

THE MAGICAL MUSIGNY OF JACQUES-FRÉDÉRIC MUGNIER



The sun setting behind Petits Musigny, with the ridge on the horizon the start of Grand Musigny.

Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier's Chateau de Chambolle-Musigny is the second largest holder of vines in the vineyard of Musigny (behind those of the Comte de Vogüé), which would make it a very important Burgundy domaine even if its wines were not very good. However, the wines are also amongst the very greatest treasures to be found in all of Burgundy, and none is better in the fine Mugnier lineup than their magical bottling of Musigny. For such an important domaine, which in addition to its 1.37 hectares of vines in Musigny proper, also possesses significant holdings in Bonnes-Mares, Chambolle-Musigny premier crus Les Amoureuses and Les Fuées, as well as a monopole on the fine Nuits St. Georges premier cru of the Clos de la Maréchale, the history of the Mugnier family in Chambolle-Musigny does not go back particular far into the past (at least by Burgundian standards), as the family first bought its vineyards in the last decades of nineteenth century. Jacques-Frédéric's great-great-grandfather, Frédéric Mugnier, had been a merchant of spirits in Dijon in the middle of the nineteenth century, and as his business in Dijon prospered, he was able to buy his parcels of vines in Chambolle-Musigny and Nuits St. Georges during the nadir in fortunes of the area brought about by the phylloxera epidemic. Frédéric Mugnier purchased several parcels from 1860 to 1900, mostly from the Marey-Monge family of Vosne-Romanée, slowly piecing together an estate with vineyard holdings in Chambolle-Musigny and the Clos Vougeot. The family

was to retain the plot in Clos Vougeot until the late 1970s. In 1902 the Mugnier family added the entire Clos de la Maréchale in Nuits St. Georges.

For the first four generations, the Mugnier family was content to pursue their other businesses and allow an agent to run their property in Chambolle-Musigny, Nuits St. Georges and Clos Vougeot. The Mugniers added to their vineyard holdings in the area when they bought the Château de Chambolle-Musigny in 1889 (also from the Marey-Monge family), though the house was used primarily as an occasional retreat from the city for the family for many, many years to come, with no one from the Mugnier family settling down in Chambolle until today's proprietor, Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier returned to Chambolle from overseas in 1984. As he relates, "my family were people from the city" so it is not surprising that "I am the first one to live permanently in this house." During the 1920s, the family business was run by five grandsons of Frédéric Mugnier (who had passed away in 1911), with James Mugnier officially in charge of the wine side of the business and the vineyards. Of these five grandsons, only one, Jacques Mugnier, ever married and had children, and it is from this grandson of Frédéric Mugnier that today's proprietor, Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier is related. The production was still sold off in its entirety to négociants at this time, as it had been since the Mugniers' original purchase, and as Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier observes, "James Mugnier, despite being specifically in charge of the vineyards and winery at this time, certainly would not have referred to himself as a vigneron." The family at this time would have small quantities of wines bottled for themselves from their production, but there were no wines made commercially available under the labels of either the Château de Chambolle-Musigny or the Mugnier family name and the remainder of their share of the production was sold off in cask. After World War II, the Mugnier family signed a long term contract with the négociant firm of Joseph Faiveley in Nuits St. Georges to manage their vineyards and buy their grape production- though in the early 1950s a small amount of wine was bottled and sold under the Mugnier label for the first time.

Around the same time that the Mugniers were reaching an agreement with the Faiveleys to manage their vineyards, the family was also forced to give up part of their choicest parcels as well, due to the wishes of another of the five Mugnier grandsons, Charles Mugnier. Charles was one of the bachelor Mugniers, and throughout his life he had a romantic liaison with the most famous diva of the era at the Dijon Opera, Madame Adrien. Upon Charles Mugnier's passing in 1944, he sent shock waves through the family by bequeathing his portion of the family holdings in Les Amoureuses, Bonnes-Mares and Musigny to Madame Adrien. The Mugnier family sought in vain to reach a financial arrangement with Madame Adrien so that they could keep the family vineyards intact, but she wanted her vineyards, and from 1947 onwards, her wines were made by the négociant firm of Joseph Drouhin in Beaune. Eventually, in 1961, Robert Drouhin eventually purchased these parcels from Madame Adrien for his family domaine. It was at this time that the father of today's proprietor, also named Jacques-Frédéric took control of the management of the family estate. However, Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier had a degree in law and pursued a career in finance, so that his Paris-based business took him around the globe and the day to day affairs of the Mugnier vineyards was overseen by the Faiveleys.

