

WINE News

In Burgundy, it's not just about great terroir, it's about great personal relationships.



NOVEMBER 17, 2014 FEATURES

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Burgundy, for the Season and for the Cellar

By Keith Wollenberg

It's November, and my thoughts turn to Burgundy. Oh, who am I kidding? My thoughts are on Burgundy 365 days a year. I love the place, the wines and the people. It is why I am in this business, which can be a joy as the people in it (both those making the wines and those selling them) tend to be interesting and passionate. Burgundy is particularly interesting, since the scale is often smaller and more human. When the winemaker is also the winegrower who works in the vineyards, and his or her involvement with the wines is intimate and personal, something

of their personality seems to be magically transmitted to the finished wine. There is no way I can list all of the wines we offer, as Burgundies come and go so quickly. That is the downside of working with these small growers. But our website KLWines.com has a current listing of our stock. As I write this, there are more than 350 different Burgundies in stock, with another 75 due in the next week. We are excited to bring you the beautiful 2012 vintage, which is rolling in quickly, and rolling out just as fast. Below are three of my top picks for the season.



For that special holiday dinner, nothing is better than a terrific bottle of Burgundy. Recently, when ten professionals met for a blind tasting, the **2011 Domaine Odoul-Coquard Chambolle-Musigny 1er Cru "Les Baudes"*** (\$74.99) bested several Grand Cru wines from much more well-known producers. This comes from a vineyard just below Bonnes Mares Grand Cru, from old plantings of a tiny-berried clone called Pinot Fin. It has lovely fruit, delicacy and power, and is open and approachable with just a little time in a decanter. It will be on my Christmas table, as it will pair with turkey, roast beef, or most any feast you are ready to tuck into.



If it is white you are looking for, try the **2011 Clos Reissier Pouilly-Fuissé*** (\$19.99), from a renowned vineyard that dates back to Roman times. After centuries of growing Chardonnay here, it is clear that this is a special place. This wine was fermented partly in used barrels and partly in tank, in order to preserve freshness, then aged 18 months on the lees to promote richness and mouthfeel. It was awarded a Gold by noted French wine publication Gilbert & Gaillard. The combination of bright fruit, a bit of toasty oak and mineral notes on the finish makes this absolutely classic for the appellation.



If you are looking for a special bottle of white Burgundy to celebrate with, do not miss the **2011 Domaine Bachelet-Ramonet Chassagne-Montrachet*** (\$44.99). Only a special purchase direct from the winery in France makes this price possible. This delicious and creamy, classic white Burgundy comes from four parcels below the village. Careful viticulture results in aromas of white flowers, a gentle minerality and a creamy richness in the mid-palate. It is aged in one-year-old oak barrels to promote richness without any heaviness.



Burgundy house call: with Benoit Girardin, Keith Wollenberg, and Yves Girardin.

Direct Imports from Château de la Charrière

By Keith Wollenberg

We have a number of exciting wines that recently arrived from **Château de la Charrière**. Yves Girardin, a 10th generation grower in Santenay (and brother of Vincent Girardin), acquired this property in 2003 and built a new winemaking facility. More recently, after completing technical training, Yves's son Benoit has joined him and now has taken the reins, bringing the family's history as winegrowers in Santenay up to 11 consecutive generations. In their new cellars they have improved quality impressively in the last few years, and we are excited to present their wines to you. These wines represent compelling values in Burgundy; they're delicious and, thanks to our direct relationship with the grower, affordable as well.

Yves started with three hectares of vines—his share of the family domaine. He has since built the domaine holdings up to 22 hectares (more than 55 acres of vines—a large holding, indeed). The following wines are all from the scarce and sought-after 2012 vintage. It was a concentrated and lovely year, with both density and charm. There were some problems with hail, but it was early enough that it affected quantity, not quality. Paradoxically, a vintage like this is bad for the growers—a small crop—but good for the wine drinker, because of the terrific concentration and focus of the wines.

We are importing four whites from the domaine. The **2012 Château de la Charrière Bourgogne Blanc*** (\$16.99) is from estate vineyards in Chassagne-Montrachet and Santenay, and is rich and charming, with an open and easy elegance about it.

