

## Oxidised burgundies ☐ part 2

24 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](#). In [Oxidised burgundies - latest tasting](#), he described the first of three tastings focusing on the 2002 vintage, devoted to grand cru Chablis, significant premier crus, and Corton-Charlemagne. Below he describes the second tasting, attended by Purple pager Maureen Downey.

On Thursday, 18 February, we tasted 23 hyphenated Montrachets from the 2002 vintage (and one 2002 California chardonnay ringer in the Bâtard flight) at Campanile Restaurant in Los Angeles. This tasting was part of the fifth annual comprehensive vintage tasting/oxidation check I've hosted each February/March. 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 assess the vintage and check for premature oxidation.

The fourteen attendees for Part II of this year's tasting were: Michael Zadikian, Howard Horwitz, Joel Deutsch, John Brincko, Peter Funsten, Brian O'Toole, Brian Devine, Alan Weinberg, Ron Greene, Terry Taketa, Maureen Downey, Greg Gregory, John Tilson (Editor of the Underground Wineletter, formerly the Underground Wine Journal) and me (Don Cornwell). We also had frequent visits by Taylor Parsons, Campanile's Wine Director.

The menu for the evening was put together by Campanile's Executive Chef/owner Mark Peel. My favorite course, and I think everyone else's judging by the comments, was the quail course with the first flight of Chevaliers. While I would have liked the first two courses on their own, we struggled a bit with the strong aromatics of the Shrimp Bisque on the first course and the texture/flavors of pea coulis with the second course. Taylor Parsons, Campanile's Wine Director, again flawlessly orchestrated the food and wine service for the evening.

We have one more official night to go, on 4 March, which will be held at Melisse Restaurant. This will be our 'Mostly Montrachet' night with some selected super-expensive wines (ie, Coche Corton and MP and Leroy Corton) added in. We have enjoyed the 2002 vintage so much we are contemplating having a bonus tasting featuring some Chablis and a few odd Côte de Beaunes we haven't tasted.

On to the wines....

### APPETIZER COURSE

*Fried Oyster and dry vermouth remoulade*

#### **1990 Alain Robert Reserve Tête de Cuvée Magnum**

Medium gold color; rich, lots of fruit, a little nuttiness and some real depth and minerality here; long mineral finish. My kind of Champagne 94

### FLIGHT 1: Criots and Bienvenues Bâtard (served single blind)

*Crab Ravioli with shrimp bisque*

#### **2002 Lamy Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet**

Light gold color; some floral aromas with a very light spearmint undertone; asian pear flavors with good acidity and some minerality; long sweet minerally finish Group Rank: Tied for 9th (0/1/0/0/1) 93

**2002 Leflaive Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet**

Very light yellow color, second lightest of the flight, unbelievably corked aromas - 'corked plus' as someone said; it also had cardboardy flavors too. [NB The first corked Leflaive bottle I've ever encountered; the same for several others] (No votes) DQ

**2002 Fontaine-Gagnard Criots-Bâtard-Montrachet**

Medium full gold color; some botrytis aromas and some light sherry tones; lightly oxidized but still drinkable; very rich tropical wine with sweetness - the botrytis is obviously showing, and it is a bit advanced as well (the oxidation undoubtedly). I don't usually care for botrytis in white burgundy, but this was a pretty nice wine despite its botrytis and partial oxidation. (Fontaine Criots?) (0/0/0/0/1) 92 Partially oxidized.

**2002 Ramonet Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet**

Medium yellow gold; some citrus and a hint of Ramonet spearmint; elegant wine, some lemon-lime and excellent minerality; very nice minerally finish. (Ramonet BBM?) Group Rank: 7th (1/0/0/0/3) 93

**2002 Pernot Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet**

Light gold color - the lightest of this flight; floral, honeysuckle, and some light SO<sub>2</sub>; really great minerality here on the palate and some soft underlying fruit; very long minerally finish. (Leflaive?) Group Rank: 8th (0/0/1/1/2) 94

**2002 Carillon Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet**

Medium yellow gold color; forward, floral and light hints of honeysuckle aromas; forward fruit which is fat and almost tropical; it is rich but very racy wine; a good deal of minerality and this has a very long, lacy minerally finish. My favorite of this flight by a very narrow margin. (Carillon?) Group Rank: 6th (2/0/1/0/2) 94

