



scott paul
wines

Burgundy Express

Fall 2014

Thanks for joining us for the latest package of goodies from the Burgundy Express Club – a twice-yearly tutored wine-tasting exploration of Burgundy, delivered to your door. The theme of this shipment is “**Six Reasons to Love Burgundy**”. Mother Nature has been throwing Burgundy some tough punches lately, but she keeps bouncing back with great wines like these six in your package.

Diminishing Returns

It's been an unprecedented run of difficult vintages in Burgundy. From 2010 through the just-completed 2014 season, each of the last five years has thrown wicked challenges at the Burgundian vigneron. The most impactful blow is that all five of those years have seen severely reduced crops, with 2013 and 2014 being exceptionally small, especially in the Côte de Beaune. Over the last five years many producers have produced what amounts to a total of about two “normal” years' worth of wine.

Thus, there is very limited availability of these wines, wines that have world-wide demand and are relatively hard to get ahold of even in the abundant years. As a result prices have gone up, of course, but only moderately in relation to the amount of wine the producers have lost. The small family estates are facing severe economic difficulties in many cases. As one can imagine, it is difficult to stay in business without any product to sell. It costs essentially the same amount to farm the vineyards in good years or bad – so their costs and overhead stay the same while their potential income is slashed to the bone.

Each one of the last five years has presented its own unique challenges. It has either been heavy rains, cold and wet summers, bad weather during the crucial flowering period, serious rot and mildew attacks, devastating hailstorms – or in the case of 2012, all of those combined!



A lovely summer morning in Volnay

Amazingly, despite the trying conditions, the quality of the wines has been very good (2011, 2013) to downright excellent (2010, 2012, 2014.) This is truly miraculous, as the deck has been stacked against them in a major way. It's a testament to the tenacity and determination of the vigneron, and modern improvements in most cellars (temperature control & sorting tables are now nearly ubiquitous), that has allowed these wines to turn out so well. A generation ago, this would clearly have not been the case.

Perhaps the most difficult part of putting together this package for you was finding six wines that I loved that were available in sufficient quantities to cover all of the Club members. In 2012, most producers lost 40-80% of their production to three violent hailstorms. (In 2013 and 2014, a number of sites in the Côte de Beaune were a 100% loss. Yikes!)

As a result, our allocations were severely reduced, and I was reduced to begging in some cases. I'm not proud. Hey, it worked! I am very happy to present to you six of my favorite new releases, six wonderful wines that were made under the most trying circumstances imaginable. In other words, **six reasons to love Burgundy!**



Grapes smashed to the ground and destroyed by hail, June 2014

1. **2013 Morgon** – Julien Sunier \$35 **CLUB PRICE \$28**

Last fall, we introduced you to Julien, the most exciting young producer in Beaujolais in a long, long time. The Beaujolais region, the southernmost part of Burgundy, was not affected as severely as the Côte de Beaune or Côte de Nuits in recent years – they’ve had a relatively easy go of it, all things considered.

Of the 10 villages that have Cru Beaujolais status (the highest classification level in the region) – Fleurie is generally considered the most elegant, while **Morgon** is thought of as the most powerful and age-worthy. Julien is a meticulous farmer, working his steep vineyards organically and by hand. He says “Don’t forget, the wine is a memory of the grape – therefore we take great care of our land”.

His Morgon is from two parcels of Gamay Noir totaling a mere 3.58 acres (Les Charmes, and Corcelettes) on south to south-west facing slopes, between 840 and 1,280 feet of elevation – with average vine age now over 60 years. The grapes are fermented whole-cluster in a closed tank with natural yeasts (carbonic maceration) for 10 days, followed by 10 days in an open tank and contact with air. No sulfur is added before or during fermentation.

Then the wine is racked into neutral Burgundy barrels for 8-11 months, and was bottled in July 2014 without fining or filtration. The barest touch of SO₂ was added just before bottling.

The result is one of the most enthralling Cru Beaujolais I’ve come across in ages. Black cherries and spice notes abound, with a mouth-filling richness that only begins to hint where this wine is going over the years to come. Yes, you can age Cru Beaujolais, and I recommend it with this one – give it a year or three to really see it shine its brightest.