In 1977, Jacques-Frédéric Sr. expressed his desire to manage the family's vineyard holdings for himself, though Maison Faiveley was loathe to give up the production from these important Mugnier parcels. What followed was a lot of (probably quite contentious) negotiating, for French laws were decidedly tilted in the favor of the firm of Faiveley in terms of being able to retain their access to the vineyards for many years to come. In the end a painful compromise had to be reached between the two parties that handed over the Mugnier's fine parcel of Clos Vougeot to Faiveley and continued the right of the firm to exploit the Clos de la Maréchale up through the 2003 vintage. However bitter the pill was to swallow of the loss of the Clos Vougeot parcel, it at least allowed the Mugnier family to start to manage their own vineyards and cellars again. At this time, Jacques-Frédéric Sr. was still running his small banking firm in Paris, and his son, Jacques-Frédéric Jr. was pursuing a career as an engineer overseas, so a contract was signed with Bernard Clair in 1978 to run the property on a day to day basis; he also co-owned and managed his own family estate of Clair-Daü at this time. A very small quantity of wine was bottled during these vintages and retained for the Mugnier family's cellars, with the rest still be sold off to négociants. Jacques-Frédéric Sr. passed away in 1980, though his son, Jacques-Frédéric continued his engineering career until 1984, when he decided to take a break and returned to Chambolle-Musigny for what he thought would be a brief sabbatical. He was quickly taken with the life in Chambolle, and settled in to the life of a (part-time) vigneron.

The first commercial release of the Mugnier wines under their own Château de Chambolle-Musigny label was in 1985, which was also the first vintage for Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier to make the wines at the estate. Jacques-Frédéric has started out his career outside of the world of wine, working for many years as an engineer in the oil industry, before taking the aforementioned break from the oil business and returning to the family home in Chambolle-Musigny. Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier took a six month course in oenology at the Lycée Viticole immediately upon his arrival in Chambolle, and was soon working alongside Monsieur Clair in the cellars and fashioning his first vintage in 1985. However, Monsieur Mugnier was not content simply to run his domaine full-time, as he still had one other life long dream to pursue, and so he earned a pilot's license as well during this time and by 1988, he was flying as a commercial pilot for one of France's large airlines three days a week. One can imagine the pilot coming on the PA system in those days and saying "ladies and gentlemen, please make sure that your seats are in the upright position, that your trays have been put back and that you have finished decanting your Chambolle "les Fuées" prior to take off." For the next ten years Monsieur Mugnier would continue to fly full-time, while running the family domaine during his days off, with the vineyards looked after by growers on a contractual basis.

Monsieur Mugnier retired as a commercial pilot in 1996 and returned full-time to the domaine in Chambolle in time to oversee the entire 1997 vintage. The domaine's wines, which had always been very good since the inaugural vintage of 1985, seemed to move up another notch on the quality hierarchy once Monsieur Mugnier was able to spend all of his time at the estate. Amongst the responsibilities that he assumed once he was full-time at the domaine was to more closely oversee his own viticulture, with

impressive results. Speaking with him a few years after his return to the domaine on a full-time basis, I asked him what had been the most important changes he had instituted once he was there everyday. He observed that the rigor of the viticultural practices in the vineyards, as well as the evolution in his philosophy regarding how to best care for his vines had changed notably once he was no longer flying commercial airliners, though he was quick to point out that some of this was due to his having more time to devote to the farming aspects of running the domaine, and part of the changes were in unison with a growing awareness amongst vignerons up and down the Côte d'Or about how their viticultural practices fit in with the changes of the global environment in the last twenty years. As he observed at the time, "Burgundy's vineyards today are probably the best-cared for and the healthiest that they have ever been in the history of the region."

Amongst the changes that have been implemented in the Mugnier vineyards over the course of Freddy Mugnier's career here, some of the most important have been the discontinuance of the use of chemical fertilizers in 1986, abolishing the use of herbicides in 1990 and stopping the use of insecticides in 1995. He also began to routinely green harvest starting with the 1999 vintage, and in 2002 he began to experiment with training the vines differently, pruning them with a long cane in the Guyot method. He was very pleased with how the vines responded to this and it became general practice in all of his vineyards in 2004. However, he has also started to train his young vines differently from his old vines, which are now trained in the Cordon de Royal style, rather than Guyot in their early years, so as to restrain a bit of their vigor. Jacques-Frédéric has also discontinued replanting parcels in the vineyards, and now only replaces individual vines as they die. The last replanted parcel was done in 1997, and subsequently, all of the Mugnier parcels have been maintained intact and only individual vines have been put in as they are needed. Within the Mugnier's parcel of Musigny, all of the plantations date from between 1940 and 1963, so that the youngest vines here are now forty-six years of age and the oldest soon to be closing in on their 70th birthday.

