

Oxidised burgundies - latest tasting

12 Feb 2010 by Don Cornwell

Update 16 Jun 2011: the often frustrated and sometimes enraged opinions of Purple pagers on the subject of 'premox' can be found on the following forum threads: [Burghound's recent comments](#), [Premox blues](#), [Burgundy 09 - corked? Leflaive premox - malheureusement.](#), [White burgundy problems](#), and [Classic white burgundy abandoned](#) - to name just a few. Search under **premox** or **oxidised burgundy**.

Don Cornwell is the principal editor of the *Oxidized Burgundies Wiki Site*, which is devoted to the accumulation of data and exchange of information about a subject dear to many of our hearts, [oxidized white burgundies](#). Below he describes a recent and highly relevant tasting, attended by Purple pager Maureen Downey. [Oxidised burgundies - Part 2](#) describes the following tasting of Montrachet Grand Crus.

In February or March each of the last five years I've hosted a comprehensive tasting/oxidation check of a particular white burgundy vintage. The purpose of the tasting is to assess the top wines of the vintage all at the same time from ideal cellar conditions and to check for premature oxidation. This year the vintage in question is 2002.

The first night, held on February 4 at Campanile Restaurant in Los Angeles, was devoted to grand cru Chablis, significant premiers crus, and Corton-Charlemagne. The [second night](#) (Feb 18) will be devoted to the grand crus from Bâtard-Montrachet, Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet, Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet and Chevalier-Montrachet. The third night will be mostly Montrachet with some selected super-expensive wines (e.g. Coche Corton) added in.

The 14 attendees for Part I of this year's tasting were: Ron Movich, Michael Zadikian, Howard Horwitz, Wes Jennison, Joel Deutsch, John Brincko, Peter Funsten, Brian O'Toole, Jay Boberg, Brian Devine, Ron Greene, Maureen Downey, Terry Taketa, and me (Don Cornwell). We also had periodic visits by Jay Perrin (Campanile GM) and Taylor Parsons (Campanile Wine Director).

Chef Erica Lins did a very nice job of matching up several different courses with the five flights of white burgundies. The food was excellent. My personal favorites were the seared Santa Barbara Spot Prawns that went with the first Chablis course and veal with mushrooms and foie gras with the Meursaults. Taylor and Jay and their colleagues very nicely orchestrated the food and wine service for the evening. On to the wines....

APPETIZER COURSE

Totten Oysters on the Half Shell with Bitter Almond Mignonette
Salmon Confit with Mustard Seed Aioli & Chives

1990 Pommery Cuvée Louise Magnum

Color between light and medium gold; light citrus and floral aromas with some very slight toasty background notes; round, citrus and green melon notes, good acidity and some toasty/melon notes in the finish. Not quite classical, but interesting to drink. **91**

FLIGHT 1: premier cru Chassagne/Puligny (served single blind)

Ravioli Giganti with Spinach & Lemon Butter

2002 JM Pillot Puligny Clos du Cailleret

Very light yellow color; lightest of the first flight; light citrus, very low threshold fusel oil (so low it adds an element of complexity); very good acidity; this is lacy and has a lot of structure; nice minerality; the finish is quite long but mostly an effect finish. (No votes) **93**

2002 Ramonet Chassagne Ruchottes

Light yellow gold color; some reduction sulfur here that never completely faded – 'dirty lees' said my tasting neighbor Maureen Downey; this has light texture on the palate; it is elegant, but clearly was much lighter in weight and a more obvious 1er than some of the others in this flight; this had a somewhat lacy light mineral finish which was the best feature.

(NB A couple of tasters liked this better than I did and after the wines were revealed, I can say that this was one of the least impressive bottles of the 2002 Ruchottes I've had in the last year. This bottle came from my cellar. A couple of prior bottles of this struck me as slightly advanced. I've clearly had better bottles of this and it has ranged from 91-93 over the last year.] (0/0/0/0/1) **91**

2002 Carillon Puligny Referts

Somewhere between light and medium gold color; this had some sweet basil and floral scents with a little SO₂ showing—which dissipated with air. This wine had very good depth and grip on the palate, which grand cru weight fruit and stunning minerality. More depth and grip on the palate than any of the others in this flight except for the 2002 Sauzet Puligny Combettes. Very long and prominent minerality here. I really liked this. (Leflaive Pucelles?) (0/0/0/1/0) **94**

2002 Leflaive Puligny Pucelles

Light gold color; floral, with hints of mint and white honey aromas; some very light SO₂ apparent here too. Very light Chassagne-like fruit; seems quite simple and thin though expansive on the palate; there is a somewhat thin minerally finish. Decent, but I just didn't think the flavors lived up the promise of the aromas. (Ramonet??) (0/0/0/1/0) **91**

