

WINE News

A summer for Burgundy: rouge et blanc, but mostly blanc!



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2016 Burgundy: Triumph Over Adversity

By Alex Pross

The 2016 vintage was an incredibly challenging vintage in Burgundy.

They had to cope with the devastating one-two punch of hail and frost which dramatically cut yields across Burgundy by 30–80%. Luckily, in August and September the weather was warm and relatively dry which allowed for a surprisingly successful harvest. The resulting wines are a revelation, and many producers feel their 2016s can rival the more heralded and acclaimed 2015s. There are some differences to note regarding these two vintages: while 2015 was powerful, with black-fruited wines that had a lot of structure and were tightly wound, the 2016s seem to be more red-fruited and elegant, with sappier and crunchier red fruit and more energy and lift along with a more precise

feel. The 2016s feel like a more classic Burgundy vintage where there are more highs as well as lows. The two big issues facing the 2016 Burgundy vintage are quantity, as stated above, and price. Prices are higher than 2015, in general, because there is significantly less wine to sell, as well as the Euro being about 25% higher against the dollar from a year ago. These two factors have led to an increase in price. That said, I believe that the 2016 vintage is exactly the kind of vintage Burgundy enthusiasts are looking for: classically structured wines with beautiful fruit and precision with enough weight and body to age for the long haul or to be enjoyed in their youth while your 2015s slumber away in the cellar.

2016 Domaine Frédéric Esmonin Gevrey-Chambertin “Clos Prieur” (\$35.99)

I am a huge fan of Frédéric Esmonin wines, as they deliver some of the best value in all Burgundy. The 2016 Clos Prieur is a spectacular value. Loaded with gorgeous red fruits, spice, minerals, earth and iron notes, this impeccably balanced and classically styled red is one of the best values I have seen from Gevrey-Chambertin. **93 WS**



2016 Domaine Faiveley Mercurey 1er Cru

“Clos des Myglands” (\$39.99) Faiveley is doing some amazing things in Mercurey. The latest offerings are amazingly open and ready to drink in their youth. The Myglands is seductive on the nose with aromas of red cherry compote, cinnamon and hints of crushed red roses. The palate is packed with gorgeous red fruits and subtle spice notes along with great persistence on the palate and a fresh, long and lively finish. **91 JS**



2016 Henri Boillot Meursault (\$54.99)

Stunning, fresh and bright with wet stone, stone fruit and flint notes, this full-bodied masterpiece has great precision and length with a finish that lingers on the palate long after the wine has left your lips. Henri Boillot is an old-school vigneron who works his vineyards on almost a daily basis as well as crafting some of the most noteworthy whites from both Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet.



(Cover photo: Bourgogne Wine Board.)

Begin Your Mâconnais Adventure with Château Vitallis

By Sharon Kelly

When you think about the white wines of Burgundy, you may be familiar with the villages of Meursault, Chassagne-Montrachet and Puligny-Montrachet. These famous locations are all sources of excellent expressions of the coveted Côte de Beaune, which produces high-end wines of power and elegance with price points to match. If you're a lover of white Burgundy but not of the cost, or you drink domestic Chardonnay and are looking to explore this region on an introductory budget, it is time to turn your attention south, to the Mâconnais region of Burgundy.

The largest subregion in Burgundy, the Mâconnais is bordered by the Côte Chalonnaise to the north and Beaujolais to the south. The climate is influenced by the Mediterranean Sea with plenty of sunshine, mild winters and warm, dry summers which result in ripeness that shows more prominent fruit aromas and flavors.

The flagship AOC of the Mâconnais, Pouilly-Fuissé is a sought-after winegrowing region due to its location within a geographical amphitheater bordered by rock formations: the Rock of Solutré, Rock of Vergisson, and the Mont de Pouilly. These formations are surrounded by a ridge of starfish limestone and the terroir of limestone marl and clay here is as distinctive as in the Côte de Beaune. Over the years, some of Burgundy's top producers, like the iconic Dominique Lafon in Meursault and Domaine Leflaive in Puligny-Montrachet, have looked to the Mâconnais as a land of opportunity and potential thanks to lower land cost than in Côte de Beaune and a similar geological profile.



In November 2017, after a decade-long campaign to achieve Premier Cru status, the first cru sites in the Mâconnais were approved. Details of the new sites will follow as they become available. It has become clear that this region continues to be on the rise, delivering distinctive wines worthy of attention. The best place to begin your venture into this region is with the Dutron family of Château Vitallis.