The Mugnier family's parcels of Musigny lie right in the heart of the vineyard at its most prime location. Keep in mind that with 1.14 hectares, the Mugniers have a significant part of the vineyard, as all of Musigny only comprises 10.86 hectares, of which the Comte de Vogüé owns two-thirds. There are two Mugnier parcels of vines, both of course in Grand Musigny, as Petits Musigny is all owned by the Comte de Vogüé. The two Mugnier parcels sandwich in the parcel owned by Joseph Drouhin, not surprisingly, as the Drouhins attained their Chambolle vineyards through the auspices of Charles Mugnier and Madame Adrien. In this section of the vineyard, the slope of the vineyard rises up a bit higher along the hillside, with the crowning woods pushed further back from the dirt road behind the Clos Vougeot that runs along the base of the vineyard. The inclination of the slope here is a bit more severe than in Petits Musigny (one can sense this from looking at the horizon in the picture of Petits Musigny above), with a grade of between ten and fourteen percent, and the exposition is perfectly oriented towards the southeast. In contrast, Petits Musigny is a touch flatter than this section of Grand Musigny, with a grade of about eight to ten percent, and the orientation swinging around slightly more towards the south. There is also a slightly higher percentage of limestone in the soil of Grand Musigny, making the Mugnier parcels just about perfect.

Today, Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier produces about three hundred cases of Musigny per year. As the notes below will show, in the past he has made on three occasions a special Vieilles Vignes bottling of Musigny, which was produced in the vintages of 1986, 1988 and 1989. At that time, this was made from the plot of vines that were planted in the 1940s. The more northerly of the two Mugnier parcels includes the old vines. Monsieur Mugnier discontinued the practice of making this cuvée after the 1989 vintage, and subsequent vintages have only seen a single Mugnier Musigny bottling. The 1986 vintage of the Vieilles Vignes was aged in about a third new oak, while in both 1988 and 1989 there were only two barrels of this cuvée produced, of which one barrel was new in each vintage. To my mind Monsieur Mugnier's decision to discontinue the old vine cuvée after the 1989 vintage was a prudent course of action, as Musigny is after all, Musigny, and there is really no reason to try and improve upon it by bottling the old vines separately. With the notes on the old vine bottlings that follow, it is interesting that I have preferred the regular bottling over the Vieilles Vignes in the last few years, though certainly when the two bottlings were younger, I preferred the old vines. However, as the Vieilles Vignes bottling was produced in very limited quantities, and consequently I have not seen a bottle of any of the three vintages since I attended a dinner in New York at Restaurant Montrachet with Monsieur Mugnier in 2003.

While the entire portfolio of wines produced by Domaine Mugnier are outstanding, from the superb Chambolle AC all the way up through the premier crus to the two grand crus of Bonnes-Mares and Musigny, this feature focuses solely on the queen of the cellar, the domaine's Musigny. I remember very well Monsieur Mugnier's metaphor for describing the various wines at the top of his hierarchy when we were tasting in the cellars a few years ago, when he described the Les Amoureuses as being "a wine of the air" and the Bonnes-Mares as "a wine of the earth", while the Musigny possessed the finest attributes of both. And indeed it is a complete and utterly compelling wine of enormous depth, complexity and potential for longevity. The house style of the Mugnier Musigny is very true to the terroir of the vineyard, with an emphasis placed on transparency and allowing the soil tones to clearly shine through. In this regard, today the wine is raised in a fairly low percentage of new oak (generally about twenty percent at the present time for the Musigny), so as to allow for profound base of soil nuance found in Musigny to shine front and center in the domaine's example. Indeed, Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier has become a style leader in one aspect of his winemaking and élevage in the last few years, as he has been a pioneer in purchasing and using one and two year-old barrels for the aging of his wines, as he very much likes the more gentle style of oxygen exchange that the wines go through in these slightly older barrels. His results have been stellar since he began to use more and more "one and two wine" barrels, and many neighboring vignerons have taken notice and begun to emulate Monsieur Mugnier's approach.

I like to think that there have been perceptible epochs of style evolution of the Mugnier Musigny since Jacques-Frédéric first returned to the domaine and produced his first vintage in 1985. The first vintages, saw a bit more new oak than what is used today, as the percentage of new oak used for the Musigny in those early years was around thirty

percent. Additionally, as noted above, the domaine produced two distinct cuvées of Musigny in three of these early years, with a regular bottling and an old vine bottling labeled as Musigny “Vieilles Vignes”. I think the bottling of the older vines on their own during this stretch tended to produce a more red fruity, ethereal style of Musigny for the regular bottling, while the old vine cuvée was always more black fruity and a bit more sappy in style. These were very good wines in this era, but it is my impression that they did not deliver quite the same exhilarating base of Musigny terroir as is found routinely in the wines today. In general these vintages tended to be a bit more red fruity out of the blocks than later vintages of the Musigny, and while very good, the current renditions of Mugnier Musigny really do tower above these early vintages. However, Monsieur Mugnier tended to be fine-tuning his vinification techniques in the cellar during this period, so generalities about this era are not particularly accurate on a vintage by vintage basis. For example, commencing with the 1989 vintage, the wines began to see a bit of pre-fermentation maceration, as well as a bit higher fermentation temperature to try and extract a bit more out of the must.