Their **2012 Château de la Charrière Savigny-lès-Beaune Blanc "Vermots Dessus"*** (\$24.99) comes from a site on the slopes just above the village of Savigny, en route to Bouilland. It is always a

vineyard with terrific minerality, since it gets the cooler air descending from the Rhoin valley, as well as shallower topsoils. Charming and elegant, with bright minerality, attractive citrus and lemon notes, lots of complexity and a long and elegant finish, this is simply terrific and an amazing value in white Burgundy!

Their **2012 Château de la Charrière Santenay Blanc 1er Cru "Beauregard"*** (\$31.99) is a new acquisition of one of the family's historic vineyards in Santenay, from his brother Vincent who left the wine business to farm cereal grains west of Paris. It shows a very pretty thread of minerality running through it, which comes from the relatively shallow topsoil of this site, located above the more well-known Santenay Les Gravières. This has that combination of energy, focus and a relatively open texture on the palate that makes it both delightful and very easy to like.

The **2012 Château de la Charrière Chassagne-Montrachet "Les Champs Morjot"*** (\$39.95) is a terrific value in Chassagne-Montrachet, which is getting harder and harder to find as the world discovers Burgundy. What attracted me to this wine instantly was the white flower note on the nose and the rich mid-palate. It is poised and elegant, well balanced, and has a long and most attractive finish.

We also have five red wines from this domaine to offer you. We'll start by tempting you with two wines that may help you to understand that you *can* afford to drink Burgundy on a regular basis. We love to be able do so—why shouldn't you? The **2012 Château de la Charrière Bourgogne Rouge*** (\$16.99) comes from estate vineyards

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TOP BURGUNDY PICKS *For Your Holiday Party*

'Tis the season to gather with friends and family. But, in addition to those special wines for holiday dinners, you need delicious wines that will not empty your holiday shopping budget to feed those large gatherings. Here are some of our top selections from small growers that we have sought out in Burgundy.

A deliciously crisp, fruity Pinot Noir is a great match with a variety of foods. One of my favorites this year is the **2012 Domaine Anne & Arnaud Goisot Bourgogne Côtes d'Auxerre Pinot Noir*** (\$13.99). Don't let the low price fool you. This is estate-grown and hand-harvested Pinot Noir, the epitome of a bright, charming Pinot from this northerly region adjacent to Chablis. It is not a plush, rich style. Instead, it dances on your palate and each sip refreshes.



Of course, if it's a party you will need some whites and some bubbles. We have you covered there as well. The **2012 Domaine des Niaux Rhedon-Marin Mâcon-Villages Vieilles Vignes*** (\$12.99) is a balanced, well-made and wonderfully crisp and mineral-driven Mâcon, made from 100% Chardonnay, hand-harvested from his oldest vines, all over 45 years of age, planted by his grandfather. No oak here, just delicious, honest wine.

If you want something a bit richer, we have the **2011 Domaine Jean Pascal & Fils Bourgogne Blanc "Les Riaux"*** (\$19.99), which comes from a single estate vineyard in Puligny-Montrachet, just across the road from the winery. This offers richness and lovely Puligny character for a song.



If you are looking for a somewhat richer wine, but still do not want to break the bank, try the **2012 Domaine Desertaux-Ferrand Bourgogne Rouge** (\$15.99). Vincent Desertaux and his sister Christine make lovely wine from relatively unknown appellations, which keeps the price modest. Vincent won an award just a few years ago for being a top young winemaker in Burgundy. Try this wine and see why he did. It has attractive cherry and other red fruit notes, with a bright spiciness. Lots of wine for an extremely modest sum.



And let's not forget bubbles! Our top-selling sparkler from Burgundy is made in the *méthode traditionnelle*, and sells for a delightful price. Satisfy your guests with the **Louis Bouillot Crémant de Bourgogne "Perle d'Aurore" Brut Rosé** (\$14.99). Crowd-pleasing on the palate with a beautiful, pale rose hue, this is easy to like and hard to stop sipping.

— Keith Wollenberg

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just south of Chilly-lès-Maranges. It has a very pretty nose with notes of red cherries and raspberries. On the palate it shows quite a bit more weight and structure. This is, despite its modest price, a concentrated and serious wine that still manages to remain charming and most attractive in character.

