

# DOMAINE DE LA ROMANÉE-CONTI

2020 VINTAGE OFFERING



WILSON DANIELS

---

WILSON DANIELS HAS PROUDLY REPRESENTED  
DOMAINE DE LA ROMANÉE-CONTI  
EXCLUSIVELY IN THE U.S. SINCE 1979

---







# DOMAINE DE LA ROMANÉE-CONTI

## 2020 VINTAGE HARVEST REPORT

---

2020 was a strange year if we consider all the unexpected events and suffering man had to cope with due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but it was also an extraordinary year, as you are going to see, thanks to the benevolence of the gods, which was in total contradiction to the pandemic.

First and above all, spring was unforgettable this year. While everywhere in the world governments were imposing all sorts of constraints to face an unprecedented viral attack, nature broke free. Thanks to the lockdown, it seemed to find its real place again and forget the one to which it was little by little reduced. From the very beginning of the lockdown, we could observe that planes had disappeared from the sky, that roads were deserted, and that human activity had stopped. At the same time the sky was becoming more luminous, birds seemed to be getting more and more numerous, singing louder than they ever had, and flowers were showing a range of colors never seen before. Nature was showing its happiness. Vineyards joined this natural concert displaying vigor and health. Budbreak started extremely early on March 20th. In our opinion, this was a very important factor, maybe one of the most important factors that marked the vintage. The same thing occurred in previous vintages, especially in 2018 and 2019, but to a lesser extent. This earlier and earlier budbreak is of course the result of global warming — or rather of climate change — that we have known for a few years. If its impact is so important, it is because it comes first in the cycle of vegetative development and thus determines the dates of all of the following phases: flowering, véraison, maturity... and consequently the harvest.

It is not so often that climatic conditions allow us to work in the vineyards with such serenity and ease as this year. It was decided “up there” that the weather would be beautiful. Then we, vigneron and farmers, who were authorized to work, made the most of it. The weather was sunny, apart from a few rains that increased the water reserves built up during winter. These reserves will prove to be essential to the vines in summer. Contrary to other years, in 2018 for instance, when the vines exhausted us and obliged us to run after them throughout the spring... in 2020, thanks to the sunny weather, Nicolas Jacob, our vineyard manager, could carry out all the works (pruning, disbudding, tying up, tying down, trimming or suckering) in due time with no hurry. He could also put in place the various experimental tests made necessary by the climate change: for instance, we have decided to use rootstocks that can better withstand extremely stressful conditions than the universal 161-49,





Perrine Fenal | Co-Director



Bertrand de Villaine | Co-Director

and also, for two years now, we have increased the height of the canopy in order to protect the vines and berries from excessive heat. This phenomenon of scalded berries has indeed been recurrent in recent years. There was another major factor in the way vineyards resisted in spite of the dry and hot weather — sometimes excessively dry and hot — that prevailed from April to the harvest: vineyards had been well watered during winter, far less from April to June, and not at all in July and August, except for a last rainfall in the middle of the harvest at the end of August. As a result of temperatures, flowering was logically early. This is an essential phase of the vegetative growing cycle of vineyards. It is at this time indeed depending on the weather being favorable or not to the fertilization of future grape berries, that the quantity of grapes or wine is determined, on condition of course that mildew, oidium, botrytis or hail don't cause any damage... The mid-flowering stage was reached between May 20th and 23rd depending on the climats. Flowering went well with an ideal proportion of millerand grapes (small berries) that are not very juicy, but become very sugared at harvest time. In every vintage, millerand grapes are a factor of quality.

Wind is another essential factor in the development of vines. It is among the most active elements in the "building" of a vintage. As often pointed out in the past, the wind blowing on Palm Sunday, a week before Easter, will be the dominant wind for the rest of the year. This proved true this year again: the North wind blew continuously on Palm Sunday. Contrary to Western or Southern winds that bring rain in Burgundy, for vignerons it is the promise of beautiful crops and prosperity. It brings the dry weather that vineyards like and stops most feared diseases like mildew or botrytis (oidium also, but to a lesser extent, since the cool nights that accompany the

North wind may cause the development of this fungus). Again, spring was miraculous, as everything was in place so that the vineyards could grow and their grapes develop in the best possible conditions.

