

## CELLAR NOTES

# 2018 Burgundy Preview

Balancing ripeness with freshness and restraint was key for promising Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays; more than 150 potentially outstanding and classic wines rated



Bouchard Père & Fils' Beaune Grèves Vigne de l'Enfant Jésus Domaine is potentially outstanding in 2018. (Courtesy of Bouchard Père & Fils)



**By Bruce Sanderson**

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*Note: Wine Spectator senior editor Bruce Sanderson visited Burgundy earlier this year for his annual barrel-tasting trip to evaluate the young wines. For full reports, along with tasting notes, from some*

of his most exciting domaine visits, check out [his archive of recent Winery Intel reports \[https://www.winespectator.com/display/bruce-sanderson-decanted\]](https://www.winespectator.com/display/bruce-sanderson-decanted).

In what seems like a year ago, given the developments of the past two months, I spent a week in Burgundy at the end of January, visiting cellars and tasting the 2018 vintage.

Overall, I tasted 300 wines from 2018, a few 2019s from barrel and about three dozen 2017s. Some 2018s were already bottled, particularly whites, while others were in stainless steel tanks, blended and awaiting bottling, or still in barrel and not yet racked.

The 2018 growing season in Burgundy was the warmest year yet in the 21st century, with temperatures on average 2° Celsius higher than normal. The vines yielded generously, particularly for Chardonnay, so it was important not to over crop in order to have concentration in the wines.

It was a balancing act between high sugars in the grapes and getting ripe tannins in the skins and seeds. “2018 was my 20th vintage, but it was not easy,” conceded [Cyprien Arlaud of Domaine Arlaud \[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/morey-st-denis-magic-at-burgundy-s-domaine-arlaud\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/morey-st-denis-magic-at-burgundy-s-domaine-arlaud). “I had to fight the ripeness, but also to find the ripe tannins. It was important not to look for too much power.”

Frédéric Weber, winemaker at [Bouchard Père & Fils \[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search\\_flag/winery\]](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_flag/winery) concurred. “Yes, it’s a warm vintage, but for the reds and whites, there is a definition, the expression of *terroir* is there.” Yet more than one vintner said that the wines went through stages where they really weren’t expressing their identities.

“At pressing [in October], the wines showed *terroir*,” explained [Mounir Saouma of négociant Lucien Le Moine \[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/a-different-take-on-burgundy-s-2018-vintage\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/a-different-take-on-burgundy-s-2018-vintage). “By March, they all tasted the same. Just now [in January] they are beginning to show the vineyard character again, the purity of each place.” At [Domaine Leflaive \[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/an-ideal-vintage-at-domaine-leflaive\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/an-ideal-vintage-at-domaine-leflaive), managing director Brice de la Morandière said, “I was a little worried in October, but the wines are really showing much better now.”

And for the most part, the wines were showing well during my annual visit to the region in late January and early February. At Lucien Le Moine, Saouma presented the wines in pairs, contrasting red Burgundies from limestone soils with those from clay. Their textures, structures and expressions of fruit, mineral and vegetal aromas and flavors reflected their origins.

Generally speaking, the reds are big, dense, fleshy and fruity Burgundies, with unbridled exuberance and youthful appeal. There were some that I tasted verging on jammy in

character and soft, but the majority had freshness to balance their breadth.

"In my opinion, [wines from] the Côte de Beaune have something special in 2018, as interesting as the Côte de Nuits, because it was harvested earlier than Côte de Nuits. It was hot and dry the first two weeks of September. Some of the Côte de Nuits was picked a bit too late," said [Louis Jadot](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search\\_flag/winery\]](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_flag/winery) technical director Frédéric Barnier.

The white Burgundies are less consistent, with opulent profiles and soft structures. Where there is balancing acidity, particularly from certain *climats* such as Corton-Charlemagne, Chevalier-Montrachet, Puligny-Montrachet Les Foliatières and Meursault-Perrières, the wines have sufficient tension. And where the yields were kept in check, there is concentration and intensity.

Both Louis Jadot and [Maison Joseph Drouhin](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search\\_flag/winery\]](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_flag/winery) blocked the [malolactic conversion](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/malolactic\\_fermentation\\_%28ml%29\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/malolactic_fermentation_%28ml%29) in its whites, though there was very little malic acid to begin with due to the ripeness levels. At [Olivier Leflaive](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search\\_flag/winery\]](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_flag/winery), winemaker Franck Grux performed three times more [lees](#) [\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/lees\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/lees) stirring than usual to nourish the whites, which account for roughly 80 percent of production.