Julien Sunier (rt) at his kitchen table in Beaujolais

2. **2012 Hautes Côtes de Nuits** – Anne-Françoise Gros \$45 **CLUB PRICE \$36**

In our shipment last fall we introduced you to the Hautes Côtes de Nuits appellation – the vineyards high on the slopes of the next range of hills above the Côte de Nuits. In our last package we turned you on to a lovely HCdN from Caroline Parent. This time we've got one for you from her mother, the legendary **Anne-Françoise Gros**.

Famous for her fabulous Grand Cru wines from Richebourg and Echezeaux and superb Village holdings in Vosne-Romanée, Anne-Françoise also has a nice piece of the Hautes-Côtes – on an east-facing slope in the village of Arcenant, high above Nuits-St. Georges.

The grapes up there tend to ripen some two weeks later than down on the Côte, as it's much cooler at the higher elevation. Vineyard plantings on the Hautes-Côtes are typically less dense than down below as well, with 4,000 vines per hectare the norm (vs 10,000 on the Côte.)

The Gros HCdN is destemmed and fermented in open-top concrete tanks, then aged in large neutral oak Foudres (big oval casks) for one year, then moved to once-used Burgundy barrels for 3-5 months prior to bottling.

The 2012 is fresh, bright, and very pretty, showing red cherries and raspberries on the nose, a discreet mineral touch on the palate, and simply delivers a whole lot of pleasure. Yummy now, and should be at its best 2015-2017.



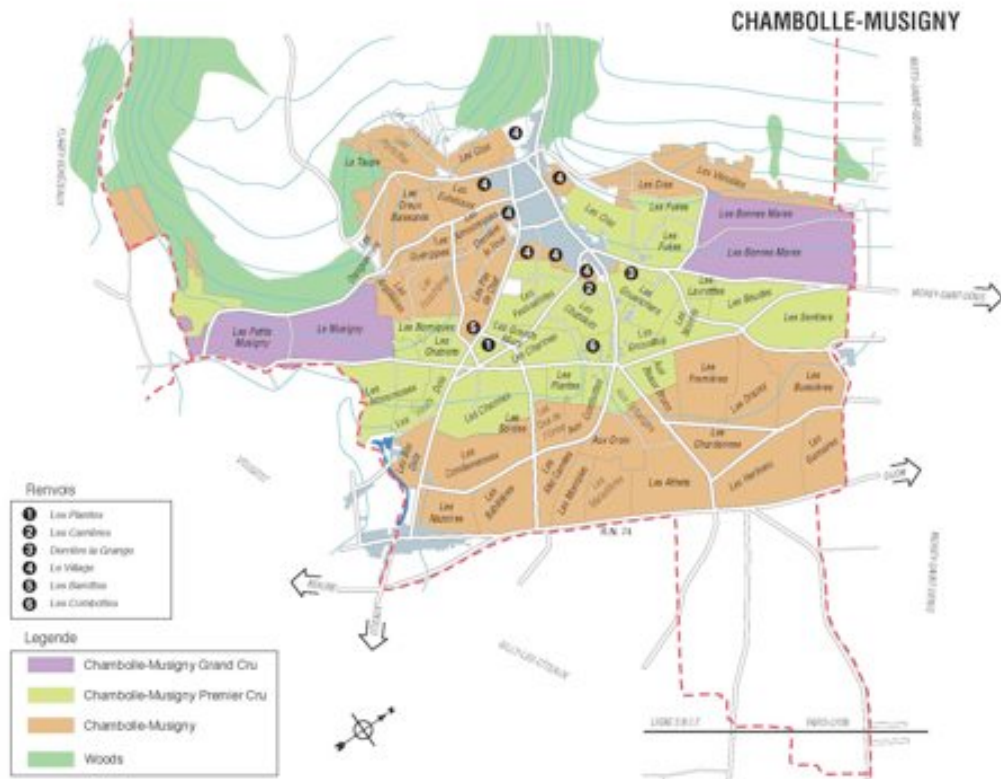
Anne-Françoise Gros (and hubby François Parent)

3. 2012 Chambolle-Musigny – Anne-Françoise Gros \$98 CLUB PRICE \$78.40

If you've followed us over time, you'll likely know that my heart belongs to Chambolle. Chambolle-Musigny is a tiny village of about 275 inhabitants, 425 acres of vineyards, and is the home of arguably the most sublime expression of Pinot Noir on the planet. Within those 425 acres are two of the grandest of Grand Crus (Musigny and Bonnes Mares), several of the greatest 1er Crus (especially Les Amoureuses), and Village wines that can offer the most refinement and elegance you'll ever find at that level.

