

Clark Foyster

SPECIALIST WINE IMPORTERS

BURGUNDY 2020 EN PRIMEUR OFFER

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BURGUNDY 2020 EN PRIMEUR

THE VINTAGE

- Yet another 'année solaire'. Hard to see yet which vintages it resembles. There are similarities and differences with 2019 and 2018.
- Ripe and sometimes powerful wines, but with surprisingly fresh acidity. A warm and dry summer, but not excessively hot. Drier, but not overall hotter than 2019.
- Very small berries: less juice: less wine: for some it is a very small vintage in 2020. Smaller than 2019. (But for most considerably larger than 2021.)

Well, we managed a few dinners in Burgundy last November, unlike last year when we ate takeaway pizzas in the car sheltering from the rain. It was good to be back, though all our producers reported that they had seen very few visitors, and none from further afield than Europe. Restaurants were open and functioning, which makes a massive difference when you're looking at young wines all day, and we ate and drank well. It was good to see everyone, and all the producers we know have survived and appeared in good health despite some Covid cases reported. Some, mostly those who supply French gastronomy and private clients, reported a downturn in business, but if wine remains temporarily longer in their cellars it's not a big deal. I guess it's not like many people involved in wine in Burgundy are on the breadline..

All growers had enjoyed more in the vineyards in 2020, with fewer visits from clients. Several commented on how much they appreciated having more time to spend on their true métier: being vigneron.

And of course we all remember what a sunny summer it was.

Winter was mild and buds burst early. There was frost damage, but it was mostly contained by the popular new trend - soon to be outlawed, we hear - of burning straw in the vineyards and blocking out early morning sunrays with the puthering smoke created. A hot May meant early flowering, but cooler weather in early June meant that some Pinot Noir fruit failed to set. June, July and August were mostly hot (though not 40C hot, as in 2003) and crucially there was no rain. Some growers reported vines under drought stress ceasing their photosynthesis at the beginning of August. Picking began around 20th August in Côte de Beaune, and soon after in Côte de Nuits. Fine weather continued throughout. Some growers picked only in the morning. Everything was finished by 15th September.

I have spent a lot of time looking at the weather and comparing the trio of 2018, 2019 and 2020. It will be absolutely fascinating to see, as the years roll on, how these 'années solaires' stack up against each other. Of the three, the vintage I have felt most comfortable with so far is 2019. It has a charm and easy balance that I didn't find tasting young in 2018, and 2020 felt less homogeneous stylistically. Some wines were easier than others to taste, so I wrote to all the producers to ask them their opinions. The responses are varied, but I have to report that there are more positives for 2020 than I would have thought. Yes, of course they have the current vintage to sell (and which vigneron does not prefer their most recent vintage?), but the enthusiasm for 2020 surprised me. And actually, incidentally, enthusiasm for 2018 surprised me too. Florence Heresztyn feels that 2020 is as pretty as 2019, but with an extra spark. Cyril Audoin feels that 2018 has probably the longest potential for ageing, and when pushed, will probably opt for this as his favourite of the three. But he loves 2020. Philippe Garrey said that for him 2020 is the best vintage so far of the new millennium. Vincent Ravaut feels that 2018 may ultimately be seen as the best of the three, but loves the Burgundian typicity which he finds in 2020, more than 2019. Sébastien Cathiard feels that 2020 has the greatest potential for ageing, and the greatest need of ageing.

It's not the only important factor, but the presence of acidity in 2020 is important to point out. It's something which is notable in nearly all the wines tasted. The wines mostly have big colours, sometimes big tannins and concentration that comes from dry, hot, vine-stressing conditions. And yet they have high acidity. Cyril Audoin points out that the heatwave which lasted from the end of July through to the middle of August, combined with the lack of water, brought stress to the vines and closed them down. So no sugars were created during this time, and crucially no tartaric acids degraded. When vines began to breathe again and resumed ripening their fruit, sugars and began to move very quickly. But as harvest was in most cases only two weeks further on, it seems that acidities remained relatively high.

There is no doubt that Burgundian producers are thinking very seriously about how to respond to these warmer temperatures, earlier harvests and higher alcohol levels. We're noticing different responses. The challenge faced by all is to synchronise the sugar and phenolic ripeness, which do not always happen together. The increased use of 'whole bunch fermentation' to soak up colour, tannin, alcohol is becoming more and more widely practised. Jean-Marie Fourrier, and others, are looking closely at amphoras as a way to preserve freshness. Some growers are making wines from the previously unfashionable Hautes Côtes, and harvesting grapes there ten days later than they harvest in the Côte de Nuits, though this is still three weeks earlier than they would have been harvesting the same grapes 30 years ago. These Hautes Côtes wines are still under 13%. We're really looking at completely different priorities these days. Thirty years ago it was all about the best and warmest sites, maximising sunlight and extracting all the grape had to offer. Now it's the opposite, and the new star vineyards are those like Les Goulots, high up in the cool of the Combe de Lavaux in Gevrey-Chambertin. It's all about reducing, not maximising, sugar levels; extraction is something which oozes out of the grapes all on its own these days. Joannès Violot completely abandoned 'pigeage' punch-downs in 2019 and 2020. As Jean-Marie Fourrier says, winemaking these days is more about knowing when to do nothing and resist the temptation to interfere and work the must. It's really a question of 'rethinking the farming'.

