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Burgundy Club! FALL 2017

Welcome to the latest edition of the **Caveau Burgundy Club** – a twice-yearly tutored tasting and exploration of the great wines and terroirs of Burgundy.

This club functions just like our **Champagne Club** - *(and if you're not already a member, email us - scott@caveauselections.com. <http://www.caveauselections.com/champagne-club/> Also, check out our new **"House Wine" Clubs** if you're interested in a steady supply of delicious Burgs at around \$20 per bottle.*

The wines in each 6-bottle shipment have been specifically selected to help educate and illustrate – each shipment is essentially a Burgundy seminar-in-a-box. You can use all of this to stage your own tasting seminar at home, or of course you can just drink the wines one by one. Whichever path you choose – there's lots of good Burgundy in your future!

2015 - a classically GREAT vintage

Sometimes in these packages we explore different villages, or sub-regions, or different appellation quality levels. **This time around, we're going to dive deep into the spectacular 2015 vintage - a truly great year in Burgundy.** 2015 may ultimately go down as one the best vintages in our lifetimes. I personally rank it above the glorious 2005, and also above 1999, 1990 and 1985 - all wonderful vintages that I adore. Where it eventually stacks up against the likes of all-time greats 1929, 1945, 1959 and 1961 remains to be seen - but it will certainly be up there and part of the discussion.

I'm excited to be able to include five prime examples of why 2015 is so glorious, and then we'll turn you on to a sneak-preview of 2016 - a vintage plagued with freak weather issues, but that ultimately delivered amazing wines...

If you're new to the club, or would just like to brush up a bit, we'll start off with some good general Burgundy information to help you understand the lay of the land.

Burgundy Basics

The Burgundy region of France has been producing what are widely considered to be the world's finest Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays for nearly a thousand years. Burgundy is a relatively small area (only about 13,500 acres of vines in Burgundy's Côte d'Or, as opposed to Bordeaux's 235,000 acres or California's 515,000.) Oregon has recently grown larger than Burgundy, with some 18,000 vineyard acres now planted.

As in Oregon, most of the winegrowers and producers in Burgundy are small, family operations. The average estate size is about 15 acres, enough to produce about 3,500 cases of wine each year. Those 15 acres are often split into 10 or more tiny parcels of vineyards scattered around several different vineyards and villages — so production of each wine is often only a few hundred cases or less. While it can seem quite complicated, even perplexing at times, in reality Burgundy is fairly simple to decipher.

Red = Pinot Noir. If it's a red wine from Burgundy, it is made from the Pinot Noir grape. (Beaujolais, while technically part of the Burgundy region, is truly a different world altogether. Beaujolais reds are made from the Gamay Noir grape.)

White = Chardonnay. If it's a white wine from Burgundy, it's a Chardonnay. (Again, there are minor exceptions you'll rarely see — there's a white grape known as Aligoté that produces some very inexpensive, lower-level wines — but it will not come into play in anything we're discussing here.)

Unlike America, France has legal classifications for their wines. In Burgundy, the actual vineyards themselves, rather than the producer or wines, are given a level of classification. There are four levels:

Grand Cru — The best of the best. There are 32 Grand Cru vineyards in Burgundy, accounting for less than 2% of all Burgundy wine production. Grand Cru wines mention on the label only the producer and name of the vineyard — as in "Montrachet" or "Musigny" — the name of the village is not deemed necessary in the case of these great vineyards.

Premier Cru — (Also written as 1er Cru) One notch below the Grand Crus — there are hundreds at this level, and the quality varies widely. The best Premiers rival the Grand Crus, the lesser ones seem barely deserving of the ranking. These makeup about 10% of total production. A Premier Cru wine will mention the name of the village and possibly an individual vineyard on the label, as in "Pommard-Rugiens" or "Vosne-Romanée — Les Suchots" — if it indeed comes from a single vineyard. It will always bear the mark "Premier Cru" or "1er Cru".

If the wine is a blend of more than one 1er Cru vineyard within a given village, it will simply bear the designation "1er Cru" without any vineyard designation.

Village — Grapes for a village wine come from one or many vineyards surrounding a specific Burgundian village, for example Vosne-Romanée or Puligny-Montrachet. These are classified below the 1er Cru level, but can often be lovely wines and great values. Village wines are about 43% of the total pie.