2002 Sauzet Puligny Combettes

Color-wise, this was two clicks short of medium gold; clearly the darkest of the first flight. This has some forward floral tones and a definite hint of oak toast which I thought detracted a bit. This had very good acidity and fairly big lemon/lime flavors which finished with some nice minerality to go with that citrus. My second favorite of this flight. (No votes) **93**

FLIGHT 2: Chablis from Valmur, Preuses and Blanchots (served single blind)

Seared Spot Prawns with Fresh Pappardelle, Tomato Confit & Thyme

2002 Raveneau Chablis Valmur

Very light yellow color; strong sweet basil aromas with an exotic spice —perhaps cardomam?; very bright, sweet honey dew melon flavors with some underlying minerality; a good deal of richness on the finish here for Chablis. My third favorite of this flight. Group Rank: Tied for 10th (0/0/2/0/0). **93**

2002 Fevre Chablis Valmur

Light yellow gold color; sweet floral and asian pear aromas; sweet fruit flavors with some minerality; lots of richness as well as minerality on the finish. My fourth favorite of this flight. (No votes) **93**

2002 Raveneau Chablis Blanchots

Light yellow color; light licorice and acacia flowers aromas; quite round, fruity asian pear flavors with some moderate minerality and very good acidity; this has a very strongly mineral finish which is quite long. Despite the unusually deep fruit, this had a very classic grand cru Chablis finish and incredible grip. Great wine. Group Rank: Tied for 8th (0/1/0/1/2) **94+**

2002 Dauvissat Chablis Preuses

Color between light and medium gold; light pineapple and pear aromas; similar flavors on the palate with very good acidity and some modest minerality; this also had a very classic minerally finish without any hint of those tropical fruit notes that showed up initially. This is like a mix of Côte de Beaune from a ripe vintage and Chablis. I liked this particularly for the wonderful minerally finish. My second favorite of this flight. (No votes) **94**

2002 Billaud-Simon Chablis Blanchots Vieilles Vignes

Between light and medium yellow gold color similar to the Dauvissat Chablis Preuses; aromas of 'juicy fruit' gum (ascorbic acid??); strong sweet fruit character and good acidity on the palate; lacking the classic mineral finish though. Ironically, while this isn't prototype Chablis, this probably would have been good by itself, maybe as ringer in the premier cru flight, but didn't measure up as well with the others. A ringer brought by Peter Funsten. (No votes) **92?**

FLIGHT 3: Chablis Clos (served single blind)

Scallop Stew with Guanciale & Roasted Rose Finn Fingerlings

2002 Dauvissat Chablis Clos

Very light yellow straw color; incredibly saline, clean scallop shell aromas with hints of sweet basil; very bright wine with a moderate lemon crème palate and incredible minerality and great acidity; the finish was tremendously long and expansive minerality. Wow. Group Rank: 1st. 49 pts. (5/3/2/3/0) **96**

2002 Fèvre Chablis Clos

Light yellow gold color; some light peach and lemon aromas; on the palate it was concentrated lemon crème flavors with a very long finish of lemon-crème and pear flavors with an undertone of minerality. Surprisingly powerful fruit here. Long finish of sweet fruit and minerals. Not classic style, but I sure did like this. My third in this flight and fifth favorite of the night. (0/0/0/0/1) **95**

2002 Raveneau Chablis Clos

Very light yellow-green color; sweet citrus and seashells aromas and an almost spearmint component; on the palate this wine is very concentrated but somewhat locked up – some sweet lemon/lime tones and lots of minerality lurking beneath it; this is obviously great wine and needs more time to show its charm. Tight mineral finish is very impressive. My second favorite of this flight and third favorite of the evening. Group Rank: 4th (1/1/4/1/0) **95+**

2002 Christian Moreau Chablis Clos

Light yellow gold color; some pear and sweet basil aromas; this is a more forward wine than the others in the flight and it exhibits some apple tones and shows the markers of the early stage of maturity in terms of some very light toast flavors; apple pastry and some modest minerality in the finish. Nice but probably at its peak. (No votes). **92**

FLIGHT 4: Meursault premiers crus (and one village wine; served single blind)

Grilled Veal Chop with Mushroom Duxelle, Foie Gras & Chardonnay Fondue

2002 Lafon Meursault Perrières

Medium gold color; some diesel oil (light), SO2 and pain grille aromas; this came across as rich on the palate, some pear/apple pastry and a little mature; after about an hour of air this showed much better -- finer, sweeter fruit, and much longer than it was earlier. Group Rank: Tied 10th (0/1/01/0) **93**

2002 Bouchard Meursault Perrières

Medium full gold color; oxidized aromas – cereal grains and hints of sherry; good acidity here, but this is clearly oxidized we all agree; also has sherry and cereal grains flavors. Although “partially oxidized,” this was not really drinkable as the oxidative character was too strong. (No votes) **DQ**