This initial period ended with the 1990 vintage, when the old vine cuvée was discontinued and only a single bottling of Musigny was produced by the domaine. I would say that this second stage of the evolution of style of the Mugnier Musigny lasted from 1990 to 1995, and was marked by a more powerful style of Musigny from the 1985 to 1989 era, with a bit more extraction leading to more black fruity, more soil-driven versions of Musigny than the first few vintages of Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier’s career. This was a period when Monsieur Mugnier used a bit more new oak for his grand crus as well, with the Musigny probably aged in about forty percent new wood during this stretch of vintages. Interestingly, having tasted one very old and profound vintage of Mugnier Musigny, the 1937, I would suggest that the style of the wines from this period very much reflects the style of Musigny that was produced here back in the 1930s, as even when tasted in 2006, the 1937 Musigny was still quite black fruity, smoky and soil-driven, with a fair bit of tannin and plenty of life ahead of it. And indeed, based on this most recent tasting of the Mugnier Musignys, the stretch of vintages from 1990 to 1995 remain quite young wines for the most part (particularly in the more structured vintages such as 1990, 1993 and 1995), with the power one expects from Musigny, but perhaps not quite the refined perfume and elegance for which the vineyard is also quite famous. I would term this epoch of Musigny at Domaine Mugnier the “Musigny of the earth” period, with the wines more dominated by their structural elements than is the case with later vintages.

The third stylistic period of Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier’s illustrious career (I should reiterate that this is my impression, and I have little doubt that Monsieur Mugnier might clearly disagree with me in at least some of this analysis- we will find out when I see him in a couple of weeks in Chambolle) really starts with the 1996 vintage and has progressed dramatically over the most recent vintages of his Musigny. The 1996 is the first vintage where I can clearly find both “the air and the earth” in his rendition of Musigny, and as the years have unfolded with him full-time in Chambolle, the progress in the vineyards and in the cellars can be felt with each subsequent magical vintage of Musigny. During this period, to go along with greater control in the vineyards and vines that continue to get older, Monsieur Mugnier also began to lower again the amount of

new oak that he used for his wines, so that now the grand crus are raised in about twenty percent new oak, and the premier crus even a bit less. To my mind it is not a coincidence that the decrease in the percentage of new oak in the Mugnier wines has coincided with a steady climb up in quality from their already very high level to the very pinnacle of Burgundy. After all, working with some of the most beautiful and profound terroirs in the world that are found in Chambolle-Musigny and Nuits St. Georges, what is the potential difficulty with reducing the influence of the new oak in the finished wines and allowing the soils to play a more prominent role?

While this has been a gradual evolution in style, since day one the overarching goal for Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier has been to produce wines that most beautifully capture the underlying beauty of the soils of Chambolle-Musigny and, since 2004, Nuits St. Georges, and this progression has reached an uncanny level of quality in the last several vintages. I suspect that several things have played important roles in the further refinement and greater expression of terroir in the Mugnier Musigny bottling in the last several vintages. As touched on above, the quality of the viticultural practices have moved up exponentially since Monsieur Mugnier retired from flying, and the increased health, vigor and natural setting of his vines can very much be sensed in the wines today. Secondly, as Jacques-Frédéric has matured as a winemaker, he has begun to really hone in on the style that he likes in his wines, with the wines becoming better and better with each passing vintage. As he notes, “this is simply logical- one has an idea and pursues it to see how the wine will be improved, and over time one adopts new ideas and continues to refine the approach in the cellars to more closely approach the mental vision one has of how the wine should be.”

In the continued improvement that one sees with each passing vintage of Musigny in the Mugnier cellars, partly due to the “dialing down” of the percentage of new oak in use in the cellars and the increased reliance on more one, two and three year-old barrels has had a dramatic effect on the signature of soil in the wines and the greater purity of the expression of fruit as well. One of the constant refrains that one hears when discussing the use of new oak with vigneron in Burgundy is that “grand crus have the material to support the new oak with ease, so it is logical to use more new oak for these wines.” It is my distinct impression that much of this philosophy dates back a generation to the dramatic success that Henri Mayer had with his wines raised in one hundred percent new oak, and that very real success of Monsieur Mayer dating from 1978 or so onwards continues in many ways to color the debate today. Of course, what is equally germane is the question of whether or not the grand crus are actually improved by the higher percentage of new oak in which they are raised. With the continued climb up in quality of the wines of Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier, which has been duly noted amongst most of the vigneron in Burgundy and is frequently commented upon in the last few years (both in Burgundy and amongst Burgundy lovers around the globe), since Monsieur Mugnier has begun to champion older oak as his preferred vessel for the elevation of his wines, the debate about the use of new oak in Burgundy has taken on a new dynamic that is very much reflective of the ringing success at this estate in the last several years. It would not surprise me in the least that a generation from now, with new oak then fully out of fashion and the terroir of Burgundy more brilliantly on display in the

region's wines, that the name of Monsieur Mugnier will be spoken of with the same reverential tones as is today used for Monsieur Mayer, based on the very important strides that Jacques-Frédéric has taken with his more "sympathique" use of wood to highlight the soil characteristics of his wines.



Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier in his office on a cold, drear February morning.

The following wines for the most part were tasted at an extraordinary evening organized by Chet Kern here in New York, who put together a lineup of seventeen vintages of Mugnier Musigny dating from the 2006 back to the 1988. I have augmented this with notes from my files of several other vintages of the domaine's Musigny that were not represented at the tasting, but a few of these notes date back as far as 2003, when I attended a dinner with Monsieur Mugnier that featured more mature vintages of his Musigny. Where the notes are older, I have made reference to their date in the text, but this being Musigny after all, I do not think that even the older notes will be found to be inaccurate today. As one will see while perusing through the tasting notes, Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier's Musigny is one of the greatest wines to be found in all of Burgundy, and it is a great treat to witness this wine getting better and better with each passing vintage. It is a beautiful and very classic expression of the magical terroir of Musigny. If I were forced to only drink one red wine, Musigny would be the one.

2007 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 2007 Mugnier Musigny is simply magical, as it offers up a celestial bouquet of red and black cherries, pomegranate, blood orange, woodsmoke, coffee, cocoa, brilliant soil elements, sweet herbs and again, dried violets in the upper register. On the

palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and impeccably balanced, with a velvety palate impression tied to great focus and purity. The core of the wine is rock solid and very sappy, and the wine delivers flawless focus and intensity of flavor on the very long, complex and modestly tannic finish. With tangy acids and great grip, this is a dynamite example of the vintage. As Monsieur Mugnier chuckled (while I was jumping up and down in enthusiasm), “Granted, this may not be an intellectual wine, but perhaps it can be said to be very spiritual in this vintage.” Amen. 2016-2050. **96+**.

2006 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

I had expected the 2006 Musigny to be even more closed than it showed at our tasting in October, and while this wine remains almost painfully young and primary, its ultimate potential is quite clearly outstanding. The youthful and very deep nose offers up a lovely mix of black cherries, pomegranate, a touch of balsam bough, a great complex base of soil and a bit of espresso. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very powerfully styled, with ripe, substantial tannins, good acids and a very long, very closed finish. This wine will be stunning in the fullness of time and I may well be underrating it a bit right now, but in this closed stage, it seems to make sense to err on the side of caution. 20202-2075+. **95+**.

2005 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

Tasting the magical 2005 Burgundies for the first time out of barrel in November of 2006, the two wines that stood at my own personal hierarchy at that time were Romanée-Conti and the Mugnier Musigny. I was fully prepared for this wine to be hermetically sealed at this point in time, but it was not the case and this great young wine showed beautifully. The bouquet soars from the glass in a brilliant mélange of red and black cherries, blood orange, mustard seed, a great base of iron soil tones, woodsmoke, violets and raw cocoa. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and very, very pure, with a rock solid core of fruit, brilliant soil inflection, ripe tannins, tangy acids and remarkable grip and purity on the endless finish. This is very, very young, and very, very good. 2025-2100. **99**.

2004 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

This was showing very well in October, with its pyrazine elements very faint and fading nicely into the emerging layers of complexity on both the nose and palate. In fact, this showed so well that several tasters around the table commented that “if this is what the best 2004 Burgundies are going to be like, I am going back out shopping for this vintage!” The nose is really very complex and attractive, as it offers up scents of red and black cherries, vinesmoke, espresso, celery seed, a complex base of soil, mustard seed and a touch of orange zest in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and very complex, with beautiful soil inflection, moderate tannins and really lovely length and grip on the modestly tannic and tangy finish. This is aging very gracefully and will be a dynamite bottle in another five or six years. 2014-2040. **93+**.

2003 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

I vividly recall Freddy Mugnier discussing his approach to making the 2003 vintage, as he eschewed adding any acidity to the wine during the fermentation, preferring to make the 2003 in the mode that nature provided with the vintage’s conditions during the growing season. The results at age six are pretty tasty, as the wine offers up a pretty, very sappy nose of black cherries, cassis, dark chocolate, smoke, herb tones and a touch of oak. With extended aeration the wine showed just a hint of raisin in

its fruit component, but all in all, this is an admirably fresh 2003. On the palate the wine is full, fat and dark chocolaty, with very soft acids, modest tannins and good length on the finish. Due to the low acids of '03, there is just a touch of heaviness on the backend here that suggests this wine will be most tasty if drunk in its youth. 2009-2020. **87.**