In your hands now is a great example, from the lovely Madame Anne-Françoise Gros. She has small parcels of four different village-level vineyards in Chambolle that total less than 1 acre. All four parcels (Les Fremières, Derrière le Four, Pas de Chat, and les Athets) are clustered around the center of the village, where the cool air comes down from the break in the hillside above, and the wines are at their most feminine and graceful.

The wine is a model of elegance, with soft, silky tannins, pretty red fruits, and a lingering minerality and the long and complex finish. Mme. Gros recommends drinking it anywhere from 2-8 years of age for maximum pleasure.



4. **2012 Gevrey-Chambertin, Vieilles Vignes** – Marc Roy \$79 CLUB PRICE \$63.20

Alexandrine Roy and her stunning wines have been regularly featured in this Club since we started working with her a few years ago. Her wines are highly sought after, her production is small even in “normal” years, and her reputation is growing in leaps and bounds.

So what sets her apart from the hundreds of others who produce wines from the soils of Gevrey-Chambertin? From my observations, I’d say it’s first and foremost a level of dedication that borders on obsession, and just plain old hard work. The kind of hard work a lot of folks are just not willing to do. The willingness to sacrifice on the personal and professional level to do whatever it takes to make her wines the best they can possibly be.

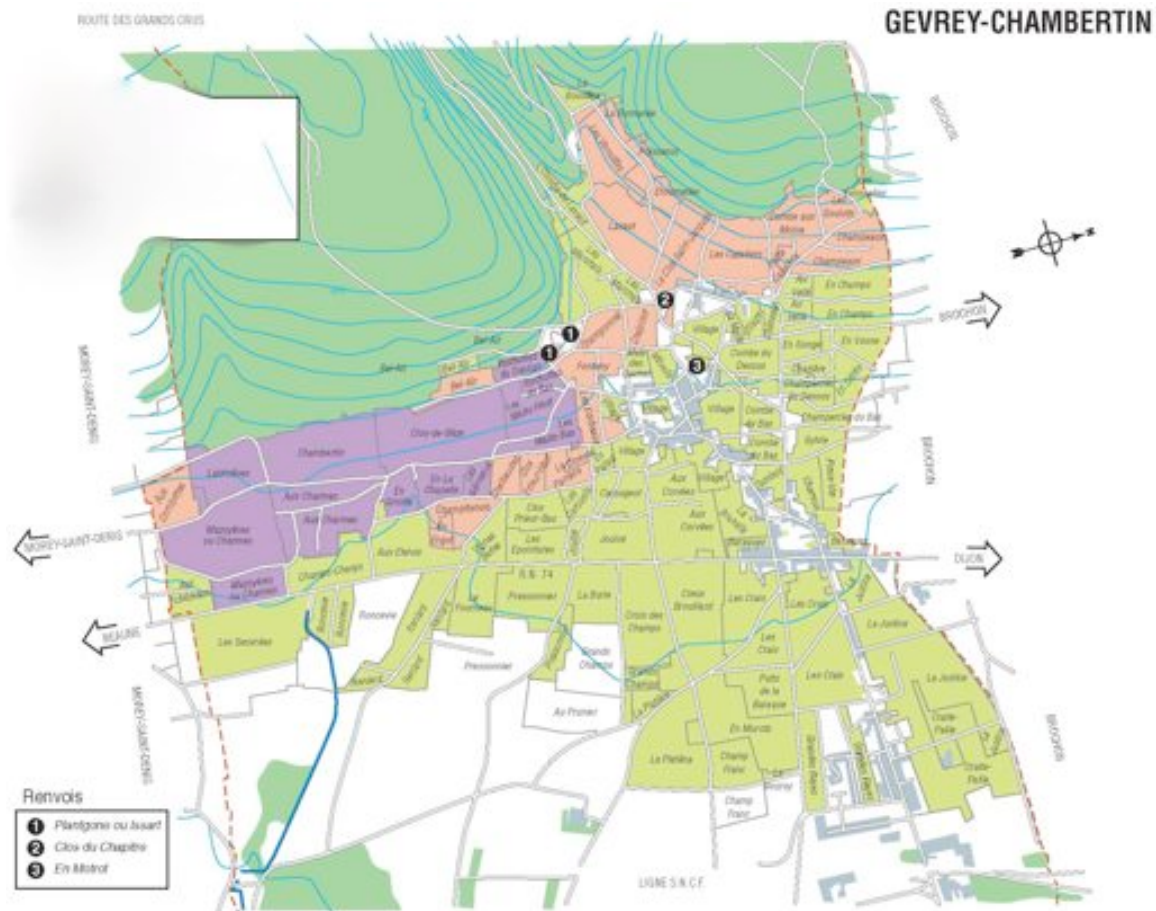
It is only Alexandrine and her father Marc that work in the vineyards. They have only 10 acres in total, but each vine is meticulously pruned and tended by hand, and laboriously farmed to achieve at their highest level. When you call Alexandrine to try to make a tasting appointment and she politely refuses, it’s simply because she just doesn’t feel she can take the time away from her work in the vines. (Thankfully she makes an exception for me once a year, but I can always tell she’s itchy to get back in the vineyards as soon as she can!)



