

WINE News

There's wine, there's love, and then there's Burgundy. It's complicated, but we help you to sort it out.



MAY 11, 2015 FEATURES

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Burgundy, a Farewell and a Welcome

By Clyde Beffa Jr.

You may ask, why is Clyde writing the first page of the Burgundy newsletter? After all, he is a Bordeaux guy who likes blended wines from the southwestern part of France and rarely writes about *mono cépage* wines from the heart of that country. Yes, you are correct about my love for Bordeaux, but I also love the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays from the Côte d'Or. In fact I was the Burgundy buyer long ago, from about 1983 until 1999. And that brings me to an explanation of the headline.

Keith Wollenberg took over the Burgundy buying for K&L just about the time of the first dot-com bust. I must say the Burgundy sales took off dramatically when he took the reins of this quite complex and difficult category. He has done an outstanding job over these 16 years or so. Keith retired from the K&L Burgundy buying position on March 31.

I, and the whole K&L family, certainly wish him the best in his future endeavors, and we thank him for the many years of dedication to K&L. He will be sorely missed. There is a rumor, and it is only a rumor, that he may be looking for a place in the Côte d'Or!

The welcome part of the headline is not for a new Burgundy buyer (as of this writing we do not have one), but for the new writers of this newsletter. I am writing page 1. We have an article from Angie An from the Redwood City store on page 2, and another by Trey Beffa from the LA location. Also pitching in from LA, Daniel Maas writes on page 3. And finally, Gary Westby takes off his Champagne hat for a bit for pages 3 and 4—he does know about the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay grapes. We hope you enjoy this edition of K&L e-news.

The wines of two of my favorite Burgundy producers just happen to be coming in May. Do not miss these.

2013 Domaine Paul Pernot Bourgogne Blanc (\$19.99) The dollar sure helps these days, and this wine for under \$20 is a steal. I was bringing this wine in during the '90s and we have been big supporters of this property for many years. It has consistent Puligny character and it is clean and refreshing. So nice to taste Chardonnay that goes with a meal.

2013 Domaine Paul Pernot Puligny-Montrachet (\$49.99) Outstanding Puligny for under \$50 is a treat. A charming combination of creaminess and minerality.

2012 Jacques Bavard Bourgogne Blanc (\$19.95) Bright and lively; refreshing. Jacques Bavard is a tiny négociant producer in Puligny-Montrachet. And these wines sell out quickly.

2012 Jacques Bavard Meursault (\$39.95) A lovely Meursault, available at a very modest price, thanks to our direct import.

2011 Jacques Bavard Montheilie Rouge (\$24.99) We must have a red Burgundy and this one is a superb value. We were able to secure a bit more of their 2011 and, because of the dollar, sell it for less than last year. This exciting Pinot Noir comes from the picturesque village of Montheilie, located next to the more famous village of Volnay. Lovely cherry fruit and quite a bit of structure to balance its fruitiness.



Gevrey-Chambertin and Chambolle-Musigny *How I Fell in Love*

By Angie An

Getting to know Burgundy is a very unique process. At first glance, the region seems simple enough, with only two main grapes—Chardonnay and Pinot Noir—until you dive deeper and realize that each village, vineyard or even rows within the vineyard can taste vastly different from one another. Pinot Noir is also especially sensitive to weather from different years and each winemaker's specific style. Combine all the variables, and it becomes incredibly hard to truly understand the region, and picking a bottle from the shelf can be a gamble each time. At the end of the day, I compare understanding Burgundy to understanding the dating scene: You spend a lot of time preparing and learning, building up lots of expectations, only to end up, more often than not, getting your heart broken and wallet emptied. However, once you experience the first great bottle that just blows you away, you can't help but keep going back for more.

With that said, below are some new releases from two very different yet outstanding villages in Burgundy, and two great places to start falling in love with Burgundy.