2002 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 2002 Musigny showed very well at our tasting and was a classic example of this vintage. The beautiful nose jumps from the glass in a blaze of red and black cherries, blood orange, a touch of strawberry, roses, coffee and a gentle topnote of mustard seed. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and tangy, with modest tannins, good grip and fine length on the finish that closes with a distinct note of pinot beetroot. This is a beautiful bottle of pinot noir, but unless it develops more of a signature of soil with further bottle age, it will never rank amongst the most interesting recent vintages of Mugnier Musigny. 2009-2040. **93.**

2001 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 2001 Mugnier Musigny is quite closed today, but with all of its constituent components readily available for inspection and its ultimate quality quite easy to discern. The nose is deep and very beautiful in its purity and nascent complexity, as it wafts from the glass in scents of red plums, black cherries, a touch of blood orange, coffee, lovely soil tones, fresh herbs and just a hint of oak. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and quite sappy at the core, with ripe, well-integrated tannins, impeccable balance and focus, bright acids and outstanding grip on the very long finish. This is already a beautiful glass of wine, even in its youthful state, but it is really a waste of bottles to be opening it now, as there are so many more layers to pile on here as the wine evolves with further bottle age. 2018-2060. **95+.**

2000 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 2000 Musigny from Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier has been delightful since the day it was released, and was showing very well indeed at our October tasting. In the context of all these surrounding vintages of Mugnier Musigny, the ripeness of the 2000 showed a bit more prominently than I think it would if drunk on its own, but this is a lovely bottle for drinking over the next couple of decades. The bouquet offers up a beautiful blend of red cherries, mustard seed, plums, coffee, *sous bois*, a bit of orange zest, lovely soil tones and a bit of fresh herbs in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, ripe, broad and succulent, with just a touch of tannin, lovely focus and balance and just a touch of pinot weediness perking up on the long, velvety finish. A lovely example of this underrated vintage. 2009-2025. **92.**

1999 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 1999 Musigny was very closed down when first poured at our most recent tasting, but it blossomed beautifully with a bit of air and I would have loved to have seen it spend thirty minutes in decanter before it was served. The bouquet is very deep, very pure and perfumed, as it delivers a complex and sappy blend of red and black cherries, cocoa, a touch of gamebird, complex soil tones, blood orange, incipient notes of *sous bois* and espresso. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep, pure and very sappy, with ripe tannins, sound acids and great length and grip on the youthfully closed, but intensely flavored finish. With a bit more bottle age, this will be superb. 2016-2060, **97.**

1998 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

I have had the good fortune to drink the 1998 Mugnier Musigny three or four times in the last year, and each time the wine has shown beautifully. This most recent bottle at our tasting in October was not decanted, so it may have shown a little less generously as a result. The bouquet is deep, complex and is developing beautiful secondary elements in its mélange of red and black cherries, roses, woodsmoke, coffee, herbs, a touch of celery seed and a great base of Musigny's iron-like soil tones. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep, pure and very complex, with great intensity of flavor, outstanding mid-palate depth, modest tannins and great length and grip on a complex finish that closes with a very beguiling note of sappy fruit. A beautiful wine that is only a few years away from primetime drinking. 2012-2040. **94+**.

1997 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

1996 and 1997 marked a point of transition for Monsieur Mugnier, and the 1997 shows very strongly his full-time capacity at the domaine. This is a very ripe and buxom vintage, with the best wines quite fruit-driven and plump, and the less successful examples rather over the top, pruney and often rather green as well. The 1997 Mugnier Musigny is one of the best '97s I have tasted in the last several years, as the wine offers up admirable purity in its aromatic mélange of red cherries, baked plums, chocolate, herbs, discreet soil tones and a lovely topnote of roses. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, plush and a bit fruit-driven by the high standards of Musigny, but with lovely balance and a poised, long and opulent finish. This is of course a rather riper style of Musigny, but it is a very tasty bottle and a notable success in this vintage. 2009-2020. **89**.

1996 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

I was not prepared for the 1996 Mugnier Musigny to show as brilliantly as it did at our tasting, but it is clearly now beginning to blossom and underneath its structural elements there are copious amounts of sappy fruit that were not always readily apparent. The classic and magical nose offers up a fine mélange of cherries, strawberries, beetroot, mustard seed, striking iron-like soil tones, coffee, cocoa, blood orange and forest floor. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied, pure and very, very transparent, with modest tannins, zesty acids and simply brilliant length on the tangy finish that closes with impressively sweet, sappy fruit. This is a brilliant bottle of Musigny in the making. 2015-2065. **96+**.

1995 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 1995 Mugnier Musigny is a very classically structured example of this vintage, with a bit of angularity still on the palate from firm tannins, but with a very nice core of sweet fruit that augurs well for its eventual resolution and blossoming. The bouquet offers up a black fruity nose of black cherries, baked dark berries, a touch of tar, *sous bois*, nice spice tones, bonfires, mustard seed, coffee and soil. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and fairly powerful in style, with a sweet core of fruit in reserve, excellent complexity, a fair bit of tannin and fine length and grip on the finish. This clearly still needs several more years of cellaring to really emerge from its structural elements, and it will never be the most elegant vintage of Mugnier Musigny, but this still will deliver at its apogee a complex and classy wine that is true to its *terroir*. 2014-2035. **92+**.