ALLOCATIONS

Quantities are massively down this year. In several cases the reductions are significantly more than the small harvest might have meant. But we accept what we are offered. Please bear in mind that we have only tiny quantities of some of the most sought-after wines and for these wines we prioritise customers who support us through the rest of the range. We try not to be too prescriptive with strict ratios but we appreciate orders which are balanced. The quantities we have received of the top wines this year are smaller than ever before.

Please let us now as soon as possible what you would like. The sooner we receive orders, the sooner we can confirm availabilities.

PRICING

Burgundians like to have the current vintage in barrel before they fix pricing for last year's vintage. We've all heard, I expect, of the tiny quantity of 2021 to expect next year, and this will certainly have been a factor in fixing the 2020 prices. So three consecutive small vintages are part to blame. So we do have some increases, and some are large! On top of that we do still have the demand. I am late this year writing the offer, and am hearing that pricing does not appear to have reduced demand.

En Primeur prices which follow are quoted in £ Sterling per bottle, ex duty and VAT. We have also shown the price for a standard case of six, though please note that a few wines are packed in three or twelve packs. Please also note that the top wines from the most sought-after domaines will be sold as individual bottles without domaine-labelled outer cases.

Shipment will take place in Autumn 2022 and we will aim to release wines for onward delivery or collection when the final shipment of each customer order has arrived from France. We will avoid despatches in December 2022 when the warehouse is under particular pressure.

Please note that, like last year, we are including onward In Bond UK delivery in our pricing; we hope that this will simplify and speed up the process of onward deliveries to your own bonded storage. Freight and customs costs are currently very hard to predict; if inward shipping costs increase significantly over our estimates then we reserve the right to make additional charges to cover this.

Lance Foyster MW

Domaine Sophie Cinier, Pouilly-Fuissé. 4.5 ha (+ négociant wines).

2020 is a fine, classic vintage for Sophie and Alain. It's sandwiched between two difficult and tiny vintages which have made life complicated and difficult for them. Both 2019 and 2021 harvests here are more reduced in size than at any of our other domaines.

2020 was an early harvest. Sophie picked at the end of August, and describes the vintage as rich but precise, with an attractive saline character. For her it has the richness and roundness of 2019, with the freshness of 2018. Her winemaking essentially uses stainless steel for all the Mâcon wines, with an early summer bottling, and oak for all the Pouilly and Saint Véran wines. She uses a very occasional new barrel and the oak is rarely evident. The exception is perhaps Les Longeays, but the oak never dominates.

Pouilly-Fuissé Classique (mineral) and Collection (concentration) are hard to separate in quality. The first is bottled slightly earlier and is full of lifted citrus and mineral notes. The second is in barrel until October, and just a little thicker and creamier.

Sophie's top two wines, Pouilly-Fuissé Vers Crâs and Pouilly-Vinzelles Les Longeays (from vines over 100 years old) receive an extended barrel maturation and will be bottled in March. Finally we will see the words "Premier Cru" on the bottles of Vers Crâs. This has been a long time coming.

When not decimated by frost, Sophie's new parcels in Igé are yielding delicious fruit for the Mâcon and Bourgogne Rouge: a pretty 11.5% red, with light oak influence and 100% whole bunch. She also continues her small négociant business, buying fruit from neighbours and friends. We have followed her Saint Véran 'A la Côte' from day one and this year have bought a second wine, Pouilly-Vinzelles, a single parcel of 65 year old vines vinified entirely in used barriques, like the Saint Véran. The wine is dense, rich and ripe, with serious concentration.

Sophie talks [here](#) about the vintage.

		bottle	case of 6
CIBOR20B	Bourgogne Rouge, Le Clos	£13.50	£81.00
CIMAF20B	Mâcon-Fuissé	£14.00	£84.00
CIMAP20B	Mâcon-Fuissé, Les Perrières	£16.00	£96.00
CISTV20B	Saint Véran à la Côte	£18.00	£108.00
CIPVI20B	Pouilly-Vinzelles	£19.00	£114.00

CIPOF20B	Pouilly-Fuissé Classique	£21.00	£126.00
CIPOC20B	Pouilly-Fuissé Collection	£22.50	£135.00
CIPVC20B	Pouilly-Fuissé, 1er Cru Vers Crâs	£27.50	£165.00
CIPVL20B	Pouilly-Vinzelles, Les Longeays	£27.50	£165.00

Domaine Charles Audoin, Marsannay-la-Côte. 14 ha.

