

DOMAINE BERNARD MOREAU

Burgundy: The Cote d'Or's 2018 Vintage

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January 2020

The Côte d'Or's 2018 vintage is defined by extremes. This was a historically warm year for Burgundy—some three and a half degrees Fahrenheit warmer than average when taken as a whole and with peak temperatures in excess of 100 degrees. 2018 was also a historically sunny year, with 290 more sunlight hours between May and September than average—equivalent to around 30% additional sunlight. And if summer was unusually dry, with some 30% less rainfall than average, winter was unusually wet. In the months preceding budbreak, the Côte d'Or's rainfall tracked 30% above average. While it's hard to find a recent analogy for such conditions, it might be said without undue simplification that 2018 combined the winter of 2004 with the summer of 2003.

Yields were as extreme as the weather. An even, rapid and remarkably fruitful flowering resulted in a substantial crop: copious in Pinot Noir, approaching the scale of the 2017 vintage, and gargantuan in Chardonnay, with some producers looking as far back as 1982 to find a year that was as generous. The ample reserves of water accumulated during the rainy winter meant that vines were generally able to bring these grapes to full maturity despite the dry summer, notwithstanding some instances of hydric stress—largely afflicting the Côte's drier sites and its younger, less deeply rooted vines. With the exception of virulent spring mildew, a particular challenge for organic farmers, and mid-July hail in the vicinity of Nuits-Saint-Georges, there was little to complicate this picture from one commune to the next.



The 2018 grapes in Domaine Ponsot's Clos de la Roche (left) and the 2018 grapes in Domaine Dujac's Clos de la Roche (right)

The 2018 Whites: Historically High Yields Produce Charming and Nicely Balanced Wines

The year's generous yields retarded ripening in Chardonnay, so alcohols are not especially elevated in the white wines of 2018. The abundant crop also meant that producers could afford to be selective at the press, retaining only the higher-acidity juice liberated at the beginning of pressing and thereby somewhat compensating for the vintage's below-average acidities. Burgundians increasingly habituated to warm summers knew to pick in a timely fashion, with the earliest harvesters beginning around August 20, and few domaines appear to have been caught unprepared. Given the extreme weather, the 2018 whites are therefore surprisingly classically balanced in profile, and while the 2017 white Burgundy vintage is as a whole superior to 2018, there are certainly several 2018s that surpass their 2017 counterparts.

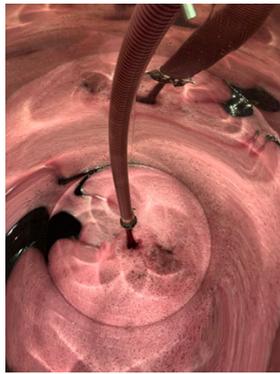
Though many producers are inclined to suggest that the 2018 whites should be considered near-term propositions, it is worth remembering that the same was said of the 1982 white Burgundies—from an even higher-yielding vintage, when the 20th century's agrochemical excesses were at their most flagrant—wines that have aged very gracefully indeed. I suspect that the longevity of 2018's best whites may similarly confound expectations. More recently, analogies for the 2018 white wine vintage are far from self-evident, but readers might like to think of the year as reminiscent of a less-concentrated and also less-alcoholic version of the 2015 vintage.

The 2018 Reds: A High-Wire Act

In Pinot Noir, yields were not so elevated, and sugar accumulated rapidly, so timeliness was, if anything, more critical. Rainfall on August 23 unlocked blocked phenolic maturation, though more fell in the Côte de Beaune than the Côte de Nuits. Faced with rising potential alcohols and falling acidities, a number of domaines started picking in late August, and harvest was well underway by the first week of September. Needless to say, the logistical challenges presented by a copious crop ripening rapidly were considerable, and that even some of the region's largest négociant houses were able to complete picking in a mere two weeks must be accounted a considerable organizational

feat. In years such as 2018, an increasing number of domaines are wisely employing refrigerated trucks and cold rooms to hold harvested fruit while it awaits processing,

In the winery, fermentations could be sluggish, as indigenous yeasts struggled with musts high in sugar, and above-average pHs favored precipitous malolactic fermentations. Consequently, some wines were spoiled by excess volatile acidity, and 2018 proved a boon to consulting oenologists, whose services were much in demand among anxious vigneron. Strategies varied with respect to whole clusters, with some producers opting to use more than usual for their enlivening aromatic lift and others using less, afraid that potassium in the stems would precipitate out invaluable acidity. Almost invariably, pigment and tannin extracted extremely rapidly during vinification. In the cellar, there was little malic acidity, so malolactic fermentations did comparatively little to alter the character of the young wines.