Alexandrine Roy, in her vines in Gevrey-Chambertin

Her Vieilles Vignes bottling is from five different Village-level sites across Gevrey-Chambertin, with average vine age now nearing 70 years or more (the oldest are 100.) She destems everything, vinifies with native yeasts in traditional open-top concrete tanks, gently punches down by foot, and the wines are raised for 11 months in 30-40% new oak.

As is often the case with this bottling chez Roy, this is one of the softest and silkiest Gevrey's you're likely to experience. A nice mix of red and black berry fruits, nice richness and an elegant mouthfeel, and it can be approached earlier than most of her other wines (and most Gevrey-Chambertin wines in general.) Very tempting and totally delicious now, and should hit its peak around 2017.

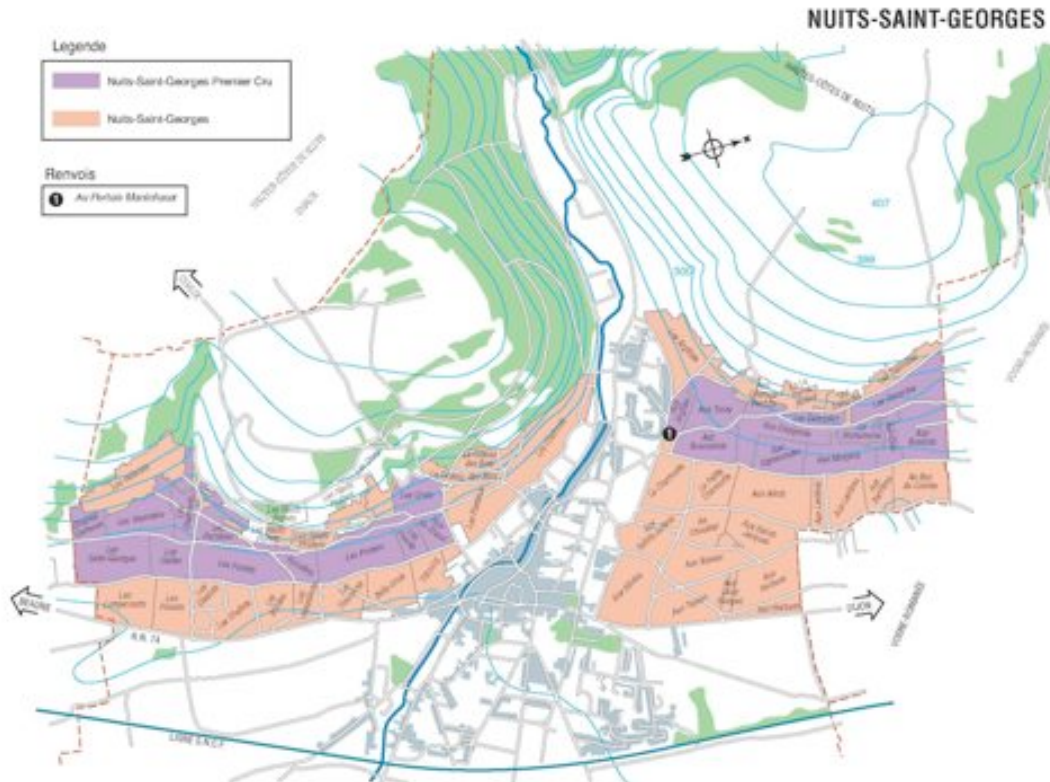


5. 2012 Nuits-St. Georges les Fleurières – J-J Confuron \$69 CLUB PRICE \$55.30

This is another wine we've featured in the club in previous vintages. It's a great example of how good a "simple" Village wine can be in the hands of an extraordinary producer, and it's the largest vineyard holding at Confuron – in fact the only parcel they have the produces enough wine to be included in the Club. (Our allocations of their other wines run from 12-36 bottles in some cases!)

My heart may be in Chambolle, but as I always preach, it's mostly about producer, producer, producer. I'm not the world's biggest Nuits-St. Georges fan (I find most of the wines too tannic, metallic and impenetrable for my tastes), but I love the wines Alain Meunier makes at J-J Confuron, no matter the appellation.

Les Fleurières is a vineyard on the southern side of the village of Nuits-St. Georges, generally considered to be the more tannic, structured, and earthy portion of the appellation. There are, however some sites in this south half that tend to be more refined and elegant, Les Fleurières being one of them. Confuron owns 3.03 acres here, one parcel now 50 years old and the other 25.



The vines are farmed organically, like everything at the domaine. The wine sees minimal intervention in the winery, with wild yeast fermentation in concrete tanks and a 13-16 month *élevage* in 50% new oak.

