

DOMAINE BERNARD MOREAU

2018 Burgundy: Confounded Expectations

Vinous – Neal Martin

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I have one abiding memory of the 2018 vintage. After one Burgfest session, I popped down to Chassagne-Montrachet for an impromptu visit with Alex Moreau. I will always remember being hit by the frenetic atmosphere, the workers hollering and rushing around the winery, and in the middle of this maelstrom, Moreau's face, whose expression could be summed up with the acronym WTF. "I can't believe it," he said with a combination of pleasant surprise and mild panic. "Where is all this juice coming from? We can only just keep up!" I stayed for a couple of minutes, witnessing another heaped load of Chardonnay enter the reception area, cognizant that whatever transpired, 2018 was not going to be a small crop for the whites at least.

Readers will know the high esteem in which I hold Domaine Bernard Moreau and winemaker Alexandre Moreau. You want the best Chassagne-Montrachet? This is where you call first. I have absolutely no reason to alter that view with respect to the 2018s. "We started picking on 30 August, the same date as 2017 but the profile of the vintage is different," Moreau told me surrounded by stainless steel vats. "This was because of the size of the crop and the heat. I like to have freshness and not too much alcohol, so I was anxious about the picking date. So I controlled the maturity, constantly tasting in the vineyard and soon realised that the sugar level can rise quicker than the phenolic maturity. I have now started the harvest in August in 2015, 2017 and 2018. I couldn't understand why if August was so warm, the increase in sugar level was actually quite slow. I knew it was generous, but I did not know it would be so generous in older vineyards - something that I have never seen. For example, I haven't made nine barrels of Chassagne Chenevottes since I began, then again, yields are only just above 50hl/ha for the Premier Crus. Maybe people are expecting something like 2003, but the 2018s are not heavy at all. For the Village and Premier Crus the alcohol is between 13.0° and 13.5°. As usual we practice natural fermentations, no racking and so forth - the only difference in 2018 is that it was a super-long alcoholic fermentation. Many barrels were fermenting until July - and I don't mind that - I like to play this game as you have activity in the barrel with the fine lees in suspension and natural CO2 that protects your wine. The pH is around 3.19, which gives them a lot of freshness. It is not a vintage for early bottling and so most of the Premier Crus will be bottled next Spring."

Zoning in on specific appellations, I would not single out any particular one as being superior to the rest. However, I do want to draw readers' attention to two growers in Chassagne-Montrachet who are "killing it" at the moment. Firstly, there is Alex Moreau at Domaine Bernard Moreau. This is a domaine whose wines have risen to a whole new level in recent years. Moreau's portfolio is a veritable tour around Chassagne's Premier Crus, showcasing the nuances between climats on the flatter lower sectors and more limestone-rich parcels located on higher contours.



Alex Moreau, winemaker at Domaine Bernard Moreau, whose wines continue to perform at a consistently high level.

Vins Rouges

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet La Cardeuse 1er Cru Rouge

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet La Cardeuse Rouge 1er Cru is a monopole of the domaine, part of Morgeot, and includes 50% whole bunch this year. It has a clean, fresh bouquet of blackberry, bilberry and white pepper, all taut and very well defined. The palate is medium-bodied with grippy tannins that frame the peppery black fruit and delivers great length. You can feel the whole-cluster contribution in this wine, but it does not dominate.

2022-2035 (90-92)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Volnay Les Santenots 1er Cru

The 2018 Volnay Les Santenots 1er Cru has a well-defined but stubbornly backward bouquet; perhaps this cuvée is beginning to close down as Moreau's cellar cools in the winter. The palate is more expressive, offering chunky black fruit and even more peppery than the La Cardeuse due to the 50% whole bunch, although personally I might have dialed that down a little, as I find the finish a bit too stemmy at the moment..

2022-2035 (89-91)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Vieilles Vignes Rouge

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Vieilles Vignes Rouge is made from a blend of 50-year-old vines; this sample came from tank. It has quite an intense black currant and bilberry scented bouquet. The crisp palate is well balanced with slightly chewy tannins, the 10% new oak just lending a little midpalate depth, and a little peppery thanks to the 30% whole cluster fruit (a little more than in previous years). Delicious.

2024-2032 (88-90)

Vins Blancs

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Bourgogne Chardonnay

The 2018 Bourgogne Chardonnay, which had been bottled by the time of my visit, has a clean, precise apple blossom and citrus-scented bouquet that shows impressive definition for a generic white Burgundy. The palate is taut and fresh with a touch of bitter lemon on the entry, superb acidity and a saline finish. You will not find a better white Bourgogne Blanc in 2018.

2020-2027 (90)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Saint-Aubin En Remilly 1er Cru

The 2018 Saint-Aubin En Remilly 1er Cru is the only Premier Cru that had been bottled by November, when I visited the domaine. It was one of the rare cuvées where the malolactic was completed before spring. It has a very satisfying bouquet of citrus peel, almond shavings and light crushed flint aromas. The palate is well balanced with a superb line of acidity. Tension runs throughout this En Remilly from the start to the finish, which conveys an almost Chablis-like flintiness. This has great aging potential.

2022-2038 (92)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Village

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Village had been blended in July and fined three weeks prior to my visit. It has a delightful bouquet of orange blossom, tinned peach and touches of wild mint, quite intense for a Village Cru. The palate is taut, fresh and spicy on the entry, with touches of white pepper and fennel infusing the citrus fruit. An almost clinical saline finish lingers in the mouth. Superb.