I can admit now that we struggled through the first vintages we bought here. But since 2015 we have had a streak of successful vintages, of which 2020 is the latest. Cyril combines infectious enthusiasm for his job and his wines with precise and thoughtful vineyard and cellar work. He will have an Ecocert organic certification from the 2021 harvest. He is a really fine vigneron and winemaker and we see considerably increasing demand for his wines year on year. My admiration for his wines focuses largely on his ability in extracting tannins. There are a lot of tannins around in 2018, 2019 and 2020 but in none of these vintages does the wine taste anything but silky, rounded and balanced. In 2018 he made several cuvées without any destemming and yet the stems just don't show, unless in a slightly higher level of freshness than the year often shows. In 2019 and 2020 he has not used any stems, but believes the freshness preserved in 2020 comes from the blockage in the grapes' maturation during the heatwave in early August. When cooler weather returned it was a headlong rush towards harvest only two weeks later as sugar levels rose rapidly. But in this time tartaric acid levels fell more slowly. Cyril also made the comment that for him 2020 resembles a much cooler vintage. He actually likened 2019 and 2020 to 2009 and 2010. Controversial perhaps, but not illogical.

When we look at the value these wines offer in the context of overheated Burgundy, I'm even more sympathetic here for the tiny yields of the past three years. Yields in 2020 were only 25 hl/ha. Alcohol levels vary between 13 and 13.6%.

The increasing interest and demand for these reds has not yet been mirrored in sales of the whites, and this is a pity. In 2020 Cyril has again produced whites with weight and ripeness, but vibrant energy and a tight citrus line. Cuvée Charlie, a blend of four parcels is taut, mildly phenolic and with just the lightest hint of oak.

Cyril's Bourgogne Rouge, all from demarcated Marsannay vineyards, is one of the very best. Marie Ragonneau is a village blend from three distinct parcels of fruit. The rest of the wines are all from single vineyards which will one day be designated Premier Cru. Clos du Roy and Longeroies from the northern part of the village produce slightly lighter, more supple and forward wines. Moving south through the village, Clos de Jeu has super ripe fruit and great concentration. Favières and Champ Salomon usually seem to be the most backward of the single vineyards, requiring more time than the others. Last year we found more charm in Cyril's Fixin Le Rozier than ever before; this year it's even better. There is always a touch of the rocky limestone in the wine, but the wine has ample supple flesh on those bones, with plenty of spice and mineral notes.

All these wines offer exceptional value.

Cyril talks [here](#) about the vintage.

		bottle	case of 6
AUMCB20B	Marsannay Blanc, Cuvée Charlie	£23.00	£138.00
AUBOR20B	Bourgogne Rouge	£16.00	£96.00
AUMAR20B	Marsannay, Cuvée Marie Ragonneau	£22.50	£135.00
AUMLO20B	Marsannay, Les Longeroies	£27.50	£165.00
AUMCR20B	Marsannay, Clos du Roy	£27.50	£165.00
AUMCJ20B	Marsannay, Clos de Jeu	£27.50	£165.00
AUMFA20B	Marsannay, Les Favières	£27.50	£165.00
AUFX20B	Fixin, Le Rozier	£27.50	£165.00
AUMCS20B	Marsannay, Au Champ Salomon	£27.50	£165.00
AUMCP20B	Marsannay, Charmes Aux Prêtres	£29.50	£177.00

Domaine Fourrier, Gevrey-Chambertin. 12 ha.

Vintages like 2020 (and 2018 and 2019) provide a challenge to estates for whom elegance, energy and freshness are the byword. No surprise, Fourrier has again pulled it off. Quantities are roughly the same as last year (though our allocation is much smaller) and the wines will be bottled at the beginning of February.

They picked from 1st September, so neither early nor late in relation to their neighbours, preserving Jean-Marie's sacred 100 day rule from flowering to harvest. Alcohol levels for the reds range from 13.2 to 13.9%. The high proportion of old vines here are, once again, credited with responding to the extreme conditions of the year and preserving the freshness of the wines.

Everything that Jean-Marie does in the cellar and vineyards is focused on protecting freshness and retaining that lightness and elegant salinity which he sees as the unique hallmark of Burgundy. So, for example, shading of the bunches is achieved by ceasing all vine trimming after mid July. Soils are kept moist by large additions of manure to the vineyards, increasing the humous content. Picking was done only in the mornings, and the must passed through a vacuum pump to cool it overnight before crushing. Again in 2020 the bunches were all destemmed, with a proportion added back to the must. In the cellar, extraction is always minimal, and was effected this year with one light pigeage per day.