Alain's deft touch is in evidence in the ripe, fresh nose of black cherries, plums and earth, and roundness in the mouth that is not often found in young Nuits-St. Georges wines. There's a velvety texture lingering on through the persistent finish. Enjoy this one now or any time over the next 7+ years.



Alain Meunier & Sophie Confuron Meunier

6. **2012 Pommard Clos du Colombier** – Huber-Verdereau \$95

CLUB PRICE \$76

For the second vintage in a row, Thiébault Huber has allocated us one whole barrel, (300 bottles) of precious juice from his magnificent **Clos du Colombier**, a monopole vineyard in the heart of Pommard. (Monopole indicates there is only one owner – Thiébault owns the entirety of the site.)

The Clos du Colombier is a 2.14-acre walled-in vineyard, conveniently across the road from his house. (*Colombier* is French for dovecote, an ancient one of which occupies one corner of the property.) Situated smack in the middle of the village and between the two slopes that peel off on either side, the Clos is ideally and uniquely situated to produce Pommard of not only great richness but refinement and elegance as well.



Plowing by horse in the Clos du Colombier

Production in the Clos was down, from 18 barrels in 2011 to 7 barrels in 2012! (In 2013 and 2014 he was hit even harder, as the Clos produced only enough for 4-5 barrels in each of those years.)

Over the 150 years of its existence, none of the previous owners produced a wine solely from the Clos – historically all of the fruit from this site was sold off to various negociants. Thiébault's 2011 was the first release ever from this site.

If you still have the 2011 in your cellar, you might want to hang on to it along with the 2012 and start a vertical. You would be among the few folks on the planet to have it, for sure.

The 2012 shows a pungent nose of black fruits and violets, with big, rich flavors on the palate and a very refined finish. This is a Pommard of elegance. Very Pommard in the black fruits and earth profile, yet richer and more vibrant than a lot of "old-school" Pommard. I'd hold it for another 3-5 years to enjoy it at its best.

Next shipment in the Spring...

Thanks for joining us on our exploration of the great wines of Burgundy! Watch your email for information on our next Burgundy Express shipment coming in the spring, and for arrival and release information on all the yummy Burgs headed our way throughout the year. All the latest information is always available on our website:

www.scottpaul.com