

Dom J & N Saumaize, En Cr ches 2008 St-V ran

30 Sep 2010 by Jancis Robinson

From £11.50 and \$17.99

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Buying white burgundy from the C te d'Or heartland has become a perilous business, thanks to the apparently unpredictable threat of premature oxidation, much discussed on our Members' forum (see, for example, [Oxidised burgundies](#)). The pain of your precious bottle of fine dry white turning into one of flat, tawny syrup is exacerbated by the sort of prices commanded by such appellations as Meursault, Puligny-Montrachet and Chassagne-Montrachet - generally £20 a bottle and up.

This is making the best white wines of the M connais well to the south of the C te d'Or look more and more attractive - not least because winemaking standards there have been in the ascendant in the most dramatic and impressive fashion. A famous appellation name such as the trio above encourages complacency; a name such as M con that for years was associated with cheap blends can act as a spur to prove the exception, and there is now no shortage of local growers such as Daniel Barraud, Bret Brothers, Christophe Cordier, La Croix Senaillet, Guffens-Heynen and Olivier Merlin arguably being even more conscientious than their C te d'Or counterparts.

M connais whites may not have the longevity of the C te d'Or's finest whites but they tend to be a little broader and are extremely easy to like. This southern outpost of Burgundy has furthermore been paid the ultimate compliment of seeing the two great names of Puligny and Meursault - Domaine Leflaive and Comte Lafon respectively - investing in their own M connais domaines.

One other long-standing over-performing M connais name is Saumaize, a domaine split in the 1990s between the brothers Roger, who, with his wife Christine, continues to run Saumaize-Michelin with aplomb, and Jacques, who, with his wife Nathalie, has made this great-value St-V ran from vines on slopes with a good proportion of Chardonnay-loving limestone to the north of the robustly priced Pouilly-Fuiss  appellation. The Vieilles Vignes bottling is fermented in barrel but this unoaked version is wonderfully sunny, open and attractive already. I loved its almost ethereal perfume, its energy and its creamy texture. According to the label it is only 13% alcohol and I would drink it, with or without food, any time over the next two years.

In the UK it's available from The Wine Society (who have a particularly well-chosen selection of M connais whites, as outlined in [Young white burgundies - some great buys](#)) for £11.50 a bottle or £138 a dozen, and also from Earle Wines of Yorkshire. In the US it's not too difficult to find, from \$17.99 a bottle.

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