Bouchard Père & Fils' Weber did short, gentle pressings to avoid too much potassium from skins and thus lower the acidity, shorter fermentations in stainless steel (one to two weeks), then [racked](#) [\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/racking\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/racking) the wines into barrel with a lot of lees. In Chablis, technical director Gregory Viennois vinified the cuvées at

[Domaine Laroche](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search\\_by/exact/text\\_search\\_flag/winery\]](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_flag/winery) to maintain freshness, working with healthy lees and eschewing [bâtonnage](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/b%C3%A2tonnage\]](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/b%C3%A2tonnage) (the stirring of the lees, usually to fatten the wines).

The reds are more successful in 2018, and several of the domaines I visited were very upbeat about the vintage. "2018 will be perhaps one of the best vintages for us," declared [Domaine de la Romanée-Conti co-director Aubert de Villaine](#)

[\[https://www.winespectator.com/articles/exuberant-2018-pinot-noirs-at-domaine-de-la-romanee-conti\]](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/exuberant-2018-pinot-noirs-at-domaine-de-la-romanee-conti). "It's a vintage I cannot compare to any I have known, maybe 1966, but even in '66 we didn't get that ripeness."

"It was a hot summer, but there was a lot of freshness inside the grapes," noted Mounir Saouma. "The acidity is not high, but beautiful. The wines fresher at the end of January than six months ago."

"For me, 2018 is a fantastic vintage," said Dimitri Bazas, winemaker at [Champy](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_flag/winery). "For me it's a mix between 2009, 2005 and a wing of '03, but nothing to do with the quantity [of the small 2003 harvest]. There is big fruit and big tannins."

"I love the vintage, there is good quality and good quantity, but it needs time," explained young Thibaud Clerget, who has been in charge of his family's [Domaine Yvon Clerget](https://www.winespectator.com/wine/search/submitted/Y/search_by/exact/text_search_flag/winery) since 2015, referring to the concentration and elevated alcohol.

Indeed, the natural ripeness translated from 13.0 to 14.5 in potential alcohol among the winemakers I visited. [Cyrielle Rousseau](https://www.winespectator.com/articles/the-gold-standard-of-gevrey-chambertin) recalled that for the first time, they did not [chaptalize](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/chaptalization) to extend the fermentations a day or two.

The winter of 2018 was warm, with a lot of rain. Spring arrived sooner than usual, also with plenty of rain, a positive, because it was these spring rains that ensured enough water to get through the hot, dry summer. A good, fast flowering occurred at the end of May. Globally in Burgundy the summer was dry, windy and without disease pressure, though De Villaine reported approximately 20 percent crop reduction to powdery mildew, which helped to concentrate the remaining crop.

There were some storms in June, with hail July 14 in Nuits-St.-Georges that affected Les Cailles and Les St.-Georges, according to Bouchard's Weber. Some kept leaves to protect fruit and promote freshness; many performed [green harvests](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/green_harvest) in July and beginning of August for Chardonnay to tame the large yield. "The challenge was to recognize [what was] good volume, above-average volume and high yield," said Leflaive's Grux. "You could have the maximum yield if you didn't manage your vineyards carefully. If yields were too high, [phenolic maturity](https://www.winespectator.com/glossary/show/id/polyphenolic_ripeness) is not ideal."

By the end of August, it was time to harvest. The grapes were healthy, resulting in little to no sorting. Nonetheless, it was important to harvest at the right time and quickly. Most wineries had finished by the middle of September. "At Domaine Laroche we were the first to start the harvest in Chablis the 28th of August (Bougrots, Côte de Léchet & Les Butteaux)," said Gregory Viennois. "Some vintages we have to wait, but for some other vintages we have to start earlier and harvest faster."

Jadot's Barnier told me September was hot and dry. "There was a two-week window for harvesting. After the 15th of September was probably too late."

The best 2018 reds will deliver pleasure; the whites also, but it will be prudent to choose carefully. Following is a list of recommended wines based on my tastings. Bear in mind that many were not yet bottled and the racking, blending, sulfur additions, fining and filtration options chosen (or not) by vintners may affect the quality in the bottle.