**FLIGHT 2: Bâtard-Montrachet (served single blind)**

*Butter-Poached Sturgeon with truffled english pea coulis*

**2002 Ramonet-Bâtard-Montrachet**

Between light and medium yellow gold color; some green apple aromas and very light spearmint; sweet green apple flavors and apple pastry and an absolutely amazing level of minerality for a Bâtard; very good acidity; incredibly long minerally finish. (Seems obviously to be Ramonet) Group Rank: First - 42 pts (1/3/6/3/1) 96

**2002 Fontaine-Gagnard Bâtard-Montrachet**

Between light and medium yellow gold color; some white flowers and some slightly tropical fruit notes in the aromas; bright pear flavors with a good deal of richness; a long but ultra-elegant finish which is more like Montrachet than Bâtard. Pretty impressive. [NB In retrospect, I'm surprised that this didn't get more votes.] (0/0/1/0/0) 95

**2002 Niellon Bâtard-Montrachet**

Medium gold color; rich, peachy aromas; fat, tropical and peach fruit flavors; more alcohol than the others; slightly too big, too tropical and a little too over the top for me. Maybe the best candidate for my ringer, but doesn't taste like Ramey to me. (No votes) 92

**2002 Sauzet Bâtard-Montrachet**

Nearly medium yellow gold color; some white flowers and a little oak toast here; lemon-lime fruit with some mid-palate richness but again marked by some light toast in the flavors; this is notably more mature than the other bottles in this flight despite the acidity. Nice, if you don't mind the toast, but drink relatively soon. (0/0/0/1/1) 93

**2002 Ramey Hyde Chardonnay [my ringer]**

Between light and medium gold color; some floral and green apple aromas and a hint of peach melba; bright green apple flavors with good richness on the mid-palate; excellent acidity and a long buttery, slightly minerally finish. My third wine in this flight. [N.B. This wine was presented as a 'mystery Bâtard' because two members of this panel had previously identified it as a Bâtard when served blind. Not a single negative comment was made about this wine and nobody thought it was atypical, though Maureen Downey did note that she thought it had a slightly higher percentage of new oak than the

other wines. Some people were really amazed it was from California and everyone seemed to have this wine in the middle of the flight. Pretty remarkable. One panel member said he was sure that this would have gotten some top five votes, including his own, had I not revealed it as the ringer until after we voted. Bravo to David Ramey for proving it is possible to make California chardonnay that really does stand up to Burgundy's best at 7.5 years of age.] 94

#### **2002 Leflaive Bâtard-Montrachet**

Light gold color; this had some SO2 and hints of creosote, which blew off with time, later showing white flowers and some green apple; bright, great acidity in this wine; some citrus and green apple flavors, but with some fat and a buttery texture; slightly disjointed; as it sat it seemed to develop incredible volume, and fat; it was by far the biggest wine of this flight, but it was a little disjointed overall and not the best on this occasion. (0/1/0/0/0) 93+?

#### **FLIGHT 3: Chevalier-Montrachet I (served single blind)**

*Crisp Flattened Quail with black trumpet mushrooms, sliced almonds, potato purée*

#### **2002 Henri Boillot Chevalier-Montrachet**

Light yellow gold color; big-scaled white flowers aromas and some pear; very nice asian pear and citrus fruit flavors with an exotic leech-like component; nice depth and a rich long mineral-driven finish. Overall, a very nice wine. (No votes) 94

#### **2002 Girardin Chevalier-Montrachet**

A couple of clicks short of medium gold color; some white flowers and a hint of oak; some sweet pear and citrus flavors; surprisingly fat for a Chevalier and not nearly as minerally as the others. (0/0/0/1/0) 92

#### **2002 Latour Chevalier-Montrachet Demoiselles**

Between light and medium gold color; some white flowers and lime in the aromas; the flavors are slightly odd/off - a bit flat on the mid-palate but this had some nice minerals in the finish. (No votes) 91?

#### **2002 Colin-Deleger Chevalier-Montrachet**

Between light and medium gold color; aromas of white flower and hints of lime; some asian pear flavors with some richness and power like Bâtard; nice wine, but lacked the classic citrus, backbone and minerality of a Chevalier. Given the above, I think this is reasonably mature but not showing signs of obvious advanced age. (No votes) 93

#### **2002 Bouchard Chevalier-Montrachet**

Light yellow-green color, clearly the lightest of the flight; aromas of light citrus; light citrus and pear fruit with good acidity and incredible minerality and subtlety to it - something missing for the most part in the other wines in this flight; tremendously elegant and long finish. Seemed to tower over most of the wines in this flight. Group Rank: Third (34 pts) (2/3/2/3/0) 95