2021-2036 (90-92)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Clos Saint-Jean 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Clos Saint-Jean 1er Cru possesses an intense bouquet: quince and marmalade aromas infuse the vibrant, penetrating citrus fruit, and crushed pebbles and chalky aromas emerge with time. The palate conveys palpable energy. A vibrant Chassagne-Montrachet with fabulous acidity and a razor-sharp, brilliantly defined finish that frankly flirts with Grand Cru quality. Stunning.

2022-2040 (92-94)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Les Vergers 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Les Vergers 1er Cru has a more reserved and austere bouquet compared to the Clos Saint-Jean, featuring scents of dewy green pasture and mountain streams and more malic in style. The palate is very well balanced with a keen line of acidity, notes of lemon rind mixed with orange pith and a touch of white peach and a little tangerine toward the elegant finish, which brims over with energy. Alex Moreau mentioned that this has the higher acidity of his cuvées, and you can feel it (in a good way).

2022-2049 (92-94)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Les Chenevottes 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Les Chenevottes 1er Cru has a beautifully defined bouquet of yellow plum, linseed and citrus lemon scents complemented by hints of pressed flowers; a suggestion of orange rind appears with aeration. The palate is beautifully balanced with a fine line of acidity, and quite spicy and energetic, revealing touches of pepper and even a dab of curry powder toward the long, complex finish. Another great success for Alex Moreau.

2022-2040 (92-94)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet La Maltroye 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet La Maltroye 1er Cru has a slightly reserved bouquet that is less expressive than its sibling Chassagnes at the moment; fleeting touches of citrus lemon and smoke emerge with aeration. The palate is well balanced with a very saline opening that counters the richness on the midpalate. There is weight and power to this Maltroye, yet the acidity offsets that and leaves it feeling perfectly balanced, with a very long, spicy tail on the finish. Excellent.

2022-2038 (91-93)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Champs Gain 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Champs Gain 1er Cru, the smallest cuvée of the domaine, this year represented by two barrels, has a gorgeous bouquet of citrus lemon, almond flakes, nectarine and subtle praline aromas. The palate is very well balanced with a fine bead of acidity, sharing the same weight and density as the La Maltroye but leading to a slightly more mineral-edged, almost stoic finish. This will be fascinating to monitor in bottle.

2022-2042 (92-94)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Morgeots 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Morgeots 1er Cru has a tight, backward, stony bouquet; Alex Moreau mentioned that he strove to pick at the right time to keep a sense of strictness. The palate is taut and fresh on the entry, with a fine bead of acidity. Elegant and refined, without the weight of the Champs Gain or La Maltroye on the midpalate, but conveying a sense of athleticism and poise on the saline finish and an exceptionally persistent aftertaste. Superb.

2022-2045 (93-95)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Les Caillerets 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Les Caillerets 1er Cru reflects its terroir brilliantly on the nose, which offers aromas of wet limestone and flint, beautifully defined and gaining intensity in the glass. The palate is wonderfully balanced with green apples, freshly sliced pear and just a touch of citrus lemon. This is taut, almost Zen-like in style – just as Caillerets ought to be. Superb.

2022-2045 (92-94)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Les Grands Ruchottes 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Les Grands Ruchottes 1er Cru has a fabulous bouquet of white peach, apricot, orange blossom and nectarine, turning a touch more tropical than Moreau's other Premier Crus as hints of passion fruit and guava emerge. The palate is very well balanced with a killer line of acidity. This is armed with wonderful salinité and a focused finish akin to a Puligny Grand Cru. This is a very serious Chassagne-Montrachet that should give many years of drinking pleasure.

2023-2048 (93-95)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru

The 2018 Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru comprises just one used barrel this year. It has a very reserved, almost austere bouquet that feels a little aloof after the fireworks of Moreau's raft of Chassagne Premier Crus. But that's Bâtard for you. The palate is very well balanced with a fine line of acidity, fresh and taut with impressive weight on the back palate. The citrus notes are complemented by touches of orange peel and salinity, and there is very good length on the finish. Excellent. Montrachet that should give many years of drinking pleasure.

2023-2048 (92-94)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru

The 2018 Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru, which comprises three barrels this year, has an expressive bouquet of crushed stone mixed with Granny Smith apples and fleeting hints of white peach. The palate is supremely well balanced, delivering superb weight and penetration; the intense flavors of orange peel and sour lemon dovetail into discreet passion fruit and pawpaw notes toward the finish. Of course, there is outstanding mineralité throughout this Grand Cru. An awesome Chevalier-Montrachet.

2024-2050 (95-97)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru

The maiden 2018 Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru comes from an exchange of juice with another grower, sourced from the Aloxe-Corton side of the famous hill. Unlike other cuvées, this came from a used barrel and had remained on its lees since harvest. It has an attractive bouquet of yellow plum, hints of tangerine and grapefruit, and a little coconut and patisserie in the background. The palate is fresh and well balanced, displaying notes of tangerine and mandarin, a fine bead of acidity and a slightly leesy finish, as you would expect given that it had not been racked (Moreau was unsure whether he would rack or not). Very fine. 2023-2043 (91-93)