The Dutron family has been dedicated to producing Chardonnay since 1835 and is one of the few major estates located in the commune of Fuissé, in the heart of the Pouilly-Fuissé appellation. Denis Dutron has been running the ship since 1981 and is now joined by his son,

Maxime. The estate is well-known for its old vines, of which some are 65 years old and an average age of 35 years, positioned on the ideal southeast-facing slopes in the villages of Fuissé and Solutré. The following wines from three different vintages are excellent representations of the region, and they demonstrate how quality winemaking, combined with notable vine sites, can result in striking wines that fancy your palate and your pocketbook.

2014 Château Vitallis Pouilly-Fuissé “Les Perrieres” (\$34.99)

This was a fairly smooth vintage. Harvest had an early start in September and the overall quality is exceptional. This wine shows such precise balance between rich fruit and vibrant, acidic tension. On the palate there is ripe peach and apricot, sensual texture and a lengthy finish.

2017 Château Vitallis Mâcon-Fuissé (\$16.99)

A stellar wine from the most recent vintage, this 2017 delivers clean, bright drinking pleasure with gorgeous yellow peach, almond, supple texture and finely integrated oak. This was poured at a recent consumer tasting and was the top pick among the white wines presented. The ideal Chardonnay to introduce newcomers to the region or make any naysayer of this varietal into an enthusiastic fan.

During the 2016 growing season, the Mâconnais did not fall victim to the frosts of late April but a sweeping hail storm mid-month destroyed vines in the best of the southern parts of the region, especially Pouilly-Fuissé, and resulted in a 30% loss for the area. Summer had a difficult start but a successful July and August helped produce plump, fresh wines that are optimal for mid-term drinking. Try these:

2016 Château Vitallis Pouilly-Fuissé Vieilles Vignes (\$24.99)

The fruit for this magnificent wine comes from the property's oldest parcels which grow in clay and limestone soils on the best hillsides. The wine is fermented and blended in 100% French oak casks, 15% of which are new. Barrel aging is on the lees for about 12 months. With its ripe Golden Delicious apple aromas and flavors and luscious texture on the palate, you can definitely enjoy this now but it will also develop nicely over another five years.

2016 Château Vitallis Pouilly-Fuissé “Les Vignes du Château” (\$21.99)

Of the 2016s, this one is a favorite. The nose is utterly gorgeous with white flowers, white nectarine and freshly peeled orange and lemon rinds jumping out of the glass. On the palate it is racy and vibrant with pure fruit freshness and great length. The texture is not as opulent as the Vieilles Vignes or Les Perrieres yet the flavor concentration is powerful and balanced. A five-star wine for a steal. **91 WE**



Domaine Paul Pernot: “The Maestro of Puligny”

By Alex Pross

I always look forward to our yearly appointment to taste the wines of Paul Pernot at his modest property that belies his regal holdings in Puligny-Montrachet.

Paul Pernot has the largest holding in the famed Folatières vineyard in Puligny as well as holdings in Bâtard-Montrachet and Pucelles. This small-in-stature man makes some of the most breathtaking offerings from Puligny-Montrachet with the help of his two sons,

Paul and Michel. Paul Pernot is able to capture the essence of Puligny-Montrachet, which is power and grace with gorgeous, pure fruit and shimmering minerality all wrapped up in a seamless package.

The **2016 Domaine Paul Pernot Bourgogne Aligoté (\$18.99)** is a fantastic example of Aligoté, the much rarer “other white grape of Burgundy,” with zesty notes of crushed rock, vitamin and pine notes. Aligoté in the wrong hands can come off lean and sharp but here it is fresh and lively with green fruits and bright acidity that make it the perfect foil for the richer Bourgogne blanc that follows it.



Michel pours at Domaine Paul Pernot.

The **2016 Domaine Paul Pernot Bourgogne Blanc (\$22.99)** displays its royal bloodline with a nose full of orchard fruit, spice and hazelnut notes. The palate is a rich combination of lemon crème, hazelnuts, brioche and baked apples with a Puligny-like feel at the end. This is a great wine for those of us who want to drink Premier Cru quality white Burgundy while paying Bourgogne blanc prices.

The **2016 Domaine Paul Pernot Puligny-Montrachet (\$49.99)** raises the bar with subtle aromas of flint, Asian pear, clove and white flowers. The wine surges across the palate with citrus notes, minerals, wet stone and orchard fruits. The wine has great lift and slowly unwinds across the palate as it struts its stuff. With substantial holdings in the Folatières vineyard, Paul Pernot is able to fashion a wine that is a reference-point offering for this vineyard site.

