

DOMAINE DE LA ROMANÉE-CONTI

2014 VINTAGE OFFERING



CORTON

Since November 11, 2008, the Domaine has consented to lease the AOC Corton Grand Cru vineyards of Domaine Prince Florent de Merode, for a total of 2.2746 hectares in the climats of Clos du Roi, Bressandes and Renardes. Clos du Roi: 0.5721 hectares; Bressandes: 1.1944 hectares; Renardes: 0.5081 hectares



ÉCHÉZEAUX

Of all the Domaine's wines, this is the most forward. It opens up sooner than the others, with a ravishing clarity of expression, uncomplicated and cleanly etched; a caressing softness cloaks a steely skeleton which permits it to evolve with elegance. He is the younger brother of Grands Échézeaux, the glorious elder whose fortune Échézeaux aspires to equal. It sometimes comes very close when it speaks with the muscular language of the conquistadors. Surface area: 4.6737 hectares



GRANDS-ÉCHÉZEAUX

It is "Grands" before being Échézeaux. It is a country gentleman, aristocrat and dreamer, who idles willingly with the unhurried step of his horse in a forest filled with the scents of sundry mushrooms, mosses, decaying leaves and of furtive small game, which spill forth in a multitude of shifting alliances. All of that is expressed with feeling, in a refined language — musical, concise and pure like the message of a Mozart quartet. Surface area: 3.5263 hectares



ROMANÉE-ST-VIVANT

Romanée-St-Vivant is flirtatious; one cannot help loving it. Behind this grace resides a strength in such perfect balance that, at first, it is imperceptible. Surface area: 5.2858 hectares



RICHEBOURG

This immediate neighbor of la Romanée-Conti escorts Her Majesty with good-natured ribaldry. It is a king's musketeer who likes company, likes to laugh and to sing, to feel that the somewhat brutal strength of his athlete's body is admired. Surface area: 3.5110 hectares



LA TÂCHE

Nothing evokes La Tâche so much as the wonderful portrait of Richelieu by Philippe de Champaigne, which expresses the Cardinal's fiery and angular authority, a nervous hand posed on the hilt of his sword, while the sword itself is drowned in a luxurious cascade of ermine and velvet. La Tâche is elegance and rigor. Beneath the frequent firmness of its tannins, passion is aflame, restrained by an implacable, courtly elegance. Surface area: 6.0620 hectares



ROMANÉE-CONTI

"As if, in this square of earth, the gods had bequeathed us a memory of the fascinating vestige of a timeless perfection." — Richard Olney
The wine of Prince de Conti, she is velvet, seduction and mystery. It is the most Proustian of all great wines: Concealed in the secret perfume of fading rose petals of a Romanée-Conti 1956, is it not the intense and pure sensation of the recaptured past which arrests and enchants us? Surface area: 1.8140 hectares



MONTRACHET

"Incontestably of the first order of white wines from the Côte d'Or and probably of all the white wines of the world." — Dr. Lavalle 1855
Le Montrachet is a wine of unparalleled complexity, its elegance and power make an exceptional wine. Surface area: .6759 hectares



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THE 2014 HARVEST REPORT

by Aubert de VILLAIN

Each year, once the harvest is over, it is important for us to try to describe some of the significant events around which the vintage has taken shape.

How could we fail to first mention the splendor of the mosaic of *climats*, this work of art that stretches out in front of us in the autumnal sun? During this short and magical moment, the vineyards, relieved of their fruit, dazzle us with the splendid beauty of their leaves that have turned in a few days to sumptuous shades of gold and copper, as if they wanted to recognize the attention and care they received throughout the year.

The villages of the Côte are buzzing with activity. In the wineries the *vignerons* are busy with the fermenting vats. Everywhere opulent, honeyed scents emanate from the streets and houses announcing the birth of a great vintage.

Yet, the boisterous, mischievous and quick-tempered gods that govern had not an easy season in store for us. This play, full of twists and turns, can be divided into three acts:

After a damp and exceptionally mild winter, which made the first work of the soil difficult, spring was one of the most beautiful and driest we have known for a long time.

The vineyards benefited from outstanding climatic conditions and grew in peace. Very rarely have we seen such healthy leaves and such a balanced growth of the vines. Diseases were nearly absent and the phytosanitary treatments were kept at a minimum.

Flowering was extremely early, quite spread out due to the cold nights, but complete. We observed *millerandage* especially in the older vineyards, but almost no *coulure* this year.

This first luminous act ended on June 28, when very violent storms brought hail to a great part of the area and caused devastating damage in some places like Beaune, Pommard and Volnay. Vosne-Romanée or the Chassagne and Puligny sectors were not so much affected.

Immediately after those storms, a short heat wave resulted in "scalding" phenomena in the vineyards: the berries that were the most exposed to the burning sun "roasted" and dried. Many of them fell by themselves, but it was necessary to eliminate the



remaining berries during the harvest. This light, natural thinning was ultimately not a problem in this year of abundant yields.

From July, the second act of this play brought all that a *vigneron* does not want: out-of-season cold, a significant lack of sun, much rain (more than 100mm in July), humidity and traces of botrytis as soon as early August.

In addition, as the work of the soil stopped from August 1 when *veraison* started, the grass benefited from these favorable conditions and developed in the vineyards and became difficult to control.

