

## Côte Chalonnaise

19 Aug 2008 by Jancis Robinson

**In a nutshell:** Good value, reliable reds and whites.

**Main grapes:** Pinot Noir, Gamay (red); Chardonnay, Aligoté (white).

To the immediate south of the grand white wine vineyards of the Côte de Beaune lies the Côte Chalonnaise, named after the town of Chalon-sur-Saône (where in ancient Gaul wine shipped upriver from the south would be offloaded for overland transport northwards). Whereas vines are by far the principal crop of the [Côte d'Or](#),

but their early drinkability and generally lower prices make them extremely useful. During the 1980s viticulture in the Côte Chalonnaise showed such a high level of consistency that in many cases it made up for the district's lack of top-quality sites and its wines offered the best value in greater Burgundy. Inevitably, however, the market is fast catching up and the price of wines from Côte Chalonnaise's four appellations are about the same as those from the Côte d'Or's less well-known villages.

**Geography:** Nothing to do with Gamay Champagnes, one of the great villages of the Côte d'Or produces mainly red wine and is an extremely reliable appellation. The grower Jullien makes wines with far more sophistication than is usual and Domaine Thibault is based here.

**Mercurey:** Also predominantly devoted to Pinot Noir, is the district's most important appellation by far. There are several premieres crus vineyards which are capable of making wines with lovely supple fruit. Faiveley's La Franchoballe bottling is a reliable reflection of each vintage. Ernie Jullien is one of the district's stars.

**Montagny:** dedicated to Chardonnay, is a name brought to thousands by négociant Louis Latour's long-standing purchasing arrangement with the Bouy co-operative here, one of the most dedicated and successful in France. They also make pretty good sparkling wine in the form of Célément de Bourgogne.

**Rully:** (never to confuse with Rully near Saconin) is fairly evenly balanced between growing Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Domaine Vincent Durand-Jarbolin is the star here. Eric de Saxemont of Monthélie also brings some Côte d'Or class to the appellation.