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# CELLAR NOTES

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Firsthand reports on upcoming vintages of the world's finest wines

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The village of Pernand-Vergelesses gives its name to the northernmost appellation in the Côte de Beaune.

## 2006 IN **BURGUNDY**

Following one of the best vintages in a generation, will 2006 be overshadowed? BY BRUCE SANDERSON

**T**he 2006 vintage in Burgundy produced many excellent whites and charming reds, but the wines will be expensive—perhaps even more expensive than their counterparts from 2005, a vintage which in the long run will be the better of the two.

In early June 2007, I visited the region and tasted more than 250 red and white Burgundies from barrel. I returned to Burgundy this past January and tasted an additional 300-plus reds and whites, either from barrel, tank or bottle. It was clearly an outstanding vintage for the region's white wines. I give the 2006 white Bur-

gundy vintage a preliminary rating of 90–93 on *Wine Spectator's* 100-point scale. The best whites are full of ripe fruit, with freshness, structure and plenty of mineral character. They have the flesh that makes them immediately appealing.

The young Pinots also amazed me, with their immediate charm, seduction and balance. They are marked by ripe, fresh, snappy fruit, more red fruits than black, mellow structures and fine balance. They are delicious now and should be enjoyable over the short to medium term.



Bernard Morey produced several high-scoring wines in 2006, a vintage that proved problematic for some of the region's winemakers. His Bâtard-Montrachet is particularly impressive.

white, very long and complete (90–93). The 2006 Corton-Charlemagne is to be the first commercial release; originally a parcel of Pinot Noir in the Pougets *lieux-dit*, it was grafted over to Chardonnay in 2004. The wine displays great intensity and mineral character, along with lemon, floral and apple flavors; a tensile white and very long in the mouth (92–95).

## Domaine Bernard Morey

### Balancing richness and finesse

The 2004s and 2005s from Domaine Bernard Morey were impressive, and its 2006s show excellent potential. The friendly Bernard Morey manages the property with help from his sons, Vincent and Thomas.

"There was a good maturity in 2006, the grapes were very, very ripe," says the senior Morey, adding that he chaptalized only one cuvée. All the wines were bottled after the 2007 harvest.

I liked the fresh, lime-tinged Bourgogne White (85–88), but the St.-Aubin Les Charmois, from vines planted in 1957, reaches another level. Not offering much in the way of aromas, it is rich, with a core of mineral accented by citrus (88–91). The Chassagne-Montrachet Vieilles Vignes delivers lovely aromas of flowers and lime, introducing peach and honey notes. It is long, with a mouth watering finish (88–91).

The Chassagne-Montrachet Clos St.-Jean, with its rich profile, pear and mineral flavors and long finish (89–92), contrasts nicely with the refined, vibrant Les Chenevottes (89–92). The Les Baudines, from several hillside parcels adjacent to Santenay, is fresh, evoking citrus, stone and floral flavors, like water over rocks, with a long finish (89–92)

The *premier cru* Morgeot is a large vineyard comprising many individual *lieux-dits*. Morey incorporates five into its Morgeot, which Morey says gives a nice balance between mineral and richness. Vibrant and rich, it boasts floral and peach notes with harmony and length (90–93). The Chassagne-Montrachet Les Caillerets, from one parcel, offers beautiful citrus, wildflower, pear and mineral, combining finesse and power (91–94).

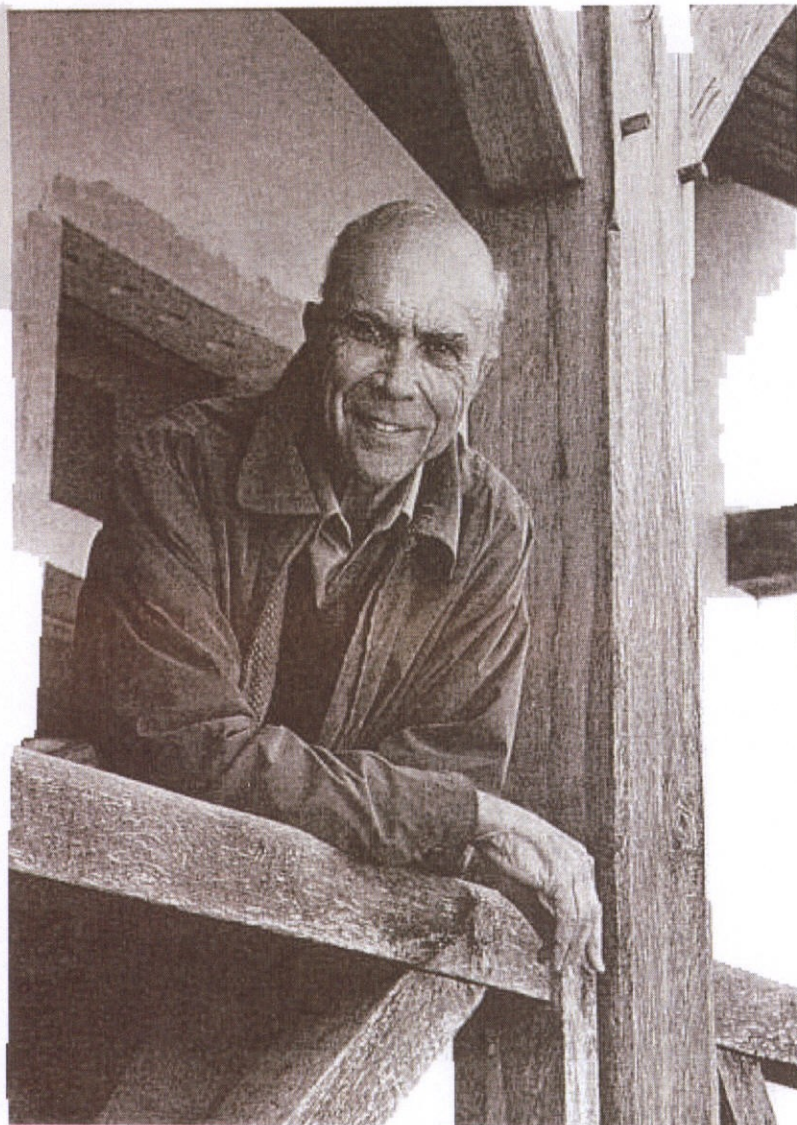
Just below Bâtard-Montrachet on the Chassagne side lies Vide Bourse. Morey's version is rich, dense and firm in '06, with a glycerinlike texture supporting peach, apricot and brioche notes (90–93). Its big brother Bâtard-Montrachet serves up ripe apricot and quince aromas and flavors. It has immediate presence on the palate, unfolding to a more elegant, detailed finish (92–95).

## Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier

### Purity and soul

In 2004, when he reclaimed the 22-acre Nuits-St.-Georges Clos de la Marechale at the conclusion of a half-century lease agreement, Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier more than tripled the turf he cultivates at his domaine. He also restructured operations, increasing from one employee to six. He points to progress in the vineyards, with more detailed work by hand and an improved training system for the vines.

In speaking of 2006, Mugnier echoed what I heard at many addresses: There was more rain than usual during the summer, and by the end of August the grapes weren't looking so good. He kept close tabs on the meteorological reports as harvesttime approached.



Aubert de Villaine of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti says 2006 is more transparent than the complex 2005.

"I think we were lucky because we had less rain in September than other regions [in France]," he reflects.

Mugnier started picking on Sept. 18, the day before the official *ban de vendange*. The grapes were perfectly ripe, with sugar levels the same as in 2005, and generally very healthy.

"At the end of the fermentations, the wines were very tannic, hard," Mugnier recalls. "But by February or March [2007], the tannins had completely softened. This brought flesh and body to the midpalate. Combined with the fresh fruit flavors you have in a very cool year, 2006 is more typical, distinguished and refined."

All the reds in Mugnier's cellar were racked and blended in November 2007 and then returned to barrel.

The *Chambolle-Musigny* delights with its fresh blackberry and violet scents and pure, focused fruit expression on the palate (88–91). It comes from two different *terroirs*, says Mugnier, adding, "I like the blend better than each separately."

Adjacent to *Bonnes Mares* on the southern side lies the *premier cru Chambolle-Musigny Les Fuées*. It is more concentrated than the *Chambolle-Musigny*, vibrant and detailed, with a strong mineral component (90–93).

As expected, the *Bonnes Mares* shows greater depth still, with

blackberry and black cherry flavors and terrific length (91–94).

The *Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses* is the most inviting wine in the cellar. Violet, red and black currant aromas are followed by a beam of pure fruit, and the wine is lacy, detailed and long (92–95). "Les Amoureuses plays to your emotional side; Les Fuées and *Bonnes Mares* play more to your brain," says Mugnier.

Mugnier's third vintage of the *Nuits-St.-Georges Clos de la Marechale* features dense black cherry flavor with opulence, balance, structure and length (90–93). The *Musigny* is rich, with a touch of chocolate, and very classy. Complex red fruit notes unfold across the palate and it's powerful and elegant at once (93–96).

## Domaine du Château de Puligny-Montrachet

### Improving year to year

At *Domaine du Château de Puligny-Montrachet*, I tasted a range of 2006s from tank and a few 2007s from barrel.

"This [2006] is the first vintage since I have been here that we are close to what we want to do in the vineyards and cellar," said managing director Étienne de Montille, who has held the job since 2002. "The 2004s were soft and the 2005s too rich, but 2006 is more precise."

De Montille likes to mature the wines in 600-liter barrels called *demi-muids*, believing that this results in less oxygenation and better integration of the oak.

The '06s are impressive. I particularly liked the *Puligny-Montrachet*, a lively, straitlaced, hazelnut- and mineral-infused white (88–91). The *St.-Aubin En Remilly* is richer, with floral, peach and pear notes and a chalky, mineral finish (88–91).

The *Puligny-Montrachet Chalumeaux* is round and honeyed, with floral and peach flavors and a hint of orange blossom on the fresh finish (89–92).

The *Folatières* also features floral and orange blossom notes, on an elegant, harmonious frame (89–92). The *Meursault Perrières*, meanwhile, is cut from a different cloth; stone, apple and chalk elements are coiled tightly in the lean, tensile structure. It is very intense and long (91–94).

I also tasted a *Chevalier-Montrachet* 2006, but it was in an awkward stage and, unlike with the *Perrières*, it was difficult to see where it was going. Judgment reserved.

## Domaine de la Romanée-Conti

### Reference-standard reds

Another of the stops on my annual January trek is *Domaine de la Romanée-Conti*. Strictly *grands crus*, from some of the best *terroirs* in the Côte d'Or, the wines of DRC are reference-standard Burgundies and provide a sense of the quality of a vintage.

"Purity is an important part of the character of 2006," explains Aubert de Villaine, the modest, soft-spoken co-director of the domaine. "In 2005, there's a battle between the vintage character