

STONE, VINE & SUN

WINE MERCHANTS

2008 Red Burgundy: Domaines Fourrier and Sylvain Cathiard

There's no beating about the bush. It was very hard in 2008 to make great wine in Burgundy, simply because the weather was so unhelpful. To start with flowering was late, and also uneven so that within one vineyard some vines were more advanced than others. Mid summer was marked by far too much rain (and damaging hail in the Côte de Beaune in late July), and also cold and cloudy weather, leading to every disease and problem in the vineyard, but especially powdery mildew (oidium).

As elsewhere in France, the vintage was saved by good weather from mid-September, when a north wind arrived, bringing sunny days and cool, cloudless nights, drying up the vines, halting rot, and aiding ripening. At the same time acidities remained high, so these are, we believe, wines for keeping and drinking well after the more approachable 2006s and 2007s.

Well, we are not going to be one of those merchants (one used the term "miracle" in a wilful way) who simply want to ram this vintage down the customers' throats just so they can preserve their allocations for the highly promising 2009s. So this year we are just offering the wines of two special domaines whose wines are infallibly excellent, and always in demand. Both these vigneron's wines are invariably characterised by full ripeness, so even in this cool year both made lovely wines.

Domaine Fourrier, Gevrey-Chambertin

Despite our enthusiasm for the wines of Domaine Fourrier, the tasting with him in early November was tough. Though the domaine waited for complete ripeness, harvesting between 27th September and 2nd October, high levels of acidity at harvest meant that several of the wines had not completed their malolactic fermentations by the time of my visit (Jancis Robinson had the same problem). Jean-Marie proclaimed himself enthusiastic for the wines of 2008, but at the same time fearful; as their slow development is outside his experience. "A wine that is slow to make will be slow to age". Despite greater understanding in both vineyard and winery he feels these wines will bring to mind those of an earlier age.

Jean-Marie believes that the overall quality of his village wines and lesser premier crus has improved since 2007 when his new winery was first used. He attributes this to the fermentation vessels having a smaller surface area producing a deeper cap (the crust of skins, pips and stalks that rises from the must) which helps build body and concentration. All the wines here show an

extraordinary purity of bright red fruit, and yet the subtle nuances that differentiate village from village, *climat* from *climat*, are clear to taste. These manifestations of *terroir* are particularly well defined in 2008.

Strong worldwide demand for the wines of this domaine means that, as always, the top wines are in very short supply. The vagaries of international currency markets coupled with Jean-Marie's open and honest approach to pricing means that we can make some of these wines available at a little less than last year's offer.

Morey St-Denis, Clos Solon

£201.00

Code: FUR808

From half a hectare of 40 year old vines, close to the centre of the village. Crystal bright ruby hue. Primary aromas of red fruits. Strong cherryish fruit with spicy oak notes. Marked acid and ripe tannins provide an almost Italianate structure. 2011-2016

Gevrey-Chambertin, Aux Echezeaux

£222.00

Code: FUR208

A single vineyard wine, from vines planted in 1928 at the southern limit of Gevrey bordering Morey-St. Denis. Pale but vibrant ruby pink. Piercing nose. A silky textured mouthful of fresh raspberries and cream. Stylish and complete. 2012-2019

Gevrey-Chambertin, Vieille Vigne

£222.00

Code: FUR108

This wine is also from vines planted in 1928 but to the north of the village, close to the hamlet of Brochon. As usual this is more structured and weighty than the wine above, and will need more time to develop. A nose broadened by smoky, coffee notes: possibly a manifestation of the incomplete malo. On the palate more intense primary fruit – raspberries and dark cherry. 2013-2019

Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Cherbaudes

£381.00

Code: FUR408

A small Premier Cru just below the Grand Cru of Mazis-Chambertin. Attractive deep ruby. Entrancingly complex nose with deep meaty notes. This is a powerful yet elegantly structured wine showing bags of black fruit concentration. Very impressive this year. 2013-2020

Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Les Goulots

£381.00

Code: FUR508

From a vineyard on the slopes above the village eroded by “*goulots*”, small streams. Fourrier feels that the elevation contributes a mineral edge. Very open primary fruit. Attractive velvet texture, bold red fruit. Finely mineral and firmly structured. So well balanced and long. 2013-2020