We hope again this year to have an allocation of Jean-Marie's entry level Bourgogne Rouge which is created from grapes sourced along the Côte from Fixin to Nuits. But as we send this offer out this is not yet confirmed. Wine making and 'élevage' principles are similar. It is not a Domaine Fourrier wine but is bottled under the Jean-Marie Fourrier label. It is an affordable introduction to the style of the domaine.

		bottle	case of 6
DFBOB20B	Bourgogne Blanc	£25.00	£150.00
DFBOR20B	Bourgogne Rouge	TBC	TBC

DFMSD20B	Morey-Saint-Denis, Clos Solon	£46.00	£276.00
DFGCH20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, Vieille Vigne	£48.00	£288.00
DFGCC20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Cherbaudes	£120.00	£720.00
DFGCG20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Les Goulots	£120.00	£720.00
DFCAM20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Combe aux Moines	£135.00	£810.00
DFCSJ20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Clos St Jacques	£275.00	n/a

Domaine Heresztyn-Mazzini, Gevrey-Chambertin. 5.5 ha.

Simon and Florence Heresztyn-Mazzini are an ambitious and determined couple, working very hard to put their domaine right at the top of the Gevrey Premier League. They have tried many experiments since taking over the family domaine in 2012 and are beginning to draw conclusions on what works best for them.

Florence says that 2020 is a bright vintage and well balanced. But their yields are very low: 45% reduced from the average. The grapes were small with 'not enough juice'. She says 'But for me it's a great vintage with a unique balance. There is a subtle richness but at the same time a pleasant tension'. The overall structure suggests to her that it's a vintage which will need longer cellaring than 2019. It reminds her of 2016, but with more depth.

They picked from 27th August. The last wine they picked was their Bourgogne Rouge, which came in at 14% ABV. All the other wines ranged between 13 and 13.5%. Florence is not alone in referring to the evolution of the 2003s to bring her confidence that these three années solaires will turn out well. Tannin as well as acidity is capable of holding a wine together over decades, and there is plenty of both in 2020. She is another one who believes 2020 is a superior vintage to 2019.

Use of whole bunches continues to feature prominently in these warm vintages. For Florence they are vital in bringing more freshness to the wine. But it does mean that more pumping over is needed to release the sugars from the whole bunches.

I always enjoy the supple and creamy texture of Clos Village. It's a less classic Gevrey but has a distinctive spicy perfume and a savoury flavour, and is always a lovely introduction to Gevrey after two or three years. Gevrey Vieilles Vignes - now the vines are 65 years old - is more classic with a little more structure and meaty notes, but still with super mouth perfumes. 'Songes' comes from two vineyards and the vine age is a shade under 100 years. This has such a pure berry fruitiness I would never guess there was no destemming at all. It's rich, tight and firm with fine powdery dry tannins. Perrières is always the lightest and most forward of the Premier Crus. The violet perfumes shoot out. Goulots has a more red fruit nose, almost like a berry coulis, and delicate tannins from its higher altitude and cooler microclimate. Champonnets has perhaps changed more than any wine since they took over the estate. It used to be a monster which needed years. Morey Millandes has always a slightly sweeter fruit. It's tense and tight, but juicy and charming. They've picked it a bit earlier than in previous years. Clos St Denis, where the vines are now over 30 years old, continues to show more year on year. Tannins here are incredibly fine, like a fine powder, with thick fresh juicy fruit notes overlaid and a spicy mineral tautness.

		bottle	case of 6
DHBOR20B	Bourgogne Rouge	£21.00	£126.00
DHGCH20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, Vieilles Vignes	£44.00	£264.00
DHGCV20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, Clos Village	£46.50	£279.00
DHGCS20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, Les Songes	£50.00	£300.00
DHGCP20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru La Perrière	£72.00	£432.00
DHGCG20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Les Goulots	£72.00	£432.00
DHGCC20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Les Champonnets	£75.00	£450.00
DHMOM20B	Morey-Saint-Denis, 1er Cru Les Millandes	£72.00	£432.00
DHCSD20B	Clos-Saint-Denis, Grand Cru	£198.00	£1,188.00

Domaine Philippe Jouan, Morey-Saint-Denis. 3 ha.

Philippe has had a challenging year. His father, Henri, died at the very end of December 2021 after a long illness. It was Henri whom I first met in 2011. He welcomed me to the estate, showed me the full range of wines, 2010s from barrel and some older vintages from bottle. He then offered me a mixed pallet of Clos St Denis 2007 and Gevrey Aux Echézeaux 2008 and 2009, which made a wonderful trio to introduce to the market. (Clos St Denis cost me €30.) Subsequent visits I made to the estate usually involved friendly bickering between Philippe and Henri as they contradicted and talked over each other. Henri was a friend and colleague of the famous Jacky Truchot who influenced some of his winemaking. In recent years Philippe has made a few changes to the winemaking, but the mantra which Henri explained to me on my first visit - “nous faisons du vin pour nos clients qui aiment le fruit” - still holds good. These are always charming wines, delicious in the first few years, but the 2007 Clos St Denis (of which I still have a couple of bottles) is still glorious.