The label will simply state the name of the village (although in some cases the name of a specific vineyard will also be mentioned, even though it is not of Premier Cru status.)

Regional (Bourgogne) — A bit less than half of all Burgundy vineyards (45%) are classified at the regional level. In the hands of dedicated and talented producers these can be lovely wines. In the hands of others they can be thin, weedy, and rather unpleasant. These wines are labeled as Bourgogne Rouge or Bourgogne Blanc, or Bourgogne Pinot Noir or Bourgogne Chardonnay.

Most of the vineyards in Burgundy are owned by multiple owners — as many as 70 or 80 different owners in some cases. (In the rare cases that a single producer owns the entirety of a specific vineyard, this is designated as a **“Monopole.”**) *This means that each winery may own only a few rows of the vineyard*, and will make only a few barrels of that specific wine each year (but they are likely to own small pieces of several other vineyards as well.) So, not all wines from the same vineyard are created equal. The quality can vary widely from producer to producer. In Burgundy, the most important consideration is in fact **the producer**. Get to know the styles of different producers, and zero in on the ones you like best. They will likely give you the most enjoyment year in and year out regardless of the classification level.

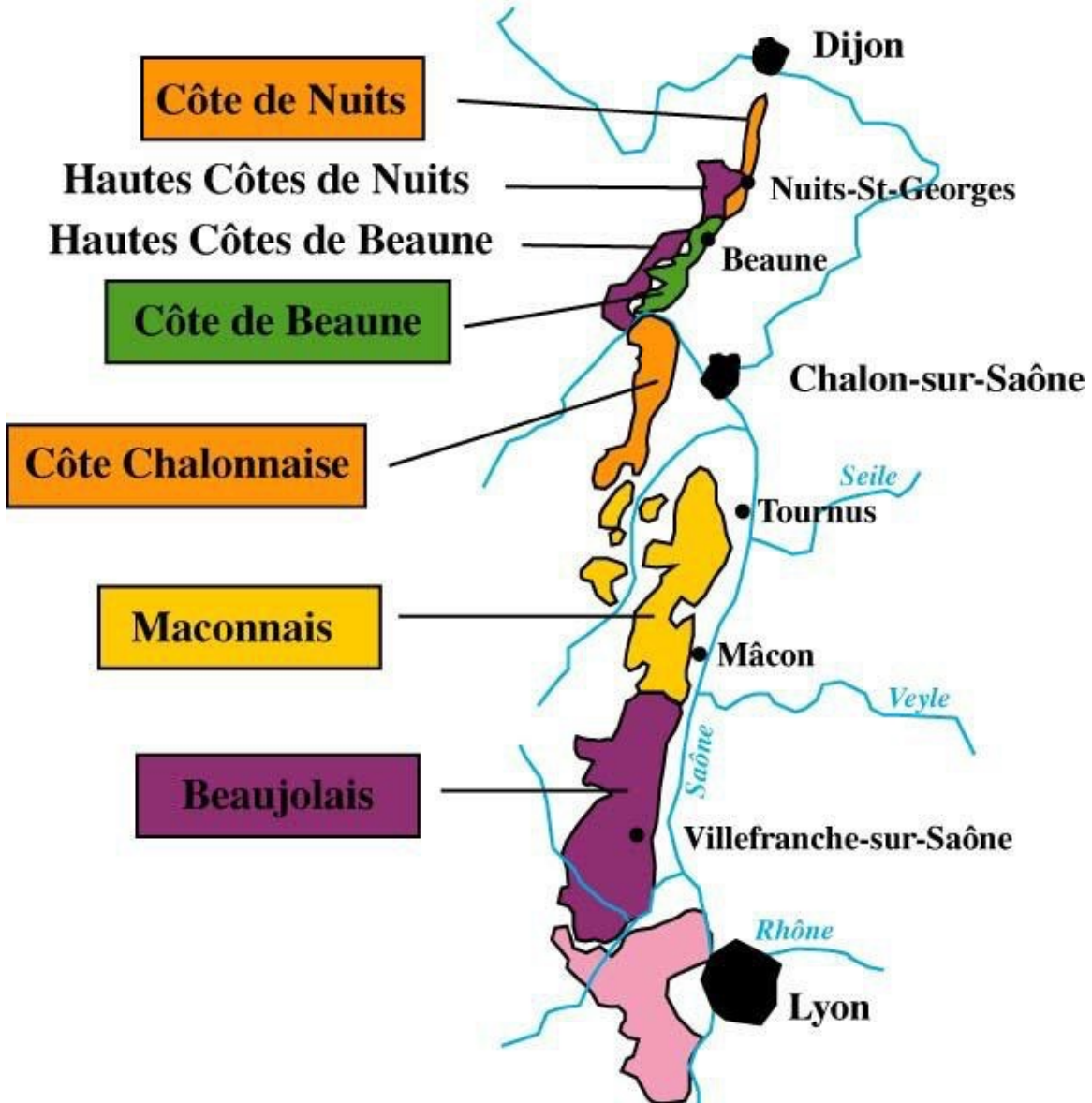


BURGUNDY

Chablis



Chablis



The 2015 Vintage

Allen Meadows, one of the world's leading authorities on Burgundy (burghound.com), says it best -

“A Great Vintage, Indeed the Greatest Since the Legendary 2005. 2015 is a genuinely great vintage and it's a great vintage from top to bottom. In fact, in all my years of visiting Burgundy I have never seen a better vintage for wines at the bottom of the appellation hierarchy. To be sure, it's great at the top as well but if ever there was a vintage to explore for value, it's this one.”

So what made 2015 great? The simple answer is weather, or actually *lack* of weather. It was sunny, warm, and very dry - pretty much ideal grape-growing conditions that you would order up from the weather gods if you could. For once, no major hail storms, no frosts, no truly significant events. Warm and dry years typically produce wines that are rich and full of fruit, and can sometimes lack acid, but the 2015s are amazingly fresh. In this respect I prefer the '15s to the '05s - there's more energy and spirit to them. The '05s are indeed amazing, but they feel a little heavier, and will probably take a much longer time to fully come into their own.