A just-pressed Chambolle-Musigny

The ensuing 2018 red Burgundies are above average in alcohol and below average in acidity, with extremely saturated hues and an abundance of ripe tannin, but it is hard to generalize further about what is a very heterogeneous vintage. The best reds are rich, enveloping and sensuous but display none of the jammy, overripe and overtly liqueur-like qualities that mar the year's less successful offerings. Differences from one domaine to another are pronounced and defy simple analysis. While picking early was generally a prudent and successful strategy in 2018, several producers who continue to insist that waiting the better part of 100 days between flowering and harvest is essential for complete maturity also rendered exceptionally fine wines.

Without knowing every particular of a plot and its vines, it is impossible to second-guess picking decisions, and as ever, in the accompanying reviews I have preferred to judge the wine in the glass. But if one were to isolate three factors that appear to be critical in producing fine red wines in 2018, they would be: firstly, attentive work in the vineyards to protect

fruit from sunburn; secondly, the logistical flexibility to pick each parcel when it was ready; and thirdly, meticulous *élevage*. Producers who refrained from deleafing and hedging to shade their fruit from the intense sunshine were rewarded with fresher, more vibrant wines; and those that ensured their wines were dry, maintaining impeccable sanitation throughout *élevage*, lost none of the year's potential to microbiological spoilage.

The 2018 red Burgundy vintage's heterogeneity makes finding analogies more than usually challenging, but among recent years, there are certain points of comparison with 2003, 2009, 2015 and 2017. To grossly simplify, the 2018 vintage's worst wines combine the faults of the less-successful 2003s and 2009s, while the best marry some of the merits of 2017 and 2015. Looking further back in time, a number of producers pointed to 1947, another ripe, high-alcohol vintage that is frequently great but notably variable, and there are certainly similarities. Mention of 1947, of course, should also underline the point that for all the 2018 vintage's challenges, its best renditions will be wines of considerable depth, dimension and sheer drama—even if they fall outside the region's norms. What is clear is that it will be more than usually important to revisit the 2018 red Burgundies in bottle to make a more definitive assessment of their quality, and I will be doing just that next year.

Alex and Benoit Moreau began their harvest on August 30, afraid of waiting too long given the warm conditions, and reported finished alcohols between 12.15% and 13.3%. This was a large crop for the domaine, even for its premiers crus and old vines: Chenevottes, for example, yielded fully 62 hectoliters per hectare, its most generous in 20 years. Most of the domaine's white wine fermentations lasted into June-July 2019. As usual, I made Domaine Bernard Moreau one of my last stops during my time in Burgundy to catch the wines at their best, and the young 2018s showed superbly: it's a more immediate vintage than 2017 but beautifully balanced. Indeed, it's hard to think of a better address to which to direct readers looking to take a tour of some of Chassagne-Montrachet's most interesting terroirs. I also revisited the superb 2017s in bottle, wines that number among the vintage's finest.

What are the rudiments of this 14-hectare estate's success? As I wrote last year, the domaine represents a loose division of labor between two brothers: Benoit, who concerns himself with the vineyards, and Alex, who oversees the cellar. In the vineyard, they use only organic fertilizers and no pesticides. In the cellar, Alex Moreau appreciates long fermentations and extended *sur lie* *élevage* without stirring, the wines finishing their maturation in stainless steel where they generally see a light fining. New oak, largely from François Frères, is judiciously chosen. Beautifully balanced and differentiated by site, these are some of the most compelling

white Burgundies being made today, and I once again warmly recommend them to readers.

Vins Rouges

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

The 2018 Chassagne Montrachet 1er Cru La Cardeuse (Rouge) is deeper and more concentrated, wafting from the glass with aromas of rose petals, red berries, cherries, cinnamon and sweet soil tones. On the palate, the wine is medium to full-bodied, deep and layered, with superb concentration, ripe tannins and lively acids, concluding with a long, perfumed finish. This is a brilliant wine with a pedigree going back to the 1952 vintage that consumers fixated on the Côte d'Or more famous red wine producing villages overlook to their disadvantage..

(92-94 points)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Volnay Les Santenots 1er Cru

Produced from purchased grapes, the 2018 Volnay 1er Cru Les Santenots reveals aromas of plums and blackberries mingled with warm spices, smoke and peonies. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, ample and enveloping, with a layered core and succulent acids. This is a charming, inviting Santenots that will drink well young.

(91-93 points)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Vieilles Vignes Rouge

Bursting with aromas of rose petals, berries, spices and blood orange, the 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Vieilles Vignes Rouge is medium to full-bodied, charming and succulent, with a perfumed core of fruit, powdery tannins and a nicely defined finish. Vinified with 30% whole cluster and finishing up at 13.1% alcohol, this delicious Chassagne is one of the sleepers of the vintage.