1993 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

In the past I had been a tad critical of this wine, which I had always ranked as very good, but not quite in the league of the Musignys that Monsieur Mugnier has fashioned since 1998. The wine had always seemed just a bit dense to me on both the nose and palate in the past, but it was of course a very closed wine and one could hope for even more promise with cellaring. It had been at least five or six years since I last tasted this wine, and the ensuing years have been very good to it, with the wine now beginning to blossom beautifully on both the nose and palate. This is still quite a black fruity vintage of Mugnier Musigny, but the nose now offers up an outstanding blend of black cherries, a touch of sweet, dark berry, espresso, violets, earth and a touch of cigar smoke in the upper register. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and fairly powerful in profile, but now with an overt sappiness at the core, modest tannins, great, snappy acids and superb length and grip on the complex and soil-driven finish. Clearly I have underrated this wine in the past, and it may well be that at its apogee it will perform like a modern day version of the 1937. 2016-2075. **94+**.

1992 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

My note on the 1992 Mugnier Musigny goes back a few years, and given how well so many other 1992 grand crus have developed in the last several years, this note may well be a tad conservative for the quality of the wine today. The bouquet offers up a complex and very pretty mélange of red cherries, red plums, a touch of beetroot, celery seed, vinesmoke and a lovely base of complex soil tones. On the palate the wine is medium-full, plush and delivers lovely sweetness on the attack, with solid mid-palate depth, melting tannins, sound acids and good length and grip on the ever so slightly four-square finish. It would not surprise me in the least to find that this wine has really blossomed in the last few years and is even better than when I last tasted it in 2003. 2003-2016+? **88+?**

1991 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

As many Burgundy lovers know, 1991 was a very hard vintage in Chambolle-Musigny, as hail ripped through the village, causing serious crop loss and damaging the vines' ability to continue photosynthesis for the remainder of the season. The results were some very atypical Chambolles in 1991- in fact atypical enough that it is really quite accurate to say that 1991 is not a very good year in Chambolle and the wines are nowhere near as good in this year as are the 1992s in the commune. The 1991 Mugnier Musigny is very typical of the vintage in Chambolle, as it offers up a slight oxidative note in its aromatic mélange of dark berries, a touch of blood orange, tar, damp earth, coffee grounds and spit-roasted game. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, tarry and black fruity, with good complexity, some dry tannins and a very smoky, moderately long finish. This is not a bad wine, given all of the depredations in this vintage in Chambolle, but I would drink it up over the next decade, as it will probably begin to maderize over the next several years. 2009-2020+? **86**.

1990 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

This wine was poured without decanting, and for the first ten minutes, it seriously looked like it would be a remarkably fresh 1990, but with extended air it began to get just a touch heavy-handed. The nose is very ripe, as it offers up scents of black cherries, black plums, dark chocolate, damp earth, herb tones and woodsmoke. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, plump and quite fresh on the attack, with a thick core of fruit, a bit of firm

tannin and a very long, ever so slightly pruney finish. This is remarkably deep-pitched for a Mugnier Musigny, but in the context of the vintage, this is a pretty fresh example. Not a bad wine, but there are many other recent vintages of Mugnier Musigny that I would prefer to have in my cellar. 2009-2030+. **89.**

1989 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier's "regular" Musigny from 1989 was drinking beautifully in October and really is one of the freshest 1989s I have tasted this year. The bouquet offers up a lovely blend of red cherries, plums, beetroot, woodsmoke, herbs, gentle notes of gamebirds, dried roses, *sous bois* and a very gentle topnote of nutskins. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, plush and *à point*, with just a wisp of remaining tannin, lovely complexity and balance and very good length and grip on the velvety finish. Just a lovely bottle of Musigny at its zenith. 2009-2025+. **92.**

1989 Musigny "Vieilles Vignes"- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 1989 Vieilles Vignes was last tasted in 2003, as is the case with a few of these other older vintages. The '89 Vieilles Vignes did not show as well in 2003 as the regular bottling of the '89 showed this past October, and I do not know if this is attributable to the regular being fresher from less new oak, or if it had simply blossomed with further bottle age. In any case, the 1989 Vieilles Vignes back in 2003 possessed a complex and deep-pitched bouquet of black cherries, plums, chocolate, woodsmoke, damp earth, espresso, herb tones and just a hint of pruniness in the upper register. On the palate the wine was full-bodied, deep and plush, with good *gras* and length, but not quite the same focus as the regular bottling displayed recently. I would love to cross paths with another bottle of this wine today and see how it is faring. At the time: 2003-2012. **87+?**