Domaine Humbert in Gevrey-Chambertin is run by two brothers, Frédéric and Emmanuel. Grapes are 100% de-stemmed, and wines are aged in 50% new oak with the exception of the grand cru, which is aged in 100% new oak for 16 months. The style is usually bold but not over the top.

2012 Domaine Humbert Bourgogne Rouge* (\$26.99) Shows good intensity and liveliness on the nose, with classic, juicy fruit aromas of cherry, strawberry and cranberry



sauce; approachable, with hints of rose petal in the background. An easy-drinking wine for every occasion.

2012 Domaine Humbert Gevrey-Chambertin Vieilles Vignes* (\$54.99) From well-sourced old vine grapes adjacent to Griottes-Chambertin Grand Cru, this shows warm notes of ripe raspberry, rhubarb and light, white pepper spice. It's elegant yet complex, with some mushroom and fresh leather undertones. Try pairing it with herb and citrus-marinated grilled salmon. 90 points AG.

2012 Domaine Humbert Gevrey-Chambertin 1er Cru "Poissenot"* (\$84.99) Sweet black Bing cherry, currants and red plum are followed by vanilla, nutmeg and other baking spices. Intense and muscular on the palate, with a light, smoky finish, this bottle will certainly improve with a few more years in the cellar, and then enjoy it with some black pepper-crushed pork tenderloin for a perfect pairing. 92 points AG.

Just a couple miles south of the village of Gevrey we have Domaine Anne et Hervé Sigaut, a husband-and-wife team that took over the estate in 1990 in the village of Chambolle-Musigny. Having improved the quality over the years, they're an up-and-coming producer.

2012 Domaine Anne et Hervé Sigaut Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru "Les Fuées"* (\$69.95) Bright, fresh-picked cherries and wild roses with the softest touch of baking spices on the nose; a high-toned and lively personality and an elegant mouthfeel. I just love the subtle beauty of Chambolle-Musigny, and this is a great example.

2012 Domaine Anne et Hervé Sigaut Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru "Les Sentiers"* (\$74.99) A more muscular expression of Chambolle with some leather, earth and a slightly meaty quality, yet the silky and lively finish on the palate is undeniably classic of the region. A few more years in the cellar and the wine should be even more stunning!

Some Highlights from the Top of the Roller Coaster

By Trey Beffa

For me, drinking and buying Burgundy is like riding a roller coaster—you have to dip to the bottom to get back to the top. The lows are low indeed. Vintage variations can be drastic. Supply is always an issue and prices tend to be on the higher side. Yet, the highs of Burgundy many times can lead one to their "epiphany wine." I believe the key to drinking and collecting Burgundy is to just hang on and enjoy the ride!

2012 Olivier Leflaive St-Aubin 1er Cru "Charmois" (\$41.99)

The Saint Aubin les Charmois is a bit of a lesser-known gem. It is located on the wrong side of an invisible dotted line directly next to Chassagne-Montrachet, 1er Cru Les Chaumees. In the mouth this wine really shows explosive richness and depth of fruit. The round entry is balanced out with a wonderfully crisp, acidic backbone; hints of lemon, green apple and a slightly toasty edge really make this wine a pleasure to drink.

2012 Domaine Marius Delarche Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru (\$89.95)

This is a wine purchased by Keith Wollenberg right before he retired. We decided to pop a bottle for the Hollywood staff, and wow! This wine is deliciously rich and layered with subtle hints of crème brûlée, cinnamon, papaya and lime. It is balanced and clean, while the finish shows a spicy undertone that seems to last for minutes.

One of my favorite producers is Domaine Gros Frère & Soeur. The style of the property is pretty straightforward: Big, rich and ripe fruit with a healthy dose of new oak. In good vintages, the wines of Gros Frère are voluptuous, bordering exotic. His wines drink and show well young, which is another reason I really like this property—as patience is not one of my virtues. The **2012 Domaine Gros Frère et Soeur Clos Vougeot Grand Cru "Musigni" (\$169.00)** is a serious wine, jam-packed with intense fruit, lots of spicy undertones, hints of bacon fat, smoke and black cherry fruit. This wine shows quite a bit of structure and power, so you might want to put it in the cellar for 5-10 years.