Yields were down in 2015 - about 25% on average, but some producers were down 50% or more. Thus '15 became the **6th vintage in a row to deliver smaller than average quantities** - though it appears that the historical average is in fact no longer a useful comparison. It was also an early year, with most domaines starting the harvest in the first week of September (some even started in late August.) This puts '15 in with '03, '07 and '11 in terms of early harvests (and the recently completed 2017 harvest was another precocious one, with most starting their picks in the first few days of September again.) That makes five of the historically earliest vintages ever, all occurring in the last 14 years.

In all, it's a vintage of spectacular wines across the range. They are wines that are built for medium to long-term aging, but many will drink really beautifully very early on as well. Some of the Grand Crus have the stuffing to go the very long haul (30-50 years+), but most wines probably have nothing to gain beyond age 20 or so. These will be at their peak before the 2005s, many of which may be eternal. So, we've got 2 from the **Côte de Beaune**, 3 from the **Côte de Nuits**, and a 2016 surprise from down south. Let's taste some wines!

The Wines

1. **2015 Hautes-Côtes de Nuits**– Domaine Felettig

CLUB PRICE \$24

This was featured in the club package last fall, and I thought it would be great to be able to compare the '14 and '15 renditions of this very nice “entry-level” wine (if you haven't opened your '14 yet, taste them side-by-side.) The Hautes-Côtes vineyards (literally the “upper slopes”) are on the next ridge above where the Côte de Nuits stops. The much higher elevation - about 1,300+ feet - makes it a lot cooler up there and thus more difficult to get grapes fully ripe, though now with climate change we're getting ripe fruit up there most years (historically it was only perhaps 2 or 3 years out of 10.)

Based in Chambolle-Musigny, Domaine Felettig is run by **Gilbert Felettig** and his sister **Christine**, the 2nd generation of a young but rapidly rising estate. Gilbert gives the same meticulous care to the viticulture and vinification for his Hautes-Côtes that he does for his Grand Crus and 1er Crus, and it's evident from the first sip. From what can often be a somewhat rustic and earthy appellation, here we have a relatively smooth, rich, mouth-filling beauty that delivers a lot of pleasure. Nice raspberry fruit on the palate, and pretty berry fruits on the nose. Not a deep or complex wine by any means, it's nonetheless a really nice example. If you can't drink Grand Cru every night, make it something delicious!