As all vignerons know, vineyards like drought and heat. No other plant of our region can withstand these conditions better than the grape, but not too much all the same! On July 25th, our vineyards were the most beautiful and healthy that we had seen since 2015 (which is saying a lot!) when, that year, with their outstanding beauty, vineyards seemed to celebrate the inscription of the Climats de Bourgogne to the UNESCO World Heritage list. But from the end of July, the drought and heat that had set in at the beginning of the month became more and more intense as a result of the wind blowing restlessly day after day. The vineyards faced a difficult period that varied depending on the climat, but during which they showed their capacity for resilience. This heatwave lasted from the end of July until mid-August. It tested the resistance of all the terrestrial actors of the vintage: vineyards, grapes and men of course. All were inflicted ordeals comparable to the ones that the gods subjected Ulysses to in the Odyssey. But these ordeals made Ulysses stronger and victorious in the end, as were the vineyards in 2020! Vineyards first resisted very well. The *véraison* (when berries change colors) that started on July 23rd in younger vineyards and at the end of July/beginning of August in the old ones (i.e vineyards over 25 years old) was heterogeneous and less rapid than expected due to the "blockages" that heat had caused in the physiological evolution of some vines. Then, they showed signs of suffering: leaves sagged in the afternoon and *véraison* stopped. When heat was becoming too intense, some vines seemed to abandon their grapes in order to keep the photosynthesis action of leaves to survive. It was at this time that the role played by both the situation

of the climats on the hillside and the age of vineyards came into play. We could see the suffering of vineyards situated on the upper part of the hillside, where there is not much soil, but also strangely enough, of vineyards on the very low parts.

Piedmont vineyards of premiers crus and grands crus, where the soil is generally deep, managed very well and their grapes ripened quite normally. It is always the case in difficult years, but on condition that vines are old enough. As for the grapes, their development was different according to the vines. Due to the scorching heat and exceptionally strong sun, a few berries were scalded.

As for the other vines — adult and young ones — which represent the greatest majority, ripeness progressed normally thanks to photosynthesis, but with accelerated rapidity. To give you an example: our old vines of Richebourg were around 11.7° on August 10th, 12.7° on the 14th (four days later) and 13.2° on the 21st, that is 1.5° in 10 days, which was very rapid compared to what happened only five years ago. The harvest there took place on August 23rd and 24th (at 13.5°). But it should be noted too that the average weight of berries instead of decreasing as should be the case with only a concentration phenomenon, increased from 80 to 93 grams. This proved that vineyards did not suffer as much as we had feared and that the reserves of water were enough to make them live and ripen their grapes. Isn't it also the concrete demonstration that our historic vineyards should be able to adapt to the climate change if they are given understanding and help? This demonstration from the vineyards has nothing to do with the projections and prophecies of those who mistake the logic of men for the logic of nature.

Let's come back to men now: some took holidays in July, some others in early August. But everything was ready for the harvest. Holidays were however shortened. Everybody was worried: drought and heat kept on without mercy, leaving no rest either to men or vineyards. We were wondering whether the harvest was not going to start on August 10th ... but we remained reasonable and drew on our experience of vintages like 2003 for instance, even though the conditions in 2020 did not resemble any other year. It was necessary to make the right decisions in respect of the philosophy of our Domaine and of the wines we want to produce. Our key idea, this year, was our will to harvest ripe, but not too ripe, grapes. Never mind if the phenolic maturity was not reached at 100% (there is by the way no precise definition of its optimum level, you can only have the right indications by tasting berries). We didn't want to run the risk of having overripe grapes with specific tastes of prune or port

wine. Consequently, at harvest time, both in the vineyards and at the sorting table, scalded or withered berries were eliminated. Even without those berries, the musts that were analyzed reached more than 13°. It was the proof that the maturity of healthy grapes was very high. On August 18th, the harvest started with the three very young vineyards that had suffered the most from heat and drought. The others could still wait. On August 23rd (as a coincidence exactly on the same day as in 2003), we began harvesting our old vineyards. The order changed from day to day according to the brief analysis of grapes that we kept on doing every day in the vineyards that had not yet been harvested.

Natural and sanitary obligations were respected. As it was hot, picking began at 7am and went on until 1pm. Vineyards were harvested in the following order:

<b>Richebourg</b>	August 23-24
<b>Grands Échézeaux</b>	August 25
<b>Romanée-St-Vivant</b>	August 26-27
<b>Romanée-Conti</b>	August 27
<b>La Tâche</b>	August 30, September 2-3
<b>Échézeaux</b>	August 30, September 1
<b>Montrachet</b>	September 5
<b>Corton-Charlemagne</b>	September 7-9

August 29-31: We did not harvest because grapes had been wetted by night rains.