There's not much wine in 2020. We have never had so little. Philippe was severely grilled by the heat of the end of July, which destroyed 45% of what he had hoped to harvest. He cited the small leaves of his old vines as a cause; younger vines have larger leaves which shade the fruit more effectively. Quantities will be similar, but no lower, in 2021. He made small tartaric acid adjustments to the must. Use of stems was lower this year, at only 5%.

He picked in 3 days from 5th September. Alcohol levels are 14-14.5% for all the wines. The two 'Clos' are both at almost 14.5%. Berries were small and thick, as reported everywhere, so extraction was gentle. Pigeage took place only at the beginning and end, really just to homogenise the must, with one very short remontage of 3 minutes per day. The wines are rich, deep coloured and succulent and there are no jammy/confit flavours. It's the inevitable result of a hot dry year. Like many of his colleagues, he describes it as exceptional, citing, like several others did, the surprise that the hot 2003s have lasted so long and turned out so well, and the confidence this gives him for the future of the 2020s.

There are some impressively old vines at this estate. Morey comes from two parcels: Pertuisées and Corvée Creunille (60 year old vines). Chambolle from three parcels: Derrière le Four, Herbues and Chardanes (80, 70 and 50 years old respectively). Gevrey Aux Echézeaux has vines aged from 70 to 100 years, including a small part which, Philippe claims, should be reclassified in Charmes Chambertin. Morey Clos Sorbé comes from two parcels, 60 and 70

years old, and the Clos St Denis parcel is 85 years old. Coopers are François Frères and Rousseau, with a 30-50% use of new barrel as we climb the scale.

Philippe talks [here](#) about the vintage.

		bottle	case of 6
DJMSD20B	Morey-Saint-Denis	£42.00	£252.00
DJCHM20B	Chambolle-Musigny	£50.00	£300.00
DJGCH20B	Gevrey-Chambertin, Aux Echézeaux	£49.00	£294.00
DJMCS20B	Morey-Saint-Denis, 1er Cru Clos Sorbé	£89.00	£534.00
DJCSD20B	Clos-Saint-Denis, Grand Cru	£160.00	£960.00

Domaine Confuron-Gindre, Vosne-Romanée. 13 ha.

Stonemasons, excavators, crane-suppliers and all the rest continue to make hay in Vosne-Romanée. They have moved on now from this domaine, but have left behind a magnificent new space for Edouard and his parents to work in. The new cellar was just about ready for the 2020 harvest, and now the office, tasting room, reception area are complete too. It's a massively-changed work environment for them all, and hugely impressive. (You almost expect to see everyone in shirt and tie.)

We've worked with the estate since the 2009 vintage and with every passing year we have seen the wines become less rustic, more polished and more complex. They were always powerful but now they are a little slimmer and more supple, and there is no doubt of the domaine's direction in the last few vintages. Edouard has created his own 'négociant' company for a few new wines which will commence in the 2021 vintage, but he remains fully involved with the family estate which, it is planned, he will eventually take over. He has introduced the concept of whole bunch fermentation to this estate, which Francois had not practised before his arrival. The village wines now see about 20% whole bunch .

Their two main village wines are from Vosne and Nuits. Each is made from several blended parcels. In November, the Nuits is usually easier to assess, but both have excellent mineral notes and black fruit, with an energy that seems to belie the vintage's warmth and dryness. They are certainly fresher than the 2019s were this time last year. This is the fourth vintage that Colombière and Hautes-Maizières have been vinified and bottled apart. They are two premium vineyards. There is a delicacy to La Colombière, while Hautes-Maizières is a thicker, richer Vosne, as you might expect from a vineyard just below Suchots. Chaumes, Brulées and Beaumonts are splendid every year. Chaumes with its 100 year vines is dense, rich and concentrated, and Brulées has the taut, sinewy tension of a north-facing part of the famous Premier Cru. Beaumonts, with its sunny exposure, always shows gorgeous rich sweetness with a clean mineral streak at the back. Suchots comes from Suchots du Bas and the vines are over 85 years old. The vineyard has long been in the family but 2019 was its first appearance as a wine from this domaine. 40% new oak and 40% whole bunch. Echézeaux comes from the Treux and Rouges du Bas subsections of this large Grand Cru. This year the wine tasted dense and closed, but there is energy and freshness which will need ten years to come around.