Gevrey-Chambertin, 1er Cru Combe aux Moines

£411.00

Code: FUR608

Vines planted in 1928, again on the well sited slopes above the village. Open, comforting cherry nose with savoury hints. Impressively intense ripe pure redcurrant and raspberry palate. Well structured, but with elegance and length. 2014-2021

Sylvain Cathiard, Vosne-Romanée

This much sought-after estate has tiny (only 5 hectares in total) but superb vineyard holdings, with a very high average age of vines - see below for details. It's not just the land that makes the wine here, and makes this such a sought after estate. Sylvain is a genius in the cellar, somehow smoothing out the vintages so ALL his wines show class and refinement: in the heatwave year of 2003 he made beautifully balanced, classic wines, and likewise in the cool and difficult 2008 vintage he achieved beautiful ripeness and concentration. Tasting here was much easier than at Fourrier, and the wines showed, as ever, superbly.

The house style is for wines with intense, very pure fruit – the essence of Pinot – rounded with scented, high quality oak: even the Village Vosne goes into 50% new oak. Sylvain destems all his grapes and even though the oak is very apparent immediately, the wines can drink very well young, such is their suavity and delectable fruit. With the exception of the Village Vosne prices have risen again a little here, but despite this we will no doubt sell our tiny allocation out quickly.

The last year has been marked by two changes: the construction of a new cellar, for both vinification and barrel storage: this was much needed; secondly, the estate is slowly being passed down a generation. Sylvain's son Sébastien will be assisting for some years yet, but the labels will from henceforth read “Sylvain Cathiard et fils”.

Nuits-Saint-Georges

£350.00

Code: CAT208

We have not bought this wine before, but it seemed very good in this vintage, a little deeper in tone and more black-fruited than the village Vosne, but not in the least evincing any Nuits rusticity. Crushed currant aromas; and then real substance and life, with currants and black cherries wrapped in mocha oak.

2013-2019

Vosne-Romanée

£360.00

Code: CAT108

From three parcels of vines aged between about thirty and sixty years old. This tends to be a well-constructed, complex wine for ageing, and the 2008 is no exception. Black and red cherry, a sprinkle of spice from the oak, fine acidity and some decent tannins. Very complete.

2013-2018

Chambolle-Musigny, Clos de L'Orme

£390.00

Code: CAT408

From a vineyard just below the 1er Crus in the midst of the appellation. Vines planted in 1951 – and that old vine fruit always comes through. Similarly, it's very much a Chambolle from a Vosne cellar, with a lushness and density which is beguiling. Vibrant purple. Almost floral scent, followed by an open, deliciously appealing mid-palate. Fine, aromatic finish.

2012-2019

Vosne Romanée 1er Cru En Orveaux

£710.00

Code: CAT508

52 year old vines. En Orveaux is a tiny 1er Cru above Echezeaux (and actually most of the named vineyard lies within this Grand Cru), so little known but of very high quality. Seductively gorgeous fruit – almost liqueur-like – but fresh and balanced too. Tannins well-covered. Very fine indeed.

2014-2019

How sales 'en primeur' work. You choose the wines you want to buy now and we will invoice you at the prices quoted. Effectively you are buying the wine overseas, often before it has been bottled. We will then invoice you for duty at the prevailing rate (currently £19.26 per case, but likely to increase in the spring budget) plus VAT (currently 17.5%), on the cost of the wine and the duty, when it is shipped from the early summer of 2010 onwards. As an example, if you buy a case of wine for £200, then assuming import duty and VAT remain constant, we will later invoice you for £57.63 prior to sending you your wine. Prices are valid until the end of April 2010.

Terms and conditions. Wine is only offered in unsplit cases unless otherwise stated. **Please note that wine will NOT be available in bond.** To enable us to be as competitive as possible we ship all wine to our own warehouse, duty paid. We will then deliver it on to you or to your preferred place of storage free of charge (with the exception of the Highlands, Islands and Northern Ireland –please ask us for a quote). Finally, whilst we make every effort to supply the wines offered above, if the wines fail to be made available by the producer we will either supply similar wines or alternatively refund any payments made.

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