

Domaine Labet, Côtes de Jura, Chardonnay En Billat 2000

12 Jul 2005 by JR

You know Jurassic Park; now try Jurassic Chardonnay. It's quite unlike another other.

The Jura, between Burgundy and the Alps, is overlooked by most wine lovers apart from the odd [discussion about mature Château-Chalon](#) such as was recently conducted on your turn. But, as in virtually every other wine region in the world, the Jura has been revitalised recently by a wave of new, enthusiastic, worldly and very able wine producers of which Domaine Labet and Jean Rijckaert are fine examples.

Domaine Labet takes such pride in its different terroirs that it offers eight different bottlings from the eight different soil types which make up the estate. Billat is, according to UK importer Vine Trail, "Jurassic marls and limestones with ammonites often weathered out on the surface". For once, one can picture this. Two other important ingredients which carve out quality in this wine are the age of the vines, over 100 years in this case apparently (very much older than any Chardonnay vines I remember in Burgundy), and the all-out sustainable viticulture that is undertaken – no agrochemicals, ploughing and all that.

The result, once the fruit has been matured in seasoned barrels, is something quite burgundian but with rather more zest and a strong streak of acidity to counterbalance high extract. You know the characteristic grape of Jura is Savagnin and much of it is matured under a flor yeast? It may be fanciful but to me most Jura wines, and this is no exception, taste as though they contain just a few, favour-deepening percentage points of local Savagnin. Think of this as – I was going to say, mountain white burgundy, but I do not mean of the Gallo sort. Burgundy with altitude might be a more felicitous description. **Domaine Labet, Côtes de Jura, En Billat 2000** is £13.50 from Vine Trail in the UK and [wineseacher.com](#) also cite a Swiss stockist who offers it at even less than this. [find this wine](#)

Few producers have done more to build bridges between this ignored region than Jean Rijckaert, who was the business partner of Jean-Marie Guffens-Heynen of Verget throughout the early 1990s. Now Rijckaert has been developing his own business, making top quality white wines, mainly Chardonnay, from some carefully-researched vineyards in the Mâconnais and Jura. His wines are superclean and racy and extremely well-priced.

Although the Flemish Rijckaert can offer many a fine Pouilly and Viré-Clessé, the wine that has most impressed me recently was **Arbois en Paradis 2003 Rijckaert** which is a perfect example of new wave Jura – still racy and superfine, but with the region's characteristic zest. This 2003 has a convincingly introvert nose and no sign of the heatwave flab or heat that generally betrays this vintage. There is masses of acidity, and for the moment the wine's quite lean and appley but obviously has great finesse. It's intense and you feel it is moving towards an alpine wine in terms of liveliness. I'd drink this between 2006 and 2009, and pat myself on the back for having found such a bargain. Farr Vintners of London are offering it at just £72 a case in bon (you'd have to order seven cases of it though to reach their minimum order level of £500, unfortunately). Sokolin of New York are offering single bottles at \$18. [find this wine](#)

If you're in a part of the world with high temperatures currently, think of the Jura as a source of truly refreshing dry whites with a great pedigree.