Their **2012 Château de la Charrière Hautes-Côtes-de-Beaune*** (\$17.99) comes from vines aged from 50 to 60 years old, and is also very charming in nature, with fine and elegant fruit. It is less overt and more focused on the palate than the Bourgogne Rouge. There is a core of terrific energy here, and a very pretty finish. If you like your Burgundies a bit more subtle and bright, this is for you. Just trust me, this is a wine you will drink and be hard-pressed to believe it does not cost a good deal more than it actually does.

We also have the **2012 Château de la Charrière Santenay 1er Cru "Clos Rousseau"*** (\$27.99), from one of the best vineyards in the commune. This is a rich and attractive wine, with lovely fruit aromatics and flavors that carry the mid-palate through the long

finish. It has great density and shows a real sense of place. I think this may be the best vintage I have tasted of this wine. The **2012 Château de la Charrière Beaune "Vieilles Vignes"*** (\$21.99) is much more limited in production this year, since one of their parcels, in Beaune Prévoles, was totally wiped out by hail damage. Such is the life of a Burgundian winegrower. This has a focused and lovely entry, with elegance and poise. On the finish it shows both structure and a steelier core than it first shows. This can be drunk now or cellared for later enjoyment.

The **2012 Château de la Charrière Beaune 1er Cru "Vignes Franches"*** (\$32.99) is from one of my favorite Premier Cru vineyards in Beaune, Les Vignes Franches. It is located adjacent to and north of the famous Beaune Clos des Mouches. The topsoil is shallow and the potential very high here. In 2012, Clos des Mouches lost 90% of its crop, while this vineyard had only a 20% loss. Such are the vagaries of hail. This is flat-out superb wine. It has an amazing nose with fine and elegant aromas, followed by lots of very, very fine and well-robed tannins and a core of delicious cherry fruit. This impressive wine offers a value so compelling it is hard to believe.

OLD BURGUNDY *As Scarce as Hen's Teeth*

One of the more difficult categories of wine that we source is old Burgundy. We find a bottle here, or a case there, but seldom in much quantity. We receive some for auction, but those tend to be rarities from a handful of the best-known domaines, and they sell at terrific premiums. So, we went to Burgundy and talked with producers to see what we could find. What we found is exciting.



2005 Domaine Moillard Vosne-Romanée 1er Cru “Malconsorts”* (\$74.99) Knowledgeable commentators will rank Malconsorts as one of the three best Premier Cru vineyards in all of Burgundy, along with Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses and Gevrey-Chambertin Clos Saint-Jacques. The Thomas-Moillard family was once the largest landholder in this vineyard. Because of French inheritance law, however, their holding was sold, and the vines are now controlled by Domaines Dujac and de Montille. If you can lay hands on either, it will cost you hundreds of dollars per bottle. We found this in the cellars of Moillard and had it delivered to our door in perfect condition. When the present supply sells, there will be no more to be had.

It's lovely and complex on the palate, with substantial structure, a note of unsweetened cocoa, and very pretty, bright red fruit. As it opens, it gains more mid-palate weight and richness, showing sweet, attractive fruit robed in a more serious veil of youthful structure and tannin. As is often

Another great find we made in the cellars of Burgundy is the **2009 François Carillon Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru “Les Chenevottes”* (\$59.99)**. This comes from a vineyard that is relatively flat, and just across the road from the Grands Crus. I feel that while this wine always displays a fine and mineral-driven texture, it needs a few more years after the vintage to develop. I like it particularly well in riper vintages, such as 2009, so I am excited to offer this wine, which is delicious and ready to drink now. Since they have just a miniscule .07 hectares of vines here, this is one of their rarer wines, and is rarely seen in the U.S.

— Keith Wollenberg



Grand Burgundy Tasting in all K&L Stores

Join us on **Saturday, November 22**, for our annual **Grand Burgundy Tasting** in all three retail locations. Tentatively featuring 10-12 wines, including 3-4 Grand Crus, this is a tasting not to be missed! In **San Francisco**, noon to 3pm; in **Redwood City**, 1pm to 4pm; in **Hollywood**, 4:30pm to 6pm. All tickets are \$40 per person. Attendance is strictly limited and pre-purchase will secure you one of the scarce spots.

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