Edouard talks [here](#) about the vintage.

		bottle	case of 6
CGBOR20B	Bourgogne Rouge	£13.50	£81.00
CGGCH20B	Gevrey-Chambertin	£37.00	£222.00
CGNSG20B	Nuits-Saint-Georges	£37.00	£222.00
CGVOR20B	Vosne-Romanée	£37.00	£222.00
CGVOH20B	Vosne-Romanée, Les Hautes-Maizières	£47.00	£282.00
CGVOC20B	Vosne-Romanée, La Colombière	£47.00	£282.00
CGVRC20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru Les Chaumes	£55.00	£330.00
CGVBR20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru Les Brûlées	£55.00	£330.00
CGVBE20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru Les Beaumonts	£55.00	£330.00
CGVRS20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru Les Suchots	£62.00	£372.00
CGECH20B	Echézeaux, Grand Cru	£100.00	£600.00

Domaine Sylvain Cathiard et Fils, Vosne-Romanée. 12.4 ha.

You can see the crane towering over Domaine Cathiard from the main road. Sébastien's grandfather's house has been bulldozed, and the courtyard is a building site as they prepare the new cuverie and cellar for this dramatically enlarged domaine. A few years ago, Sylvain was making his name on 3.5 hectares; he's now at 12.5. Most of the new vineyards come from the Hautes Côtes, including a sizeable holding of Aligoté, and Sébastien seems to have taken to white wine production with as little fuss as he appears to approach reds - though under the calm, reserved exterior there is very obviously meticulous determination and assured confidence. And these days there is a lot at stake. This is already a very expensive domaine, and this year we see very significant increases. Sébastien is well aware of the secondary market prices his wines fetch, and I am sure this is a large reason for the increases. Looking on Winesearcher today, I can see that Romanée Saint Vivant 2018 is listed at around £3,000 per bottle. Why shouldn't Sébastien have a larger share of these absurd prices?

Quantities here are down, but not so badly down on 2019 except for the two new Hautes Côtes vineyards, where the limestone and low clay content meant they suffered more from the drought. Sébastien picked from 8-15th September, picking first the wines from the Côte and finishing in the Hautes Côtes. Sébastien feels that the lack of water in recent vintages has caused them more problems than the heat; for this domaine the heat was not excessively high and did not degrade the tartaric acid naturally present in the grapes. He also makes an interesting point about the behaviour of Pinot Noir in these recent hot years, reassured that the variety seem able to maintain its typicity and balance from warm vintages without turning its fruit to jam. Alcohol levels are around 13% in the Hautes Côtes, and 14%-15% in the rest of the domaine. Sébastien talks more of 'infusion' than 'extraction' for 2020. Malolactic conversion happened a little earlier than usual, but still hung on till July with some cuvées. This is an important element of the maturation for Sébastien. He wants the wines to spend two winters in barrel, so the longer he can retard the 'malo' the better. Come bottling in the spring, he will add a little CO₂ to the wines to maintain freshness.

SCBOA21B	Bourgogne Aligoté (NB 2021)	£18.50	£111.00
SCHNB20B	Hautes Côtes de Nuits Blanc	£29.50	£177.00
SCCOB20B	Côteaux Bourguignons, Les Croix Blanches	£22.50	n/a
SCBOR20B	Bourgogne Rouge	£36.50	£219.00
SCHNC20B	Hautes Côtes de Nuits, Aux Chaumes	£42.00	£252.00
SCHND20B	Hautes Côtes de Nuits, Les Dames Huguette	£43.00	£258.00
SCGCH20B	Gevrey-Chambertin	£71.00	£426.00
SCNSG20B	Nuits-Saint-Georges	£71.00	£426.00
SCVOR20B	Vosne-Romanée	£82.00	£492.00
SCCHM20B	Chambolle-Musigny, Les Clos de l'Orme	£88.00	£528.00
SCNUT20B	Nuits-Saint-Georges, 1er Cru Aux Thorey	£153.00	£918.00
SCNUM20B	Nuits-Saint-Georges, 1er Cru Aux Murgers	£167.00	£1,002.00
SCVRR20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru Aux Reignots	£280.00	n/a
SCVRO20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru En Orveaux	£280.00	n/a
SCVRS20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru Les Suchots	£350.00	n/a
SCVRM20B	Vosne-Romanée, 1er Cru Aux Malconsorts	£450.00	n/a
SCRSV20B	Romanée Saint Vivant, Grand Cru	£1,230.00	n/a

Domaine Gaston et Pierre Ravaut, Ladoix/Corton. 12 ha.

I wrote last year that Vincent Ravaut described 2019 as his best yet. And this year he says the same about 2020. You might describe this as grower hype if you did not know Vincent, who is a straightforward, modest and honest winemaker, and shared with me openly his anxiety that the 2018s seemed more like Côtes du Rhone in their early stages. (Two years on he is much more positive about them.)

