

## Red burgundy vintages

3 Sep 2008 by Jancis Robinson

2012 was highlighted by rot in Burgundy, as a damp summer across Europe made conditions hard for vignerons, with rot being a particular problem. The weather was erratic and bizarre, with heatwaves, hail, a cold spring, thunderstorms and all manner of meteorological mischief. The net results are very low volumes of variable quality – but overall vignerons are surprised and delighted by what resulted. One hallmark of 2012 looks to be soft tannins.

**2011** Disappointing quality with widespread rot and uneven weather conditions throughout the year. The results can be surprisingly good in parts, but 2010 is a much safer bet.

**2010** A return to the high acid norm after 2009, and some very good quality - especially in the Côte de Nuits - but volumes up to a third lower than average.

**2009** Finally, the Burgundians enjoyed a comparatively dry growing season with consistent warmth and no early season hail damage. Low acidity and ripe tannins should make these reds drinkable early.

**2008** was an accursed vintage in Burgundy, with *coulure*, mildew and hail all conspiring to damage yields and quality. Late September sunshine went some way to rescue the crop, however, although high acidity remains the hallmark of this vintage.

**2007** A dank summer led to rotten Pinot Noir grapes and the need for extremely strict selection. The vintage is unlikely to notch up record scores.

**2006** Poor summer with vine health problems produced wines which at their best are very pure and expressive and at their worst just a bit too austere for comfort.

**2005** As in Bordeaux, a quite exceptionally good vintage, although many wines may go through a prolonged stage of chewy adolescence.

**2004** Large vintage of far from flashy but pretty serviceable and certainly good value wines. Relatively light and crisp, for early drinking though the best may surprise in the long run.

**2003** A small proportion of monumental wines from old vines were produced this heatwave year, but generally the frail Pinot Noir grape suffered raisining and made some very unusual wines indeed, some of which provide good, luscious drinking at about five years old but dry tannins are expected to make their presence increasingly felt.

**2002** Good vintage. Summer was not especially hot, though it was reasonably dry. Sugar levels were boosted in September but some grapes were adversely affected by scattered rains then. Sugar levels were quite respectable in the end and most wines showed their charms at an early stage.

**2001** Wet summer with some heat spikes. As for red bordeaux from this vintage, a gentle hand was needed in the winery to retain delicacy and not emphasize the already notable tannins. Quite varied quality. Wines from low-yielding grapes will provide exciting long-term drinking but others are gawky. August hail in Volnay.

**2000** A difficult vintage for growers, with rain and rot during harvest. Rather soft, easy wines that were more successful in the Côte de Nuits than in much of the Côte de Beaune. Useful early drinking but showing signs of losing fruit by 2008.

**1999** Exceptional quality and quantity. Powerful, charming and well balanced with great concentration and colour - particularly in the Côte de Beaune. The Côte de Nuits was hampered by a little more rain. Tannins and pigments achieved sumptuous ripeness. A vintage to drink young or old.

**1998** Thick skins made for good colours but pretty tough and stolid wines in general.

**1997** Charming, early-drinking wines – most should have been drunk by now.

**1996** Remarkably high acidity has made its presence increasingly felt over the years in bottle. Some wines just too tart for comfort; others may eventually bloom.

- 1995** Reduced crop of initially rather austere wines which took on fat in bottle and can provide delicious drinking now.
- 1994** A year to highlight Burgundy's infamy for variability as too many let yields balloon after the rains.
- 1993** Underrated. Better than average: healthy grapes and well-coloured, fruity wines that have lasted and developed well.
- 1992** Rain at the wrong time again. Soft, tender wines to drink young.
- 1991** Grapes had ripened before it rained and some wines from the Côtes de Nuits are excellent. Not to be overlooked.
- 1990** A great success: rich and fragrant. The top vineyards made majestic wines but some lesser wines lacked lushness.
- 1989** Nearly up to 1990, if not as intense. Some real charmers.
- 1988** Tough and unusually backward, most are densely concentrated and the best repaid 20 years' wait.
- 1987** Natural ripeness was a problem so many overchaptalised.
- 1986** A very tricky year of rain and rot. Careful growers avoided the dilution but not a year to seek out.
- 1985** A problem-free year: delicious and fragrant young, but most should have been drunk.
- 1984** Poor weather and unripe grapes. One to avoid.
- 1983** A torrid summer and very mixed bag. A handful are brilliant but most are tainted by rot.
- 1982** Large yields of soft, pleasant wines best drunk young.
- 1980** Underestimated at first: balanced and scented, though most are past it now.
- 1978** A late but uniformly good crop. Top growers made breathtaking wines. Now very rare.