages, filling up the cellars for the first time in years. Pierre's sixty-year-old vines in Volnay produce a wine of depth and finesse, laced with the ethereal perfume of flowers and sour cherry. Delightful today with some aeration, this bottle will not disappoint those who choose to cellar it.





2018 Marsannay Rosé <i>Régis Bouvier</i>	Pinot Noir	15-year-old vines Limestone, marl, clay, gravel	Serve <i>cold</i> 46–50° F	Rhubarb, flowers, wild strawberry Crisp, delicate, ethereal, versatile	Drink now
2017 Chablis 1er Cru “Beauroy” <i>Roland Lavantureux</i>	Chardonnay	30-year-old vines Clay, Kimmeridgian limestone	Serve <i>cold</i> 48–52° F	Citrus zest, sea spray, crisp apple Round, generous, saline	Drink now through 2028
2017 Saint-Aubin 1er Cru “Murgers des Dents de Chien” <i>Domaine Larue</i>	Chardonnay	Vines planted in 1946, 1964, 1972, 1990, 1997 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 50–54° F	Gunflint, acacia blossom, lemon curd Crystalline, precise, fleshy, stony	Drink now through 2030
2017 Côte de Nuits-Villages <i>Domaine Gachot-Monot</i>	Pinot Noir	40- to 45-year- old vines Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F	Sour cherry, peony, cranberry Bright, elegant, approachable	Drink now through 2025
2017 Maranges 1er Cru “La Fussière” <i>Jean-Claude Regnaudot & Fils</i>	Pinot Noir	Vines planted in 1930, 1947, 1955, 1962, 1987 Marl, Jurassic limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F	Raspberry, cherry, pepper, spice Thick, chewy, vinous, mouth- filling	Drink now through 2030
2017 Volnay <i>Domaine Lucien Boillot & Fils</i>	Pinot Noir	Vines planted in 1958 Clay, limestone	Serve <i>slightly cool</i> 58–62° F	Rose petal, violet, currant Deep, fine, silky, seductive	Drink now through 2030

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middle, top: Harvest at Domaine Larue.
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middle, bottom: Damien Gachot.
Photo © Domaine Gachot-Monot
near left, top: Didier Regnaudot.
Photo © Domaine Regnaudot
near left, bottom: The cellar at
Domaine Boillot.
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CHABLIS

The northernmost and coolest appellation of Burgundy, Chablis is home to the region's leanest, raciest Chardonnays that range from crisp, well-priced village-level wines to epic, age-worthy *grands crus*. Their typical characteristics are an oyster-shell minerality and mouthwatering salinity from the famous limestone soils, dating back to the Kimmeridgian era. These wines therefore pair perfectly with shellfish and are perhaps Burgundy's most versatile and refreshing whites.

Auxerre • Chablis
Chablisien

Vézelay

BOURGOGNE

VOLNAY

The Côte de Beaune's stronghold of silky, floral, seductive Pinot Noir is undoubtedly Volnay. This appellation's *terroir* is perfect for creating wines of elegance and fine bouquet, thanks to ideal slope, exposition, and the right mix of limestone and clay. The best Volnays are long agers and produce stirring emotion once the cork is finally pulled.

SAINT-AUBIN

Often overshadowed by its prestigious neighbors, Puligny and Chassagne, Saint-Aubin is home to a number of undervalued whites and reds. Its vineyards sit on steep slopes that rise to relatively high elevations, giving a freshness that manifests itself with lively acidity, floral aromas, and lots of charm. The appellation counts no fewer than twenty *premier cru* sites, some of which sit almost adjacent to the Côte de Beaune's legendary *grands crus*.

MARSANNAY

The first appellation of the Côte de Nuits going south from the city of Dijon, Marsannay is Burgundy's only village to allow wines in all three colors. Its delicate, nuanced rosés from Pinot Noir are unique in the region, although red wines make up roughly two-thirds of production. The local wines were highly prized in the nineteenth century, and with certain vineyards set to be promoted to *premier cru* status, this village's inherent pedigree is as relevant as ever.

CÔTE DE NUITS-VILLAGES

This regional appellation covers five communes of the Côte de Nuits. The gently sloping vineyards provide greater complexity than do the flatter AOC Bourgogne parcels below, and these wines often represent great values. Almost all wine here is red, expressing the deep fruit typical of the Côte de Nuits with a more forward, accessible structure.

Dijon

Côte de Nuits

Beaune
Côte de Beaune

Chagny

Chalon-sur-Saône
Côte Chalonnaise

Mâconnais

Mâcon

MARANGES

Beyond Santenay lies Maranges, its south-facing vineyards marking the southern extremity of the Côte d'Or. Known for powerful, at times rustic reds, this appellation has great potential in the right hands. Its *premiers crus* yield dense, age-worthy Pinots and rare whites.