## Bruce Sanderson's Recommended 2018 Burgundies

*All wines included in this report were tasted non-blind, at the properties in Burgundy. For those buying pre-arrivals, or who want to get a jump on small-production, highly allocated wines, the following wines were highlights of senior editor Bruce Sanderson's tastings—many still in barrel or otherwise unfinished—in Burgundy in January. Some 2018 whites, for example Mâconnais and Chablis, are beginning to arrive in the U.S. now; official reviews are noted by a final score rather than a score range. His full tasting report on the bottled 2018 red Burgundies will be published next year, with official scores, tasting notes and recommended drink windows.*

### **Arlaud & Cyprien Arlaud**

Bonnes Mares (93-96)

Bourgogne Roncevie (87-90)

Chambolle-Musigny Les Sentiers (91-94)

Charmes-Chambertin (92-95)

Clos de la Roche (93-96)

Gevrey-Chambertin Aux Combottes (91-94)

Morey-St.-Denis Aux Cheseaux (89-92)

Morey-St.-Denis Les Ruchots (90-93)

Cyprien Arlaud Vosne-Romanée (89-92)

### **Bouchard Père & Fils**

#### **Reds**

Beaune Clos de la Mousse (90-93)

Beaune Grèves Vigne de l'Enfant Jésus Domaine (91-94)

Beaune Premier Cru du Château (88-91)

Chambertin-Clos de Bèze (93-96)

Corton Le Corton Domaine (93-96)

Echézeaux Domaine (92-95)

Nuits-St.-Georges Les Cailles Domaine (91-94)

Pommard Les Rugiens Domaine (91-94)

Volnay Les Caillerets Ancienne Cuvée Carnot Domaine (92-95)

Volnay Taille Pieds Domaine (90-93)

#### **Whites**

Beaune White Clos St.-Landry Domaine (88-91)  
Chevalier-Montrachet Domaine (93-96)  
Corton Charlemagne Domaine (91-94)  
Meursault Les Clous Domaine (87-90)  
Meursault Genevrières Domaine (90-93)  
Montrachet Domaine (94-97)

## **Champy**

### **Reds**

Beaune Vieilles Vignes (88-91)  
Beaune Aux Cras (89-92)  
Corton Rognet (91-94)  
Echézeaux (92-95)  
Mazis-Chambertin (92-95)  
Volnay (89-92)  
Vosne-Romanée Les Beaumonts (91-94)  
Vosne-Romanée Les Suchots (90-93)

### **Whites**

Pernand-Vergelesses En Caradeux (88-91)  
Chassagne-Montrachet (88-91)  
Corton-Charlemagne (91-94)  
Meursault (88-91)

## **Château de la Tour**

Clos Vougeot (91-94)  
Clos Vougeot Vieilles Vignes (92-95)  
Clos Vougeot Mommage à Jean Morin (94-97)

## **Yvon Clerget**

Clos de Vougeot (92-95)  
Pommard Les Rugiens (90-93)  
Volnay (88-91)  
Volnay Les Caillerets (91-94)  
Volnay Carelle Sous La Chapelle (89-92)  
Volnay Clos du Verseauil (89-92)  
Volnay Les Santenots (90-93)

## **Joseph Drouhin & Drouhin Vaudon (Chablis)**

### **Reds**

Beaune Clos des Mouches (90-93)  
Beaune Grèves (89-92)  
Chambertin-Clos de Bèze (94-97)

Chambolle-Musigny Premier Cru (90-93)  
Chambolle-Musigny Les Amoureuses (92-95)  
Clos de Vougeot (92-95)  
Côte de Beaune (87-90)  
Gevrey-Chambertin (89-92)  
Grands Echézeaux (93-96)  
Griottes-Chambertin (93-96)  
Musigny (93-96)  
Nuits-St.-Georges Procès (89-92)

### **Whites**

Beaune White Clos des Mouches (91-94)  
Chablis Les Clos (90-93)  
Chablis Vaillons (88-91)  
Chablis Vaudésir (90-93)  
Chassagne-Montrachet (88-91)  
Chassagne-Montrachet Marquis de Laguiche (90-93)  
Corton-Charlemagne (91-94)  
Meursault (88-91)  
Montrachet Marquid de Laguiche (94-97)  
Puligny-Montrachet (88-91)

### **William Fèvre**

Chablis Bougros Domaine (90-93)  
Chablis Bougros Cote Bouguerots Domaine (91-94)  
Chablis Champs Royaux (90)  
Chablis Les Clos Domaine (92-95)  
Chablis Domaine (91)  
Chablis Les Lys Domaine (90-93)  
Chablis Montée de Tonnerre Domaine (91-94)  
Chablis Les Preuses Domaine (91-94)  
Chablis Vaillons Domaine (89-92)  
Chablis Vaulorent Domaine (91-94)

### **Louis Jadot**

#### **Reds**

Beaune Clos des Ursules Domaine des Héritiers (90-93)  
Beaune Grèves Domaine Gagey (90-93)  
Chambertin (95-98)  
Chambertin-Clos de Bèze (93-96)  
Chambolle-Musigny Les Baudes Domaine Gagey (90-93)  
Chambolle-Musigny Les Fuées Domaine (91-94)