He says the 2020 reds have great balance between ripeness of fruit and freshness of acidity, and feel a bit less rich than the 2019s, with more deepness, better balance and more Pinot Noir typicity. Alcoholic fermentations were very slow, and malolactic fermentations followed quickly. The reds are all between 13 and 13.5% (except for Corton), and will be bottled in March. As usual, Vincent was not tempted to use any whole bunches. His son Jules has recently completed an internship with Florence and Simon Herestyn-Mazzini where whole bunch rules... I wonder if Jules is whispering into his father's ear about this. The whites are all exceptional this year, for me certainly his best year for whites since we began working together, and we are offering for the first time his Aligoté, which is all in stainless steel. The other whites came out of barrel a little earlier, and spent time in tank before bottling at the end of December.

There was damage from frost, a poor fruit set at flowering, and then the reductions in berry size during the drought, so this is another small harvest. He began early on the 20th August.

There are some super red fruit flavours throughout the range this year. Tannins are firm, but in no way chunky, and the ripeness of fruit, in one or two wines almost on the edge, is always held back by a sappy note of crunchy acidity.

Les Dames Huguette in the Hautes Côtes de Nuits is a real charmer. It's a lighter red, fresh with a nice balance and a touch of spice from 6 months in barrel. Ladoix Village was the last vineyard picked and is a big, chunky, super-ripe wine with a great freshness at the end. As usual Le Bois Roussot is the most forward and supple of the Premier Crus; gentle, soft and sweet. Les Basses Mourottes from the rockier soils with a higher limestone content is exceptional: ripe, spicy, complex. True to form, both Aloxe Corton wines are firmer, and with slightly spikier tannins, but these tannins rest behind dense red fruit. For Vincent these wines will easily be five to ten year wines. Quantities in Corton were much reduced, persuading Vincent to make a single cuvee of Corton Grand Cru. It's 60% Bressandes and 40% Hautes Mourottes, and 14.2% alcohol. When vinified separately, these two vineyards are always very different, but this is a great success - I'm tempted to say better than the sum of its parts. The Bressandes brings accessible, sweet ripeness; Hautes Mourottes brings weight and tannin. Exceptional

Vincent talks [here](#) about the vintage.

		bottle	case of 6
DRBOA20B	Bourgogne Aligoté	£10.50	£63.00
DRLAB20B	Ladoix Blanc	£24.50	£147.00
DRLHB20B	Ladoix Blanc, Les Hautes Mourottes	£32.00	£192.00
DRHND20B	Hautes Côtes de Nuits, Les Dames Huguettes	£16.50	£99.00
DRLAD20B	Ladoix	£19.00	£114.00
DRLBR20B	Ladoix, 1er Cru Le Bois Roussot	£25.00	£150.00
DRLBM20B	Ladoix, 1er Cru Les Basses Mourottes	£25.00	£150.00
DRACO20B	Aloxe-Corton	£29.00	£174.00
DRACP20B	Aloxe-Corton, 1er Cru	£33.00	£198.00
DRCOR20B	Corton, Grand Cru	£53.00	£318.00

Domaine Thierry Violot-Guillemard, Pommard. 8 ha.

Joannès has done very well this year, his second in control of the operation. (His mother Estelle is still keeping a close eye on the allocations.) He has kept hold of the lightness and coolness which were so impressive last year, but the wines have real weight and class. They don't at all look like wines from a hot drought year.

There are some new parcels coming into the estate from Pommard, Volnay and Chassagne which take the the estate's size to 8 hectares, from which they are making a total of 22 different wines.

The range is an elegant and supple one. There are no whole bunches used on the Bourgogne Rouge (which was bottled in September) or the Pommard Brescul, but for all the other reds

there was no destemming at all. For Joannès it's a very concentrated vintage, with an early, pre Christmas malolactic fermentation. Unlike the early bottling of the 2019s, these were not already in bottle in November but were due for bottling as soon as the glassware arrived at the end of 2021.

The wines all have a really super perfume in the mouth, with a ripe succulent flavour but really harmonious freshness. There is also an impressive purity to the wines. This was one of the easiest ranges wines to enjoy in November. They picked very early, from 20th August. The wine making practice of the house, conveyed through several generations, I believe, is one of minimal 'working' of the must. Again in 2020 this meant no 'pigeage' (punch down) at all, and only one 'remontage' (pumping over) per day. The wines look a little darker than last year, but are still paler here than at most other domaines. Alcohol levels are at 13.5-14%, a shade higher than in 2019.