2020-2040 **(91 points)**

Vins Blancs

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Saint-Aubin En Remilly

The 2018 Saint-Aubin 1er Cru En Remilly was also bottled before harvest 2019, and it's also quite expressive. Wafting from the glass with aromas of white flowers, pear and blanched almonds, it's medium to full-bodied, racy and incisive, with a more tensile and mineral profile than its Sur Gamay sibling.

2022-2037 **(90 points)**

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Village

There are fully 125 barrels of the 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet Village, a lovely wine in the making that reveals aromas of warm bread, citrus oil, fresh peach and dried white flowers. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, satiny and nicely concentrated, with fine cut and a well-defined finish. That there's so much volume this year is great news for Moreau fans.

(89-91)

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

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Clos Saint-Jean is very charming this year, revealing aromas of peach, ripe lemons, white flowers, fresh mint and almond paste. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, satiny and round, with a lively spine of underlying acidity and a chalky finish. This will be the most approachable young of Moreau's premiers crus. **(89-91)**

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

With a finished pH of 3.19, the 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Vergers is one of the raciest wines in the cellar. Exhibiting scents of almond paste, citrus oil and crisp green orchard fruit, it's medium to full-bodied, deep and chiseled, with a textural attack and lovely mid-palate volume, concluding with a long and precise finish.

(92-94)

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

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Chenevottes exhibits a pretty bouquet of buttered citrus, peach and yellow orchard fruit mingled with notes of almond paste and orange blossom. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, textural and enveloping, with succulent acids and a nicely defined finish. Alex Moreau tells me that his old vines in this premier cru produced nine barrels, their most generous crop in two decades.

(90-92)

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

Bursting with aromas of ripe citrus, pear and mint that are framed by a deft touch of oak, Moreau's 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru La Maltroie is medium to full-bodied, elegantly textural and precise. Racier than the more enveloping Chenevottes, it's also more tender and charming than the incisive Vergers. **(91-93)**

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

One of the smallest cuvées in the cellar is the 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Champs Gain, which derives from a two-ouvrée parcel. Revealing notes of citrus zest, pear, mandarin, white flowers and warm pastry, it's medium to full-bodied, satiny and precise, with a delicate core of fruit, lively acids and a pure finish. (90-92)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chassagne-Montrachet Morgeots 1er Cru

The 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Morgeot was one of the more reserved wines in the cellar when I tasted it, unwinding with notes of pear, peach, white flowers, mint and petrol. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, textural and precise, but needs time to fill out. Of course, that sense of reserve at this early stage is full of promise for the future. (92-94)

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

Scents of citrus oil, beeswax, warm bread and green pear preface Moreau's 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Caillerets, a medium to full-bodied, chalky and incisive wine that displays terrific depth and dimension, concluding with a long and mineral finish. (92-94+)

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

Deep and powerful, the 2018 Chassagne-Montrachet 1er Cru Les Grandes Ruchottes offers up a deep bouquet that mingles aromas of pear and tangerine with nuances of warm bread, iodine and dried white flowers. Medium to full-bodied, muscular and concentrated, this is also quite introverted and structured, with lively acids and a long, saline finish. (93-95)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru

The 2018 Bâtard-Montrachet Grand Cru represents the return to the range of a cuvée last produced—from purchased grapes—in 2015, and the intermission derives from the fact that the parcel was being replanted. Offering up aromas of pear, orange oil, white flowers and fresh pastry, it's full-bodied, ample and nicely concentrated, with impressive structuring extract, lively acids and a long finish. This is a powerful, muscular wine, and the young vines have certainly put in a fine performance in their inaugural vintage!. (93-95+)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru

Wafting from the glass with a lovely bouquet of citrus oil, orange blossom, white flowers and pastry cream, Moreau's 2018 Chevalier-Montrachet Grand Cru is full-bodied, satiny and layered, with a deep and multidimensional core, lively acids and a long, chalky finish. Whereas the Bâtard is purchased as grapes, Alex Moreau received the Chevalier in must, and he's done a terrific job of the vinification and élevage. (94-96)

2018 Domaine Bernard Moreau Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru

A new cuvée for Moreau debuts with the 2018 Corton-Charlemagne Grand Cru, the result of an exchange in must from a proprietor with vines in Aloxe-Corton. Offering up aromas of green apple, white flowers, toasted nuts and iodine, the wine is full-bodied, deep and tensile, with a satiny attack that segues into a layered core that's framed by lively acids and chalky extract. (93-95)