2002 Boillot Meursault Perrières

Medium gold color; pain grillé and a bit of diesel oil again; some strong minerality on the palate here, over some rich, lemon/lime and pastry flavors. This is rich and mostly mature. A great wine for drinking today. Group Rank: 12th (0/0/1/0/1) **93**

2002 Lafon Meursault Charmes

Between light and medium yellow gold color; some lemon/lime aromas with very light toast components; rich lemon custard flavors with very good minerality. This is fairly mature wine. Good acidity on the finish. Extremely nice but at its peak now. Group Rank: 7th. (2/0/0/0/2) [N.B. Both Lafons showed some obvious markers of maturity. I liked the Charmes better than the MP on this occasion, although I suspect that there are better bottles of the MP out there than the one we had tonight.] **94**

2002 Matrot Meursault Perrières

Light to medium yellow gold color; aromas of pears and white flowers; good depth of pear fruit and some richness, though I find some obvious alcohol on the mid-palate and the finish. This was probably allowed to get a little too ripe. (No votes) [N.B. No oxidation in this wine, but I've had terrible luck with the sibling wines from Puligny Combettes and Puligny Chalameaux purchased at the same time.] **92**

2002 Roulot Meursault Perrières

Very light yellow straw color – clearly the lightest color of the flight; aromas of key limes and white flowers. On the palate

this had some fresh lime, and lots of minerality, and good bit of lemon butter. This had length and breadth and tons of minerality. The very minerally finish goes on forever. (Roulot MP?) My favorite wine of the night by a narrow margin. Group Rank: 3rd. 32 points (2/3/2/2/0) **96+**

2002 Coche Meursault Rougeots

Light yellow gold color; aromas of citrus, seashells and some light vanilla bean (Coche?); viscous, dense sweet pear and citrus fruit with very good acidity and lots of minerality too. A really awesome wine and I suspect it is Coche. My second favorite wine of the flight and fourth favorite overall. Group Rank: 2nd. 40 points (3/4/0/2/5) **95**

FLIGHT 5: Corton-Charlemagne (single blind)

Chicken & Prawn Pot Pie

2002 Bouchard Corton-Charlemagne

Color between light and medium gold; sweet floral and fresh lime aromas; rich lemon pie flavors with some acidity. Very nice, but this didn't have the minerality of the prior flights though. Group Rank: 5th (1/2/0/1/0) **93**

2002 Bonneau du Martray Corton-Charlemagne

Color between light and medium gold; some sweet key lime aromas and background flowers; fairly rich fresh lime pie flavors with a good deal of depth and good acidity. I liked this. Group Rank: Tied for 8th (1/0/0/1/1) **94** [N.B. I have to add a note of caution here. The 96, 99 and 2000 BdM Cortons all did very well at this tasting in prior years and yet today the oxidation rate on those vintages is 50% or more out of my own cellar—drink early to be safe.]

2002 Girardin Corton-Charlemagne Quintessence

Light yellow gold color, some lemon crème pie aromas; rich, lemon crème pie flavors as well; very good acidity, a little minerality on the mid-palate and a very long lemony-mineral finish. Very nice. Group Rank: 6th (0/0/4/0/1) **94**

2002 Henri Boillot Corton-Charlemagne

Medium gold color; brioche and ripe pear aromas; this is slightly advanced, and a little toasty on the palate but a decent wine. If this showing is indicative, drink up. (0/0/0/0/1) **92?**

2002 Jadot Corton-Charlemagne

Color between light and medium gold; advanced, honey and light sherry notes in the aromas; the flavors are better than the aromas and this is drinkable although flawed by the obvious oxidation **DQ/89?**

DESSERT COURSE

Roasted Pear with Honey-Blue Cheese Ice Cream & Candied Hazelnuts

1997 Rieussec Sauternes

Fairly deep gold color; it worked with the dessert but I was too distracted by the other wines to pay any serious attention here. **91?**

POSTSCRIPT STATISTICS AND COMMENTS

Corked whites: 0/26

Oxidized whites: 2/26 (7.7%)

For the second year in a row we had a very low rate of oxidation on night one. I must candidly say that it was much better than I expected. I've experienced a lot of advanced and in some cases oxidized 2002s over the last 18 months, so my fear was that we would experience the same phenomenon even with the top wines and impeccable provenance. We could see more oxidation on night two.

I'm suspecting some of you who have followed these results over the past few years may see the trend line getting better in 2000, 2001 and 2002 and be inclined to think that the premox problem has been brought under control. I think that would be an unwarranted or premature assumption. Premature oxidation first became a serious issue in 2004/2005 and

the changes made by producers to try to avoid oxidation began with the 2004 vintage which was being bottled. At least in my experience, the incidence of prematurely oxidized bottles continues to expand among the 1996, 1999 and 2000 vintages. Wines that were stars in this tasting in past years (eg Bonneau du Martray) exhibit a huge percentage of pre-oxidized bottles today.