1988 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 1988 "regular" Musigny from Domaine Mugnier is still a tad on the young side, and like many closed down 1988s, there is a slightly "rusty" element to the wine on both the nose and palate. The bouquet offers up a complex and red maturing blend of black cherries, bonfires, lovely spice tones, game, forest floor, mustard seed and coffee. On the palate the wine is fullish and just a touch dry today, but with good mid-palate depth, lovely soil inflection, and very good length and grip on the very transparent finish. I had my last bottle of this wine out of my cellar a couple of years ago and it showed a bit more red fruity than this bottle at our October vertical. This wine could still blossom into something truly special, and at the very least it will be quite good with a few more years of softening. But one can sense a bit in this wine the fact that the old vines were bottled separately. 2009-2025. **88+.**

1988 Musigny "Vieilles Vignes"- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

My note on the 1988 Vieilles Vignes also dates back to that dinner in 2003. The wine is a bit more black fruity in profile than the regular bottling in this vintage, as it offers up scents of black cherries, plums, chocolate, herb tones, a fine base of soil, gamebirds and just a touch of new wood. On the palate the wine is fullish, deep and complex, with a fine core of fruit, moderate tannins and good length and grip on the soil-driven finish. In comparison to the regular bottling of the '88 (which was served alongside of it at the dinner in 2003), the old vine bottling seemed just a touch flatter on the finish, perhaps because of a higher percentage of new oak used during its élevage? A good wine that should still be drinking well. 2003-2020+? **88.**

1987 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 1987 vintage produced a bevy of simply wonderful, soil-driven middleweights that drank well from the moment of their release. I bought and drank a great many of the top 1987s in their early days, as many were discounted down around New York in the early 1990s for thirty-five to fifty dollars a bottle, which really is a very nice price for grand cru red Burgundy. But I never saw the Mugnier Musigny during this stretch when several other top producers' wines were on sale, and so I was delighted to taste this wine during a dinner with Monsieur Mugnier in New York back in 2003. The wine was really lovely at that time and I imagine it is still quite tasty, as it offered up a complex and very stylish nose of quince, cherries, woodsmoke, mustard seed, lovely minerality and a topnote of beetroot. On the palate the wine was fullish, complex and very transparent, with lovely complexity, little remaining tannins, sound acids and sneaky length and grip on the finish that closed with notes of coffee and iron-like soil. A very tasty bottle that should still be drinking well over the next few years. 2003-2013. **90.**



The entrance to the Château de Chambolle-Musigny.

1986 Musigny “Vieilles Vignes”- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

Subsequent to the dinner with Freddy Mugnier in 2003, the only Vieilles Vignes bottling of Musigny that I have tasted from the domaine was this lovely 1986. The bouquet is deep, complex and quite ethereal today, with significantly more refinement in its aromatics than it had shown five years ago, as it offers up scents of cherries, strawberries, coffee, beetroot, a touch of game, forest floor and a bit of mustard seed in the upper register. On the palate the wine is fullish, complex and quite lovely on the attack, with good mid-palate depth, a touch of remaining tannin and good length and grip

on the tangy finish. This is a very tasty bottle of mature Musigny that is at its apogee, but still retains plenty of life in it. 2008-2020+? **92.**

1985 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

This note also dates back to the 2003 dinner, where the wine showed brilliantly well. The bouquet is deep, complex and classically perfumed, as it wafts from the glass in a mix of red cherries, orange rind, woodsmoke, lovely minerality, mustard seed, iron-like soil tones and a topnote of spice. On the palate the wine is medium-full, deep and intensely flavored, with wonderful complexity, excellent focus and balance, tangy acids and outstanding length and grip. Just a beautiful example of the vintage and the vineyard, the 1985 Mugnier Musigny will continue to drink superbly well for decades to come. 2003-2020+. **94.**

1937 Musigny- Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

The 1937 Mugnier Musigny is an utterly brilliant bottle of wine that is fully at its apogee of peak drinking (at nearly seventy years of age!), and should continue to drink magically for at least another twenty years. This particular bottle had one of the shortest corks that I have ever seen, and yet this original cork had kept the wine perfectly. The bouquet is utterly profound and celestial, as it soars from the glass in a mélange of red berries, cherries, woodsmoke, black truffles, a glorious base of Musigny's inimitable soil, tobacco ash, mustard seed and a lovely note of chalk. On the palate the wine is full-bodied, deep and amazingly fresh, with a great core of fruit, perfect focus and balance, and a bit of remaining, old-fashioned tannin perking up the profoundly long, complex and soil-driven finish. This is clearly the greatest bottle of Musigny I have tasted since the first pair of magical, candied bottles of the '45 Comte de Vogüé, and it is just as clearly one of the greatest wines that I have ever tasted in my life. With its combination of haunting complexity and very serious intensity, it is an utterly quintessential expression of this legendary vineyard. It is extremely likely that it will be drinking beautifully on its one hundredth birthday! 2006-2030+. **100.**