Tremblay Chablis *Our Best Value in Fine Burgundy*

By Gary Westby

Real Chablis has little competition in dry, fine wine when it comes to value. When the wines are directly imported, bypassing the import company and distributor markups, these values become almost too good to be true. The wines of Gerard Tremblay are our best example in Burgundy of how much quality we can deliver for your dollar.

Chablis is an interesting place. It is closer to Champagne than it is to the Côte d'Or and shares soil and climate similarities that shine through in the wine. The wines are extraordinarily mineral, but also ripe, especially in a vintage like 2013. Getting good heat and sunshine in the summer is not a problem here, although the overall climate is cool. The limestone-rich Kimmeridgian soil brings a unique, clean earthy quality and electricity to the wines.

I have been collecting the wines of Gerard Tremblay for many years now, as Chablis is my favorite still white wine. His range offers exactly what I want in Chablis. He uses a small amount of old oak on some of his better wines, for texture rather than for flavor. He has an incredible amount of old vineyard, which gives the wine not only depth and power but also more minerality. My favorite occasion for opening Chablis is to pair with our local Dungeness crab. This combination brings out the subtle fruit in Chablis, and uses the wine's ample acidity to great effect, refreshing the palate after each rich bite. My wife Cinnamon and I enjoyed a simple cold Half Moon Bay Dungeness crab with these bottles:

2013 Domaine Gerard Tremblay Chablis Vieilles Vignes* (\$19.99) With no vines under 40 years and most planted in 1957, this is truly an old vine cuvée. The exotic white fruit of the 2013 vintage is here, but the



wine is balanced by a shock of acidity and great clean earth flavors. This is perfect for drinking now either on its own or with shellfish, but will keep well for another five years.

2013 Domaine Gerard Tremblay Chablis 1er Cru "Côte de Lechet"* (\$23.99) This is Tremblay's largest premier cru holding, with vines ranging from 35 to 40 years of age. For me, this is the most textbook of the Chablis that we have in stock, the kind that I would love to meet in a blind tasting! The fabulous pure earth flavors, creamy texture and electric acidity had me coming back for more. It was spectacular with Dungeness crab. This drinks great right now, but so do the 10-year-old bottles in my cellar!

2013 Domaine Gerard Tremblay Chablis 1er Cru "Fourchaume" Vieilles Vignes* (\$27.99) The powerhouse of the Tremblay line! This wine comes from a plot of vines planted back in 1951 and has the intensity and scale one would expect from old vines in a top premier cru site. While this wine is fantastic now for the price, on the merits of its big, pure white fruit and virile acidity, the best is yet to come from it. A bottle of the 2008 that I tasted this month blew my mind, and with a few years this 2013 will integrate into something good enough to be on the table with any white Burgundy.

2013 Domaine Gerard Tremblay Chablis Grand Cru "Vaudesir"* (\$43.99) This open-knit grand cru is showing very well young, with big Meyer lemon fruit backed up by clean Kimmeridgian earth. Paired with Dungeness crab, it was nearly impossible to stop drinking it, although I promised to save some for the rest of the staff the next day! This wine is concentrated and is full of the stuffing that will make it last for the long haul. The challenge will be leaving it alone!

A Busy Evening in Los Angeles—With Some Phenomenal Wines

By Daniel Maas

Sure, my flight out of LAX was in just two hours. Nothing, however, was going to keep me from enjoying a lovely dinner with renowned Burgundy winemaker Albéric Bichot. Taking the reins in 1996, he has led his family's four domaines into the 21st century while maintaining a classic and old-school approach. Since 1831, the wines of Albert Bichot have continuously expressed a true representation of Burgundy. Through simple winemaking (cold maceration and slow fermentations), the nature of Pinot Noir comes shining through. Two of the selections easily stood out as incredible examples of this classic style.