Gilbert & Christine Felettig

2. **2015 Volnay “Cros Martin”** - Domaine Viot-Guillemard **CLUB PRICE \$46**

Thierry Viot-Guillemard is one of the great characters in all of Burgundy (and one of the producers prominently featured in our upcoming documentary film, ***Three Days of Glory***.) Thierry’s son Joannes started working alongside his papa in 2015, and it’s expected that in another 5-7 years he’ll be taking over.

What a year to start! Joannes may not see more than one or two vintages as magical as 2015 in his lifetime. Their domaine is based in Pommard, and for five generations now they’ve been working the same parcels in the village. It wasn’t until the 21st century that Thierry bought a parcel in neighboring Volnay - for which he swears his ancestors are rolling in their graves (The *Pommardois* and *Volnaysiens* have been “feuding” for centuries - despite the fact that many vigneronns in each village also own vineyards in the other.)

Cros Martin is a vineyard in the south-east corner of the Volnay appellation, directly across from the Meursault border. Wines from here tend to have the red-fruit and perfume so typical of Volnay, but also a bit more structure and power. Thierry’s style has always been to emphasize finesse and elegance, and he captures it beautifully in this bottling. Organically farmed, and vinified with minimal intervention - it’s a pure expression of terroir. Yum! This can be enjoyed now, and will likely peak in 2020+.



Joannes et Thierry Viot-Guillemard

3. 2015 Savigny-lès-Beaune Clos des Guettes 1er Cru – A-F Gros

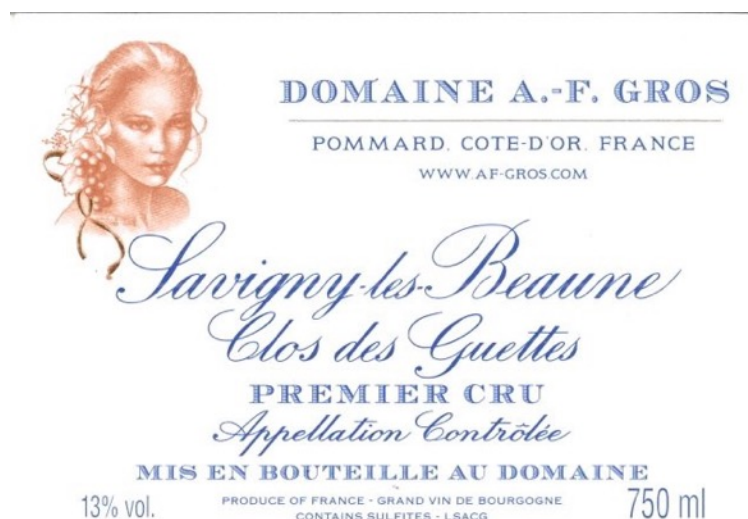
CLUB PRICE \$65

Domaine **Anne-Françoise Gros** is one of the four Gros domaines in the Côte d'Or (I know it's confusing, believe me!) They're all related, and all have many of the same vineyard holdings, making it even harder to keep it all straight. All you need to know is that the A-F Gros wines are consistently excellent, as you would expect from one of Burgundy's star producers.

Anne-Françoise's son **Mattias** officially took the winemaking reins in 2015 from his father, François Parent, (another star vigneron in his own right with a major estate based in Pommard.) Once again, Mattias has made his debut in perhaps one of the best vintages he'll ever see. He's already been drawing superb reviews and great critical acclaim. His wines seem a touch more elegant than his dad's, while maintaining the rich, polished style they're known for.

Clos des Guettes was at one time a monopole, but has now been split among several owners - Gros purchased their 1.64-acre piece in 1995. The 2014 version of this wine was featured in last fall's package, and again it's fascinating to compare the two. The '14 is gorgeous, but the '15 is a step up in refinement. I agree with **Allen Meadows'** take in *Burghound* -

"A pure and very pretty nose that consists of liqueur-like red berry fruit, pungent earth and a sauvage wisp. The sleek, delineated and punchy medium-bodied flavors reveal ample minerality on the focused if youthfully austere finish that is shaped by relatively fine-grained tannins. 90-92 Pts. Drink 2022+



4. 2015 Vosne-Romanée Clos de la Fontaine – A-F Gros CLUB PRICE \$79

Again this year, we were able to secure enough of this beauty to include it in the Club package. I always find this to be the most elegant example of Vosne-Romanée Village - there's a silky elegance and sense of finesse here that are rarely found at the Village level.