These were blessed rains for the vineyards that had not been harvested yet. At the winery, a team of 14 people worked at the sorting table following the benevolent instructions given by Alexandre Bernier, our cellar master. The grapes that arrived in the winery were superb: very small clusters with small berries, delicious to eat. Skins were black, thick and forged by the weather conditions. The quantity of juice was normal, contrary to what we had feared. Sorting was limited. There was no trace of botrytis. Only the withered or burnt berries and a few big clusters that were not ripe enough were removed. All in all, this represented only 1.5% of the total crop. Vinifications were carried out with 90 to 100% of whole clusters. Fermentations started smoothly and lasted between 18 and 21 days, depending on vats, under the supervision of Alexandre Bernier. Pumping-over and punching off the cap were the only necessary operations. This last one had to be done slowly so that extraction should not exceed its natural level.



As soon as the grapes were into the vats, musts showed dark, red colors predicting rich wines. As fermentations progressed, we had the divine surprise of tasting musts, then wines, whose dominant character is not at all power, as could have been the case in 2018 and 2019, but freshness, charm and elegance. The balance between acidity and tannins was a great surprise. It was exactly what we were looking for when we decided to harvest early.

As was everyone in Burgundy, we were afraid that the wines could lack balance due to the very hot episodes that the vineyards had experienced. This worry was unfounded. This dry and hot period had not the negative impacts we had feared. Vineyards in Burgundy like drought, but not much intense heat. They kept in memory all the successive events, whether favorable or not, and thanks to all the benefits they received during the rest of the year, they possessed all the necessary resources so that the grapes could ripen in a complete and balanced way.

We were expecting opulent and warm wines as in 2019. Wines of the 2020 vintage are totally different. They are powerful, indeed, with alcohol contents often reaching 13.5°, but their main characteristics are acidity and freshness, reminding us of the '90 vintages like 1991 for instance, or 1997, rather than those I have just mentioned. This is a wonderful surprise. We are hopeful that 2020 will rank among the most successful vintages of these last years, apart and original.

After what happened in 2020, the extreme stress that nature imposed on us in August and the wines that were born from this new scenario, we are entitled to wonder whether 2020 will be regarded as the first vintage of a new era, when the vines and the vignerons will experience together a kind of mutation, and invent a viticulture from which different wines, but of the same high quality, will be produced? It may be a little arrogant, ambitious or unrealistic for a viticulture that has made wine on these hillsides for more than a thousand years, under an essentially changing climate, to imagine that it will invent something "new," and it is surely too early, but it is not illegitimate ... "every dream is legitimate," as wrote a French author (whose name I forgot!).

— *Aubert de Villaine, December 2020*





## CUVÉE DUVAUT-BLOCHET

Lesser known but brought to light again this year are the few holdings that the Domaine owns in the village of Vosne-Romanée. For the seventh time since 1999, the Domaine is releasing a small number of bottle of its premier cru holdings. The name is a tribute to Jacques-Marie Duvault-Bloch, founder of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti as we know it today and ancestor of Aubert de Villaine.



## 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, moss, 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. Lavalley 1855*

Le Montrachet is a wine of unparalleled complexity, its elegance and power make an exceptional wine. Surface area: 0.6759 hectares



## CORTON-CHARLEMAGNE

The Domaine was able to gain access to over 2.9ha of vines after the harvest of 2018 and is presenting here its first ever vintage of Corton-Charlemagne. Their four plots are located in the two Lieux-dits Le Charlemagne in Aloxe-Corton and En Charlemagne in Pernand-Vergelesses. With one plot on top of the hill, one at the foot of the hill and the last two plots half way through the slopes, the Domaine's Corton-Charlemagne will present a perfect picture of what this famous hill can offer. Surface area: 2.9142 hectares











*View of the eastern part of La Tâche (left side of the road)  
and the village of Vosne-Romanée in the background*

**WILSON DANIELS**   
SINCE 1978

[wilsondaniels.com](http://wilsondaniels.com)

[@wilsondaniels](https://www.instagram.com/wilsondaniels)