

Michael Lafarge, L'Exception 2005 Bourgogne Passetoutgrains

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Yet more 2005 burgundy, I'm afraid, but it won't come round again, and already the allocations of the top wines are disappearing fast.

Here's a different take on it though, inspired by how well the lesser appellations have fared in 2005 - and not just Pinot Noir but also Gamay grapes whose wines in the Côte d'Or are so often too tart for comfort. I have already outlined my enthusiasm for the Gamay portion in David Clark's Bourgogne Passetoutgrains 2005 [here](#). (Passetoutgrains, or Passe-Tout-Grains, is one of Burgundy's lowliest appellations and is made from a blend of at least a third Pinot Noir with Gamay grapes.)

It can be difficult to get your hands on wines from producers with such longstanding reputations as Michael Lafarge's of Volnay. Lafarge is to Volnay what Cazes is to Pauillac, the ex mayor and animating force. He is now very materially helped by his son Frédéric, not least in the domaine's move to biodynamic viticulture, begun in 1997 and completed for the entire domaine in 2000. Unless you have a history of buying his magnificent Volnay, Clos des Chênes year in and year out, and therefore understand that it needs almost forever in bottle to show its best, you don't stand much chance of getting your hands on the 2005 vintage.

This **Dom Lafarge, L'Exception 2005 Bourgogne Passetoutgrains** is different however. For a start about 3,000 bottles or 250 cases are made. Most years it's a Cinderella wine, something the merchants have to buy to get their hands on the top stuff, but can often find it difficult to sell. This is a shame as it's a really serious wine, a very distinct step up from their basic Passetoutgrains, from 80 year-old vines grown on a specific clay-limestone patch of vineyard that, with Clos des Chênes, represented Michel L's father's entire holding when he began. When I tasted it in the cellar in December it smelt very much more Pinot than Gamay on the nose, even though it's a more or less equal blend of the two grapes and had the vintage's trademark delicious combination of richness with freshness. On the palate there is definitely a rustic note yet the tannins, quite present on the finish, are very fine. This is a bone dry wine that really is a taste of Burgundian history. There's no simple jammy sweetness, no obvious toasty oak. It could hardly be more different from the stereotypical varietal Pinot Noir (although of course it is not varietal Pinot Noir). I could have sworn I was told that the base price at the cellar door, before taxes, shipping and all that of course, is not much more than €1 a bottle.

I must have misunderstood because a case of this costs £85 in bond from A&B Vintners and Corney & Barrow and £96 from Berry Bros in the UK and Ireland. Even at Le Cuvon de Bacchus in Beaune they are charging €8 for a bottle of the 2004. The 2004 is also distributed in the US with [wineseacher.com](#) suggesting a price of \$27 a bottle which seems to be going it a bit. Lafarge is represented in the US by Becky Wassermann.

For the moment [wineseacher](#) can find only Berry Bros as a stockist of the 2005 and Haynes Hanson & Clark who used to sell Lafarge wines say they have given up on the 2005s because they are too expensive. I'm sure this wine will turn up in the US eventually and can recommend it as a reasonably accessible way of experiencing biodynamic viticulture and particularly Burgundian winemaking.

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