First, the **2012 Albert Bichot Côtes De Nuits-Villages (\$32.99)** highlights delightful notes of wild cherry, raspberry, white pepper and licorice, all in front of a smoky background. For a village level wine, I was astounded by both the great complexity and an easy-drinking quality that should make this a huge hit among our clients.

Next, from Bichot's Domaine Du Pavillon estate comes the **2012 Albert Bichot Pommard "Clos des Ursilines" (\$69.99)**. Fuller in nature, this is powerhouse Pinot, with an incredible structure of dark fruit, currant, cigar smoke, and supple tannin. Simply delicious.

In addition to these beauties, I'd be remiss to not mention the **2012 Domaine Billard-Gonnet Pommard 1er Cru "Clos De Verger"* (\$39.95)**. A real lesson in how just enough tannin can really hold a complex wine together, this boasts baked red fruit, pepper and fig. A harmonious expression of this area's famed soils and climate.

Be sure to grab bottles while they're still around. From a low-yielding vintage, they're drinking beautifully and are sure to get better and better for years to come.

And yes, I made my flight just in the nick of time!

Volnay in the House

By Gary Westby

“The Pinot Noir is a minx of a vine.”

—Jancis Robinson, *Vines, Grapes & Wines*

“Volnay is the essence of Pinot Noir.”

—Remington Norman, *The Great Domains of Burgundy*

The commune of Volnay is in the heart of the Côte de Beaune, with Meursault to the south and Pommard to the north. It has 500 acres of vineyard, of which a little more than half is divided into 33 premier cru sites, planted on soils that range from Bathonian limestone on the Pommard side to Terre Rouge on the Meursault side.

I have had a 20-year-long love affair with the wines from this village. Like any love affair, it has had many frustrating times, but also some incredible experiences, including one bottle that I can surely say is the best wine I have ever had. Volnay often surprises me with more than I hoped for, but misbehaves often. My wife Cinnamon and I just had a trio of them with some excellent glazed chicken thighs that showcased the mind-boggling variety of this commune.

For village wine, we had the **2012 Domaine Cyrot-Buthiau Volnay*** (\$39.95) from 4th generation vigneron Olivier Cyrot’s nearly 16-acre estate. This wine sees about 15 months in 40% new wood, and shows the more supple, textural, sexier side of Volnay. It is a medium to full bodied wine with quite rich black cherry fruit that is kissed with a little mocha.



This generous wine has the clean acidity for the Burgundy graduate, but is open and showy enough to drink now with folks who have yet to join the Burgundy cult.

The **2012 Domaine Jessiaume Volnay 1er Cru “Brouillards”*** (\$59.95) was the first

wine that I have ever had from this cru in the middle of the commune. Jessiaume owns just over half an acre in this vineyard situated between



the premier crus of Mitans and Combes Dessus. It is vinified in 30% new oak for one year and then has five months of settling in stainless steel before bottling. This wine had the magic of the commune, with wild berry fruit, some cracked pepper and new leather elements on the nose. The wild fruit gives way to sophisticated, light-bodied purity in the mouth, and the finish is near Champagne-like in its laser-like focus and outstanding purity.

While very young for drinking now, the **2011 Hospices de Beaune (Corcia) Volnay “Cuvée Blondeau”*** (750ml \$59.99; 1.5L \$119.95) showed me why these charity bottlings are so famous. The Blondeau is made from 4.5 acres of vines spread across four different premier crus: Champan, Taillepieds, En L’Ormeau and Roncerets. It started off the evening closed, but with air showed incredibly smoky density, firm structure and incredible cut on the long finish. This will evolve into a great “blood making” Côte de Beaune in time, and I have made room in my cellar for some!

If you have never had Volnay before, my strongest recommendation is to have it with good food. Like salt or butter, it is not meant to be consumed on its own!



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