The lighter wines: Bourgogne Maisons Dieu, Beaune Lulune and Pommard Brescul are all very pale in colour by the standards of the vintage. All have a great explosion of perfumes in the mouth. The Premier Cru Pommard Platière is intensely seductive with a glorious perfume and a crisp, fresh palate and fine, powdery tannins. The estate's top two wines Pommard Rugiens and Epenots are fascinating to compare. We really ought to sell them as a pair. Rugiens is again the denser of the two, and, this year, seemed a bit more serious. Epenots was all charm, supple and soft. Who knows how they will evolve? The whole range is so different.

		bottle	case of 6
VGMEU20B	Meursault, Les Meix-Chavaux	£47.00	£282.00
VG BMD20B	Bourgogne, Les Maisons-Dieu	£19.50	£117.00
VG BLU20B	Beaune, En Lulune	£27.50	£165.00
VG PEB20B	Pommard, En Brescul	£38.00	£228.00
VG PLP20B	Pommard, 1er Cru La Platière	£50.00	£300.00
VG PEP20B	Pommard, 1er Cru Les Epenots	£75.00	£450.00
VG PLR20B	Pommard, 1er Cru Les Rugiens	£75.00	£450.00

Domaine Philippe Garrey, Saint-Martin-sous-Montaigu, Mercurey. 5 ha.

Finding a new source of great wine is a challenge: a needle in a haystack. We've stumbled upon growers, been tipped off, and occasionally come across good wines in restaurants or at tastings. In Burgundy it is even more difficult as almost everyone good has been discovered by prospecting importers who spend longer in Burgundy than I am able to. So to be able to credit an internet search with the initial contact with Philippe Garrey is new for us. Philippe is a sixth generation 'vigneron' and took over a 3-hectare domaine in 2005, which he has developed to 5 hectares. He makes some Aligoté and has a half hectare of Chardonnay for a Mercurey Blanc, both of which are vinified and matured in 250 litre ceramic barrels. But the estate is primarily focused on red wines. Philippe farms everything himself, biodynamically since 2007. (He's been certified with Demeter since 2010.) Like many, the commercialisation of the wines in bottle is a relatively recent step.

Philippe's aim is to make wines which reflect the terroir. He is not looking for power or extraction; for him, balance is crucial. A little sulphur is used when required, usually after the malolactic fermentation. Grapes are hand-picked (obviously!) in small 7kg boxes. Grapes

receive a 4-5 day cold maceration before 20-23 days on the skins during and after fermentation, with natural yeasts only. The reds age in barrel for 12 months. 10% new oak is used.

2020 was very dry, so vineyard work was easy and the grapes were clean with no disease. But the vineyard was very short of moisture, which translated to low yields of 37 hl/ha. Philippe picked early to preserve freshness, and to anticipate too much concentration, from 26th-31st August. Like others, he severely limited extraction. There was some pigeage at the end of fermentation, and just a short daily remontage. Whole bunch fermentation he uses regularly, at 50-60%. The 2020 wines have 13-13.9% alcohol; he is not alone among viticulturists in crediting his biodynamic practices for these relatively low levels of alcohol.

We have a small allocation from Philippe made up of the following five wines:

Mercrey Blanc La Chagnée is a 0.4 hectare parcel of 30 year vines on a steep, south facing limestone slope. Quite rich with some fatness. Fresh and aromatic with a touch of pholics.

Bourgogne Rouge Clos des Boilles is a blend of parcels 50, 22 and 7 years old. Philippe has planted the 7 year old vineyard with 14,000 plants per hectare. This is a Bourgogne Rouge with deep colour, a rich nose and exceptional mouth perfume. Fresh crunchy fruit.

Mercrey Premier Cru Clos des Montaignes. These vines were planted in 1959, along an east-facing slope of limestone. The wine shows more mineral and spice than fruit. Dense, good energy.

Mercrey Premier Cru La Chassière. La Chassière is a south-east-facing vineyard of limestone over clay with vines aged 60, 40 and 35 years. It is more supple on attack, the finish firm and dry.

Mercrey Premier Cru Clos du Paradis. 60 year old vines, on marl and clay. Notes of cassis and cherry with voluptuous attack and a firm structure behind. Richly perfumed.

Philippe is a calm, considered guy. He speaks carefully and precisely in good English. With experience you can tell a lot from a conversation with a producer how the wines are likely to taste, and so I was not at all surprised by how much I enjoyed them when we met. His wines are cool, precise, elegant. I have asked if we can also buy a tiny selection of older vintages in case you would like a bottle or two to try. Please ask if interested. He is also a keen follower of Arsenal FC, which makes a welcome change from all the rugby nuts we come across.

Philippe talks [here](#) about the vintage.

		bottle	case of 6
PGMBC20B	Mercrey Blanc, La Chagnée	£19.50	£117.00
PGBOR20B	Bourgogne, Clos des Boilles	£17.00	£102.00
PGMCM20B	Mercrey, 1er Cru Clos de Montaigu	£23.50	£141.00
PGMLC20B	Mercrey, 1er Cru La Chassière	£23.50	£141.00
PGMCP20B	Mercrey, 1er Cru Clos du Paradis	£27.50	£165.00