

## How 2006 burgundies look now

10 Sep 2009 by Jancis Robinson/FT  
See my [tasting notes on 300+ top red 2006 burgundies](#), the [average scores](#) of the top 10 wines and a discussion on our [members' forum](#) about the tasting.

My summer holiday in the Languedoc ended in Beaune with an intense, three-day blind tasting of more than 300 of the top 2006 red burgundies. They had been assembled by some of the top UK importers of burgundy. All 10 of us tasters, including Norwegian importer Christopher Moestue and fellow wine writers Clive Coates MW and Neil Beckett, benefited from the way Burgundy resident Jasper Morris of Berry Bros sorted the wines into geographically sensible flights.

Before we embarked on this marathon, our host Roy Richards of Richards Walford announced how much he was looking forward to the exercise because, on the basis of lesser 2006s consumed recently, he believed that the vintage had been underrated. At the end, he admitted he'd been over-optimistic. Perhaps the way to get the best out of the 2006 red burgundies is to choose judiciously from the lesser wines rather than concentrating, as we did, on the premiers and grands crus. There were certainly instances where, as so often the case, there seemed to have been an excess of ambition without the raw materials to justify it. In the end we decided it was probably a better red wine vintage than 2004, and may be more serious (though less fun) than 2000, but is overshadowed by most other vintages of this century.

The wines from the southern Côte de Beaune were very definitely weaker in all senses than those from the Côte de Nuits, but then the major problem with the 2006 harvest was excessive rainfall and, while it varied considerably even from village to village, considerably more rain fell on the Côte de Beaune overall. The Beaune premiers crus were the palest wines we tasted, as one might expect, and many of them finished a bit dry, as though the oak had been allowed to overwhelm some not especially intense fruit. But the standard was pretty consistent and almost all of the Beaunes we tasted could be recommended for easy, if slightly timid, drinking over the next five or six years. Those from the more northerly premiers crus had a bit more stuffing to them and I was particularly taken by Bouchard Père et Fils' famous Beaune Grèves, Vigne de l'Enfant Jesus.

In fact, many of the négociants, represented in this tasting by Bouchard, the much-improved Bichot and Chanson plus Drouhin, Faiveley, Camille Giroud, Jadot and Louis Latour, did pretty well. Admittedly, as with the growers, it was left to them to decide which wines to submit. But it is heartening to see that nowadays at least they know which their best wines are.

Neither the Volnays nor the particularly tough Pommards were really that much better than the Beaunes. Not much was expected from the appellation Aloxe-Corton so we were agreeably surprised by what we tasted. Ditto Corton itself, although the tasting proved yet again that, despite some very flattering wines and many a dry finish, this is a grand cru appellation promoted above its capabilities. The best single wine we tasted from the Côte de Beaune was without a doubt Comte Lafon's Volnay Santenots du Milieu, reminding us of just how good this supposed white-wine specialist is at making luscious red wines.

The Côte de Nuits produced wines with much more ripeness and stuffing but sometimes almost too much of the former. Indeed, the Chambolles, to which everyone had been looking forward, seemed to lack some of their usual precision, and there was almost too much obvious sweetness without the freshness or excitement needed to compensate for it in many of the grands crus associated with Chambolle-Musigny. Of the 305 wines, 22, or more than 7%, were deemed in some way out of condition, either because of TCA taint (often cork-related) or because they seemed prematurely aged. I was surprised at the equanimity with which most of these merchants tolerated this worrying proportion. In fact I was surprised at how relatively low their marks tended to be for wines they had offered to their customers at three-, occasionally four-digit sums in pounds per dozen. But perhaps I am being naive.

The one appellation that seems to offer real interest in 2006 is Nuits-St-Georges, which generally showed real savour and raciness. We tasted the grand total of 41 wines from all over Nuits and were impressed by the overall quality, even if none of them features in my absolute top scorers shown here. Of all groups of wines, separating villages, and premiers from grands crus, Nuits-St-Georges managed a higher average score than any other apart from, in descending order, the grands crus of Vosne, Chambolle and Gevrey-Chambertin, ie some of the grandest wines in all of Burgundy. This suggests that Nuits is by far the best-value appellation in Burgundy in 2006. The most impressive Nuits wines seemed to come, perhaps not surprisingly, from the vineyards closest to Vosne in the north, particularly Boudots and Cras.

Because the Gevrey-Chambertin premiers crus was the first group we tasted, we may have been a little mean when scoring them to that they ended up below Volnay and above Corton in terms of average scores. They were impressively deep coloured and characterful – and consistent, especially and unexpectedly, in the lower-altitude vineyards such as Cherbaudes, although there were also some very good Cazetiers. Gevrey's grands crus Chapelle-Chambertin and Griottes-Chambertin seemed to betray the hail that hit these glorious vineyards on 27 July, but there were some truly magnificent wines among the Latricières, Chambertins and the more variable Clos de Bèzes – as well there might be in view of their prices, up to £200 a bottle. Even those wines from the hallowed ground of Le Chambertin itself, however, tasted as though they would mature faster than in a great vintage, typically in the 2010s.

The Morey-St-Denis were a bit amorphous - it was difficult to see real village character here - while, like the Cortons, the 19 wines we tasted from the oft-maligned Clos Vougeot vineyard were generally better than expected. This is heartening even if there were few real standouts. Vosne wines were a different story – as they should be, even if there was marked astringency on some of the lesser examples. As a group, those from the Malconsorts vineyard were lovely, very consistent with great juiciness and confidence.

Grands Échezeaux seemed to deserve its premium over Échezeaux and, as you can see from my list of the wines I gave 18 and 18.5 points out of 20, some of the greatest wines of all were from the great grands crus of Vosne- Romanée. It would probably have been greedy, and unaffordable, to have included DRC's. Other wines that American burgundy lovers might find most obviously missing include the two Dugats, Perrot-Minot, Charlopin, and Groffier. But we didn't go thirsty.

## **TOP-SCORING 2006 RED BURGUNDIES**

### **18.5/20**

**Bruno Clair, Chambertin-Clos de Bèze**  
**Rossignol-Trapet, Le Chambertin**  
**JF Mugnier, Le Musigny**  
**Dom l'Arlot, Romanée-St-Vivant**

### **18/20**

**Lamarche, Cras, Nuits-St-Georges**  
**Drouhin-Laroze, Latricières-Chambertin**  
**Louis Rémy, Latricières-Chambertin**  
**Armand Rousseau, Le Chambertin**  
**Louis Rémy, Le Chambertin**  
**Dujac, Clos de la Roche**  
**J F Mugnier, Les Amoureuses, Chambolle-Musigny**  
**Thibault Liger-Belair, Richebourg**  
**Follin Arbelet, Romanée-St-Vivant**

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