The **2016 Paul Pernot Puligny Montrachet 1er Cru “Clos des Folatières” (\$79.99)** is a wine I need to own. A classic nose of iodine, flint, lemon crème and oak then cedes to a palate that is an embarrassment of riches: nut oil, lemon crème, hazelnut and spice all seamlessly mingle against rich oak accents and perfect acidity. Most offerings from Folatières start at \$120 a bottle or higher but you can get this amazing wine for almost half that! If you’re in search of that special bottle of white Burgundy, I think you have found it in this wine. **91 BH**



A Trio of Spectacular Offerings from La Chablisienne

By Alex Pross

La Chablisienne is fashioning some of the greatest wine values in the world and certainly the best values in Chablis. This cooperative has strict contracts with growers and has produced a trio of outstanding Chablis from the standout 2014 vintage. We jumped at the chance to acquire more of these stunning wines from a vintage that we consider to be one of the best of all time. All three of the wines are Premier Cru offerings and all are under \$30 a bottle.

The **2014 La Chablisienne Chablis 1er Cru “Vaulorent” (\$29.99)** is sourced from the Vaulorent vineyard, which is the only vineyard located on the same hill as the Grand Cru vineyards. To be literally a stone’s throw away from Grand Cru vineyards and pay less than a third of the price for a wine of this quality is mind-blowing. This wine is packed with crisp citrus fruit notes, wet stone, zippy minerality and a purity that shines through from the first sniff all the way to the finish on the back of the palate. **95 DC, 92 BH, 92 WE, 91 RP**

The **2014 La Chablisienne Chablis 1er Cru “Côte de Léchet” (\$27.99)** offers up a ton of rich citrus fruit, minerality and subtle spice notes with an underlying power that slowly unfurls as the wine comes to life in the glass. A rich and powerful Chablis that has impressive intensity of fruit and minerality. **95 DC, 92 WE, 91 BH, 90 RP**

The **2014 La Chablisienne Chablis 1er Cru “Beuroy” (\$26.99)** is an incredibly approachable offering sourced from the Beauroy vineyard which sits to the north of the Côte de Léchet vineyard. Gorgeous citrus-laden fruit mingles seamlessly with mineral and wet stone accents to produce an intoxicatingly good Chablis. **93 DC, 90 RP**





Domaine Renaud: Go-To Chardonnay Value from Mâcon

By Alex Pross

Can't afford Burgundy? Think again! The white wines of the Mâcon are excellent daily drinkers that won't break your budget. Domaine Renaud is a property that we have been working with for years and they are consistently some of the best white wine values we have. With four offerings under \$20 a bottle and a fifth priced just barely above, Domaine Renaud should be your go-to white wine this summer for gatherings, entertaining or your house white.

The **2016 Domaine Renaud Mâcon-Villages (\$15.99)** has a nose of Granny Smith apples and white flowers which gives way to a palate bursting with stone fruits, citrus, Asian pear and mineral notes. This is an impressively layered and complex offering for a mere \$16 a bottle.

The **2016 Domaine Renaud Mâcon-Charnay (\$16.99)** is a more delicate offering with higher-pitched fruit notes and vivid white flower accents. There's a lot more stone and orchard fruit here with an elegant and more feminine feel. I love this wine because it offers complexity and balance with a focus rarely found in a white wine for under \$17.

The **2016 Domaine Renaud Mâcon-Solutré (\$16.99)** is spicy on the nose with aromas reminiscent of a fine Meursault. The palate here is more broad with orchard fruit dominating the palate. This wine is much more masculine than its counterpart, the Mâcon-Charnay.

Our last two offerings come from the two most renowned villages in the Macon: Saint-Véran and Pouilly-Fuissé.

The **2016 Domaine Renaud St-Véran (\$19.99)** takes everything up a notch with a nose that brims with flint, white flowers and lime blossom notes. The palate is focused, with favors of lime zest, green fig and stone fruits. Great energy and lift give this wine a lightweight feel when in reality it is dense and packed with both fruit and mineral notes. A gorgeous white that completely over-delivers for less than \$20.

Now to the big gun! The **2017 Domaine Renaud Pouilly-Fuissé Vieilles Vignes (\$21.99)** starts off with vivid aromas of lime, acacia and flint notes. The palate is a focused beam of fruit cocktail, lime zest and wet stone. The rush of flavors and complexity here give the wine an energy and feel that make it almost irresistible and such a joy to drink. This is easily one of my favorite white wines I have drunk this year including some Grand Crus and Premier Cru offerings.



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