

Côte de Beaune 2011 overview

17 Jan 2013 by Jancis Robinson/FT

See our [guide to burgundy 2011](#) for links to more than 1,300 tasting notes and a host of more general articles, including last Saturday's [Côte de Nuits 2011 overview](#).

As I suspected, the hundreds of 2011 burgundies hawked on London tasting tables last week and the one before seemed in general rather less vivid than those I'd seen at the end of November at some of the Côte d'Or's finest addresses. (The picture was taken at the Goedhuis tasting in the Philip Mould Gallery, the most glamorous setting for any of the 27 London tastings of 2011 burgundy.)

This is clearly a vintage where the best wines will be highly appreciated by lovers of fine, expressive burgundy, but there are many lesser wines that seem a bit thin and weedy if red, or watery if white. Few 2011s have a real persistence in the mouth and hardly any wines tasted in London were thrilling enough to earn a really high score from me. That said, the whites seemed to have withstood the journey from Burgundy to London rather better than the reds, perhaps because a high proportion of them have already been safely put into bottle in their finished form. Many of the red-wine samples were drawn from cask before Christmas, so three or even four weeks before being tasted, and given a squirt of sulphur to stabilise them for the journey before being put into bottles. It's a wonder really that they showed as well as they did.

It is interesting to see how white burgundy has evolved over recent years. The wines, like Chardonnays around the world, have slimmed down considerably. It is extremely rare now to taste anything either fat or oaky, and even the more concentrated 2011 whites are in general fine-boned and taut. As Jean-Marc Roulot of Meursault, one of the most talented and thoughtful makers of white wine on the Côte de Beaune, pointed out, the alcohol levels in his 2011s varied from 12.5 to 13.1% whereas in the much later picked, riper 2010 vintage they had ranged from at least 13.5% with some wines as high as 13.9% naturally, without any help from sugar added to the fermentation vat.

Thanks to backing from some American burgundy lovers, Roulot, along with his friend Dominique Lafon up the road, has been able to continue to add to his vineyard holdings, and both of them have been extending their cellars. On the other side of the village, another talented Meursault producer with a more recent reputation, Arnaud Ente, was also able to demonstrate physical evidence of his success in the form of an extremely cool, modern, even rather glamorous tasting room - quite a contrast to my first tastings here on a corner of the kitchen table. Both of these producers make particularly finely etched wines year after year - and indeed chez Ente, I felt his personal style of winemaking is so strong that it is almost as evident in his least expensive wines as in his grandest. But this was a rare exception to the rule that 2011 in general is good at showing tasteable differences between different vineyards.

Two irreproachable sources of really fine, precise, ageworthy white burgundy are the world-famous Domaine Jean-François Coche-Dury of Meursault and the up-and-coming négociant Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey of Chassagne-Montrachet. A clear sense of evolution is in the air at both. Jean-François's son Raphael is now making the wine chez Coche, with little perceptible change to the style. Kremlinologists may be trying to discern one and perhaps they have taken on just a little more weight, but in essence the wines remain some of the purest, longest-lasting white burgundies of all, right down to the most modest Bourgogne Aligoté. Raphael had been called away to a growers' meeting to discuss the vine wood diseases about which I wrote two weeks ago (see [Esca and friends](#)) and so my early-evening tasting was conducted by his wife Charlene and his even more loquacious two-year-old son Mathieu, who already seemed thoroughly at home in the cellar. I expect him to be drawing the barrel samples next year.

The list of those seeking allocations of Coche white burgundies is already wildly over-subscribed but it may not be too late to secure some Colin-Morey wines. Pierre-Yves, son of Marc Colin, has very much gone his own way, adding carefully to his own vineyards with a small roster of hand-picked growers from whom he buys. His wines are as intense as he is, and he, another Côte de Beaune producer to have moved his wine showroom out of his kitchen to separate premises, seems utterly dedicated to making the wines better every year.

With the small amount of red wine he makes from Santenay and Volnay vines he has been experimenting with a hugely labour-intensive method copied from the redoubtable Lalou Bize-Leroy at Domaine Leroy in Vosne-Romanée whereby each grape is individually snipped so that the pedicel but not the bunch stem goes into the fermentation vat. He claims that preparing the grapes for his three barrels of Santenay from 100-year-old vines took 30 people five hours. 'Madmen's

work', he calls it, but the result is certainly a wine with much more intensity than the average 2011 Côte de Beaune red.

Because he has been unwilling to submit samples to the village-hall-style tastings favoured by the best-known French wine critics, he is not that well known in France and one of the best sources of his wine is A&B Vintners of Kent (tel +44 (0)1892 724977). Like the equally fussy Jean-Marie Vincent of Santenay, Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey is a big fan of the small cooper Chassin of Rully (many of whose vineyards were decimated by hail in 2011), whose work he describes as 'haute couture'. He particularly values having individual barrels genuinely made to order by Chassin and his family.

Another sign of propitious evolution in this year's London burgundy tastings was in the range of growers represented by Flint Wines. In total more than 20 UK wine importers held tastings in London in an attempt to persuade their customers to invest in 2011 burgundy (although Bibendum Wine decided to sit out this particular dance this year). There is enormous overlap of the established growers between most of these importers. Trying to edit tasting sheets so that one does not taste the same wine three times can be a bit like game of Pelmanism. But Flint seem to have been more energetic than most in seeking out some new names, producers whose wines are also generally defined by being a little more energetic (and sometimes lighter) than most. Choice is good, especially with 2011.

RECOMMENDED PRODUCERS OF 2011s

Of the more than 1,000 2011 burgundies I have tasted, these producers' wines particularly caught my fancy. See wine-searcher.com for importers and our [guide to burgundy 2011](#) for links to the relevant tasting articles.

Denis Bachelet
Bachelet-Monnot
Ballot-Millot
Daniel & Julien Barraud
Henri Boillot (whites)
Sylvain Cathiard
Robert Chevillon
David Clark
Clos de Tart
Coche-Dury
Bruno Colin
Marc Colin
Colin-Deléger
Pierre-Yves Colin-Morey
Duroché
Sébastien Dampt
Dugay-Py
Dom Dujac
Arnaud Ente
Dom d'Eugénie
Jean-Philippe Fichet
Dom Fourrier
Jean-Marie Fourrier
Thierry Glantenay
Henri Gouges
Jean Grivot
Guiton
Hudlot-Noëllat

Rémi Jobard
Lafarge
Dom Lamarche
Hubert Lamy
Lignier-Michelot
Sylvain Loichet
Dom de Montille
Bernard Moreau
Christian Moreau
Moreau-Naudet
Marc Morey

J-F Mugnier
Michel Niellon
Georges Noëllat
Sylvain Pataille
Fernand & Laurent Pillot
Jean-Marc Pillot
Denis Pommier
Dom Ponsot
Chantal (Louis) Remy
Dom de la Romanée-Conti
Nicolas Rossignol
Rossignol-Trapet
Roulot
Dom Roumier
Armand Rousseau
Taupenot-Merme
Jean Tardy
Dom des Tilleuls
Cécile Tremblay

Aurélien Verdet
de Vogüé