Corton Grèves Domaine (92-95)  
Echézeaux Domaine (92-95)  
Gevrey-Chambertin Clos St.-Jacques Domaine (92-95)  
Musigny Domaine (95-98)  
Nuits-St.-Georges Les Boudots Domaine Gagey (90-93)  
Santenay Clos de Malte (88-91)  
Savigny-lès-Beaune Dominode Domaine (90-93)  
Volnay Clos de la Barre (90-93)

### **Whites**

Bâtard-Montrachet (91-94)  
Chevalier-Montrachet Les Demoiselles Domaine des Héritiers (93-96)  
Corton-Charlemagne Domaine des Héritiers (94-97)  
Meursault Charmes (90-93)  
Meursault Genevrières Domaine (91-94)  
Meursault Perrières (90-93)  
Montrachet (94-97)  
Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières Domaine des Héritiers (91-94)  
Savigny-lès-Beaune White Clos des Guettes Domaine Gagey (89-92)

### **Domaine Laroche**

Chablis Côte de Lechet (89-92)  
Chablis La Vieille Voye (88-91)  
Chablis Les Blanchots (91-94)  
Chablis Les Blanchots La Réserve de l'Obédience (92-95)  
Chablis Les Fourchaumes Vieilles Vignes (90-93)  
Chablis Les Montmains (89-92)  
Chablis Les Preuses (91-94)  
Chablis Les Vaillons Vieilles Vignes (90-93)  
Chablis Les Vaudevey (89-92)  
Chablis L'Homme Mort (91-94)  
Chablis St-Martin (88)

### **Domaine & Domaines Leflaive**

Bâtard-Montrachet (93-96)  
Bienvenues-Bâtard-Montrachet (91-94)  
Chevalier-Montrachet (94-97)  
Meursault Sous Le Dos d'Ane (90-93)  
Pouilly-Fuissé (90-93)  
Pouilly-Fuissé La Chaneau (90-93)  
Puligny-Montrachet (89-92)  
Puligny-Montrachet Clavoillon (91-94)



Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières (90-93)  
Puligny-Montrachet Les Combettes (92-95)  
Puligny-Montrachet Les Pucelles (93-96)

### **Olivier Leflaive**

Bâtard-Montrachet (92-95)  
Bourgogne White Oncle Vincent (88-91)  
Chassagne-Montrachet Abbaye de Morgeot Domaine (89-92)  
Corton-Charlemagne (92-95)  
Meursault Le Porusot Domaine (90-93)  
Meursault Sous Le Dos d'Âne Domaine (90-93)  
Pernand-Vergelesses White (89-92)  
Pommard Pezerolles (90-93)  
Puligny-Montrachet Enseignères (90-93)  
Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières Domaine (91-94)  
Puligny-Montrachet Les Pucelles Domaine (90-93)  
St.-Aubin Champlots (89-92)

### **Lucien Le Moine**

Bonnes Mares (95-98)  
Chambolle-Musigny Les Hauts Doix (92-95)  
Charmes-Chambertin (91-94)  
Chassagne-Montrachet Les Caillerets (91-94)  
Chevalier-Montrachet (93-96) Echezeaux (92-95)  
Gevrey-Chambertin Les Cazetiers (90-93)  
Gevrey-Chambertin Lavaut St Jacques (91-94)  
Meursault Les Perrières (91-94)  
Nuits-St.-Georges Les St Georges (91-94)  
Puligny-Montrachet Les Folatières (90-93)

### **Christian Moreau Père & Fils**

Chablis Blanchot (90-93)  
Chablis Les Clos (92-95)  
Chablis Clos des Hospices Dans Les Clos (92-95)  
Chablis Vaillon Cuvée Guy Moreau (90-93)  
Chablis Valmur (91-94)

### **Domaine de la Romanée-Conti**

Corton Prince Florent de Merode (92-95)  
Grands Echézeaux (93-96)  
Romanée-St.-Vivant (93-96)  
La Tâche (94-97)

## **Armand Rousseau**

Chambertin (95-98)

Chambertin-Clos de Bèze (95-98)

Charmes-Chambertin (92-95)

Clos de la Roche (93-96)

Gevrey-Chambertin (90-93)

Gevrey-Chambertin Les Cazetiers (92-95)

Gevrey-Chambertin Clos du Château (89-92)

Gevrey-Chambertin Clos St.-Jacques (94-97)

Gevrey-Chambertin Lavaux St.-Jacques (91-94)

Mazis-Chambertin (93-96)

Ruchottes-Chambertin Clos des Ruchottes (93-96)