#### **2002 Jadot Chevalier-Montrachet Demoiselles**

Two clicks short of medium gold color; some notably advanced peach and toasty aromas; this isn't right; clearly advanced peach and oatmeal flavors; I think this is partially oxidized but there didn't seem to be a consensus to that effect. (No votes) 88 Partially oxidized (in my view)

#### **FLIGHT 4: Chevalier-Montrachet II (served single blind)**

*Roast Loin of Veal with sweetbread & hazelnut stuffing, savory apple sauce*

#### **2002 Niellon Chevalier-Montrachet**

Light gold color, but still probably the second darkest of this flight; aromas of peach and whisky barrel; flavors of light citrus with a hint of peach; light on the palate, fairly ethereal, had good minerality and acidity; a bit different for its aroma profile, but excellent wine. Group Rank: Tied 9th (0/0/1/1/0) 95

#### **2002 Leflaive Chevalier-Montrachet**

Light yellow gold color, but the deepest color in this flight; some citrus aromas and some slight cornmeal aromas; some lemon-lime flavors with good acidity, which seem slightly disjointed/partly muted; however this has a very long, elegant

minerally finish which is clearly the best feature here. Some hope of more improvement. [NB I was astonished when this was revealed as the Leflaive. This was my least favorite wine of the last flight and the second consecutive under-performing bottle of this wine I've had.] Group Rank: Tied 9th (0/0/1/1/0) 93+

**2002 Jean-Marc Pillot Chevalier-Montrachet**

Very light yellow-green color; some fresh lime and charming white flowers aromas; key lime and lemon custard flavors with great minerality on the mid-palate and finish; very elegant wine. Wow. My second favorite wine of the night. Group Rank: 5th (0/2/1/3/0) 96

**2002 Ramonet Chevalier-Montrachet**

Light yellow gold color; white flowers and spearmint (Ramonet); bright citrus flavors oriented a little more to lime than lemon; fabulous acidity and layered minerality on the mid-palate; extremely long sweet citrus and minerals finish. My favorite wine and this has more room to improve. Wow. Group Rank: 2nd (39 pts) (5/3/0/1/0) 96+

**2002 Bouchard Chevalier-Montrachet Cabotte**

Between light and medium gold color; white flowers and citrus aromas; bright lemon-lime flavors and great minerality; long minerally finish that isn't quite as compelling as #21 or #22. Very nice. Group Rank: 6th (1/1/0/0/1) 94

**2002 Sauzet Chevalier-Montrachet**

Light yellow color; white flowers and meyer lemon aromas; quite lemony, long and elegant, and very minerally, long elegant finish, and yet the finish seemed a little more awkward at the end of the night. Group Rank: 4th (3/1/1/0/3) 94

**DESSERT COURSE**

*Vanilla Crème Caramel, poached winter fruit*

**1948 Masandra Collection White Muscat**

Golden brown color; aromas of honey and whole wheat waffles; quite sweet and rich on the palate with a buttery texture and long, elegant finish. 94

**POSTSCRIPT STATISTICS AND COMMENTS**

**Corked whites: 1/24 (4.17%)**

**Oxidized whites: 1/24 (4.1%) by group consensus or by my count 2/24 (8.33%).** The overall numbers/percentage to date are 3/50 (6%) or 4/50 (8%)

There were some big upside and downside surprises from this tasting.

On the upside: The across-the-board performance of the 2002 wines has been remarkable. It is a truly exciting vintage as everyone had hoped. The performances of the two Ramonets exceeded the expectations created by the initial published reviews and the regular Bouchard and the Pillot Chevalier were really exciting wines.

The incidence of premoxy has been the lowest ever. Colin-Deléger Chevalier, Girardin Chevalier, Fontaine-Gagnard Bâtard and Lamy Criots were not oxidized and that alone is a cause for celebration.

I produced proof to my skeptical colleagues that it is theoretically possible to produce California chardonnay that will last 7.5 years, show youthfully at 7.5 years, and please/fool even the most ardent burgundy collector. (With thanks to David Ramey.)

On the downside: The Leflaive wines were all relatively disappointing versus their peers. I can't ever remember that happening. And I experienced my first corked bottle of Leflaive. We unfortunately had oxidation and advanced wines from some of the usual suspects: Fontaine-Gagnard (Criots), Jadot (Chevalier Demoiselles) and Sauzet (Bâtard).