Clos de la Fontaine is a Monopole of just .88-acres, directly below the Clos de Reas, and always produces soft, perfumed, seductive wine that is absolutely captivating. From the *Burghound* again -

“A more deeply pitched nose of spicy red and dark currant aromas that are laced with hoisin and tea scents. The vibrant and velvety middle weight flavors possess a seductive mouth feel before culminating in a delicious and lingering finish. This is sufficiently rich and forward and it could easily be enjoyed young. 89-91 Pts. Drink 2020+”



In the cellar at A-F Gros with Caroline Parent

5. 2015 Nuits-St. Georges les Fleurières – J-J Confuron CLUB PRICE \$49

Winemaker **Alain Meunier** and his wife **Sophie Meunier-Confuron** continue to make some of the most elegant wines in the Côte de Nuits, with their son Louis now at Alain's side since the 2015 vintage (son Paul now has his own domaine in the Languedoc in southern France.)

We've frequently included this bottling in Club packages over the years - it's one of the few single-vineyard Burgs available in sufficient quantities to fill the club orders, and it's consistently excellent year after year.

The 2015 is clearly the best version yet. From an appellation that can often be quite rustic and driven by metallic-tasting tannins, this is a sleek and silky example that just feels beautiful in the mouth, and then builds in power and complexity as it goes on and on. It clearly "punches above its weight", offering a lot more depth than is often found in NSG Village wines. This is from an old-vines parcel that sits just below the 1er Cru *les Pruliers*, in the southern half of the NSG appellation. This is also approachable early, as in now, and likely at its best 2019+.



Lunch at the winery with Alain et Sophie

6. 2016 Fleurie – Julien Sunier

CLUB PRICE \$26

This was just too good to not include in the Club package this time! It's not a 2015 from the Côte d'Or, it's a 2016 **Cru Beaujolais**, and it blew my mind when I tasted it with Julien just after bottling this past June. As was the case in most of Burgundy in '16, Sunier lost 60-70% of his crop to a combination of frost and hail. His meticulous farming (organically, by hand and by horse), old vines, and a severe triage in the winery left him with absolutely beautiful fruit to work with - just hardly any of it. (Fleurie was hammered again in 2017, sadly, with many producers reporting a 70-80% loss!)

The village of Fleurie sits high on the hill above the valley floor, and the vines up there tend to produce the most exquisitely delicate, perfumed, graceful examples of Gamay Noir anywhere on the planet. There's also a distinct sexiness to this '16 - it's floral and very pretty, but has some seductive, alluring tones that draw you in and make you want to get closer.

The Sunier parcel is 4.64 acres at 1400 feet of elevation on a steep slope - too steep to work with tractors. Julien tends each vine by hand, and it shows in every sip. Enjoy!



The view from the deck at Sunier

Next shipment in the Spring...

I hope you've enjoyed our continuing exploration of all things Burgundian. Thanks for joining us! Watch your email for information on our next Caveau Burgundy Club shipment coming in the spring, and for pre-arrival offerings on all the yummy wines headed your way throughout the year. All the latest information is always available on our website: www.caveauselections.com

Please let us know if we need to make any changes to your account. Email us at hellocaveau@gmail.com or text us at 503-679-6233 (or send a secure message via WhatsApp to the same number) if:

- You have a new or updated credit card
- You have a change of billing or shipping address
- You want to change your order from “ship” to pick-up, or vice-versa
- You have any questions about your Club membership

*Launched in 2005, **Caveau Selections** is owned and operated by Martha & Scott Wright, the founders and former owners of top Oregon Pinot Noir producer Scott Paul Wines. Scott has been drinking and studying the wines and regions of Burgundy and Champagne since the 1970s, and visiting regularly since the 1980s. He leads annual Insiders' Tours of both Burgundy and Champagne, and teaches seminars here and abroad. He is available to teach private seminars and conduct tutored tastings for your group – email Scott@caveauselections.com for more information.*

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