Happily, the advance gained by the vineyards in the springtime, although slower in July and August, allowed the grapes to reach reasonable maturity in late August, despite the fact that the *veraison* process lasted the whole month. This had the effect of accentuating the differences of maturity between the berries that we had already noticed at the time of flowering.

Everything was ready for the third act that, from late August, totally reversed the imposed direction of the two preceding months.

Such was the situation in September, when all the best a *vigneron* can wish for his vineyards arrived: north wind, dry and sunny weather, moderate heat... the maturation accelerated and almost exploded as the vineyards were making the most of the water reserves accumulated in July and August. The Chardonnays, especially, progressed very rapidly. The Pinot Noirs were not so rapid and that is the reason why, before setting the harvest dates, it was necessary to take into account the unusual cold of July and August and to be patient. We had to wait much more than 100 days after the flowering to be able to taste the fine and concentrated aromas of the grapes that prove their full maturity.

The last anger of the gods: a storm, fortunately with no hail or heavy rains, hit Burgundy on September 19. We witnessed a rare phenomenon occurring only a few times in a century: the outstanding resistance of the grapes. After that stormy episode, we were aware of it as never before. We feared an explosion of botrytis the next morning, as the storm brought hot and humid conditions, but there was not, in fact, an attack of rot in either the Chardonnays or the Pinot Noirs. This can certainly be attributed to the thickness of the grape skins, which were strengthened by the difficult climatic conditions the vineyards had to face, but also by other factors, more mysterious and not as easy to analyze. Our *climats* have their own logic and secrets!

The vineyards made the most of the wonderful windy, dry and sunny week that followed, allowing the grapes to concentrate and fully ripen.

This makes us understand that the unravelling of the play – the adventure that we have lived for six or seven months during the vegetative cycle of the vineyards – is unpredictable, whether for the best or for the worst.

Rainy episodes, for instance, that worry the *vigneron* when they happen, may in fact be a delight for the vineyards as they will use the water reserves to accelerate photosynthesis and the full maturity of the grapes.

An attack of botrytis can bring the worst, in other words an explosion of the mushroom that can be very rapid in favorable conditions, but also help the vineyards to ripen more easily and completely thanks to the reduction in quantity that it will cause. As a result, the grapes will be of better quality.

In the same way this year, the excessive growth of grass that was the consequence of rainy conditions and that we feared we would be unable to control, acted as a buffer that regulated the water supply to the vineyards and certainly played a part in their resistance to botrytis.

The same is true, of course, when conditions are favorable. The vineyards never forget anything. So, it is obvious that the exceptional spring had an essential influence on the health of the vineyards throughout the growing season, on their resistance and on the quality of maturity at the end of the season.

We started the harvest on September 16 on a beautiful, hot day and stopped on the afternoon of September 19 because of the storm. We started again on September 20, accompanied, until the end, by perfect harvest weather: luminous, dry and temperate.

The vineyards were harvested in the following order:

- Corton: September 16
- La Tâche: September 17, 18 and 19
- Romanée-Conti: September 19 (morning)
- Richebourg: September 20 and 21
- Romanée-St-Vivant: September 21, 22 and 23
- Montrachet: September 22
- Grands Échézeaux: September 23 and 24
- Échézeaux: September 24, 25 and 26

As always, our team of around 80 pickers, all with consummate experience in selective picking, worked attentively, brilliantly directed by our vineyard manager, Nicolas Jacob.

They eliminated the dried botrytis of August, the berries that had been hit by hail in late June or the "scalded" ones that were dried as well, leaving aside the large berries that were not ripe enough – these would be picked in a later second pass, as we are used to doing.

The grapes that fell past on the sorting table were of wonderful structure, color and taste. In addition, we rediscovered what we had not seen since 2009: a good quantity, one of those which gives smiles to the *vigneron* and the amateur!

The Montrachet area had also experienced light hail at the end of June. At the harvest, the damaged berries had dried and most of them had fallen. On September 15, the grapes could have been considered ripe, but they were so healthy that we preferred to wait a little longer. On September 22, the grapes

that we harvested were golden-colored, ripe and perfectly healthy. The sugar levels and acidity were in perfect balance and quantity was also satisfactory. This was a moment of great intensity! We were alone; there was nobody around us but the crows!

The general consensus is that 2014 should produce great white wines in Burgundy.

Vinifications are in progress under the calm and careful supervision of Bernard Noble and his team. They take place in tranquility, even though there are many more vats this year, more than we have had since 2009. The rises in temperature are harmonious and the color of the red wines stands out. The first devattings show the dark red colors that are always the sign of great maturity. The balance, notably in what concerns the acidity, is excellent.

It is of course too early to give a definitive opinion. We have to wait until the malolactic fermentations are over, but we are very optimistic about the future quality of the 2014 vintage.

Once again, the new adventure that we lived in 2014 proves that it is through difficult seasons with "ups and downs" that our Burgundian vines, the Pinot Noir and the Chardonnay, produce wines of the highest quality. To ensure success, the *vigneron* must manage the anguish and anxiety that are typical of any growing season.

Never more than this year have the two great elements of the game been confirmed: risk-taking is obligatory and what we call "luck," which may simply be the smile that the vineyards give to the respectful and loving *vigneron*.

- Aubert de VILLAIN,
Co-Director
October 14, 2014