

TOUR DE FRANCE - BACKROADS OF BURGUNDY



Wine #1: Cyrill Banchet Grand Cru Blanc de Blancs NV

Variety: Chardonnay

Appellation: Champagne, France

Wine Notes: It's ok to start with Champagne. We opted for it as a bit of a celebration and also there was a very limited selection of Cremant in the portfolio for tonight. So we will drink Champagne and talk about Cremant.

My Thoughts: In my opinion, Burgundy Cremant is the closest thing to Champagne. Truly. Burgundy is known for some of the greatest Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs in the world. And those are the most important grapes for Champagne production. Yes the soils are different so there is a reason Champagne is Champagne. BUT, especially with central to northern Burgundy, we get grapes ripening juuuust enough to maintain high acid and low sugars to produce elegant base wines that are perfect for traditional method sparkling.

My Notes:

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Wine #2: Alain Patriarche Bourgogne Aligote

Variety: Aligoté

Appellation: Côte de Beaune

Wine Notes: Aligote is a grape type. This is the “other white grape” in Burgundy. It makes a simple, clean, and delicious wine. Do drink it young. Anybody who likes Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc will probably enjoy the Aligote even more. A great aperitif wine and another top value from Alain. Like a Pinot Grigio with great body. Some minerality, with fresh, lemony fruit and light elements of apple skin and hay. Shellfish, seafood, salads, aperitif -- much the same as you'd serve with Sauvignon Blanc.

My Thoughts: No oak and no MLF. Just 4 months of lees ageing. This is a wonderful way to see how complex and full-bodied a white wine can be while going nowhere near oak. I picked this wine especially because it has almost familiar grapes and also definitely NOT familiar grapes. Because of this, you get to try a well-structured wine with familiar fruit aromas but not necessarily because you have smelled them in a wine.

My Notes: Rightfully so, Chardonnay gets center stage for high quality white wine production in Burgundy. But before you crack that \$100 bottle, opt for a fresh and bright glass of Aligoté. Perfect for a hot summer day, a fresh salad, and the wallet, Aligoté is a wonderful way to enjoy Burgundian terroir and winemaking while keep the Premier and Grand Cru stuff stored away a little longer.

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Wine #3: Jean-Luc Joillot Bourgogne Passetoutgrain

Variety: Gamay, Pinot Noir

Appellation: Côte de Beaune

Wine Notes: This wine is the exception in Burgundy. By law, it is two-thirds Gamay and one-third Pinot Noir; so it is the only red wine in Burgundy that is not 100% Pinot Noir. It is very popular because of its low price point and wonderful drinkability. Fresh, jammy cherry and cranberry fruit with a touch of peppery spice. You taste the fruitiness of the Gamay grape up front and then the structure of the Pinot Noir kicks in at mid palate. A pleasing combination of fruit and body. Food pairing - turkey, barbecue, pork roast.

My Thoughts: Field blend when the field only has 2 grapes is pretty funny in my book. BUT really you can't do a whole lot more blending with either of these grapes when it comes to still wines. They are such beautiful counterparts to one another, Gamay with its brighter, lighter, sometimes cola-y flavors while Pinot can be the slightly more brooding older sibling but still cut from a similar cloth. Darker red fruit, more earthiness, more willing to receive some oak. But still very much a close relative in style and profile to Gamay. The rules state this needs to be 50/50 so you can a true balanced examination of how these grapes can really work together.

My Notes:

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Wine #4: Marcel Servin Chablis Vaillons Premier Cru 2022

Variety: Chardonnay

Appellation: Chablis

Wine Notes: Medium straw-yellow, flecks of green. Med+ notes and palate intensity. Flinty mineral notes, citrus fruit, lemons and limes, green garden herbs, fresh, floral. Medium body, med/med+ acids, med+ length. Pure and clean, mineral and fresh finish. Vaillons is one of the largest Climats in the Chablis Premier Cru appellation, with eight Climats subdividing it further. Les Lys, Sécher, Vaillons, Chatains and Beugnons are on the upper part of the hill, while Les Epinottes, Roncières and Mélinots are on the lower part. Because of its south and east exposure, Vaillons mostly enjoys morning sun. Its shallow soil lets the grapes ripen quickly. The subsoil displays a high concentration of Kimmeridgian limestone with some very compact slabs in some places.

My Thoughts: Chablis isn't unknown. But you can still get INCREDIBLE values here. Between Chablis and Petit Chablis, you get light, zippy, minimally (if at all) oaked wines that often get the ABC crowd to raise an eyebrow... and a glass.

My Notes:

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Wine #5: Jean-Paul Paquet Pouilly-Fuisse 2022

Varieties: Chardonnay

Appellation: Pouilly-Fuisse

Wine Notes: The clay and limestone soil produces classic grapes from the Pouilly-Fuissé region. Jean-Paul vinifies this wine entirely in old oak barrels to produce a rich and full-flavored white wine. This is a rich wine that exhibits ripe fruit and floral aromas. The palate has a well rounded structure with good balance. This Pouilly-Fuissé is simply delicious. Food pairings - appetizers, grilled fish, white meats, white cheeses.

My Thoughts: Why would this be featured in "backroads" if I see Pouilly-Fuisse everywhere? Because rarely do you get to taste multiple White Burgundies side by side and dissect the impact of climate. Both Chardonnays are oaked similarly with no new oak so much more subtle. This can give you a much clearer understanding of the impact warm vs. cool temps have on a grape. Do you have a preference?

My Notes:

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Wine #6: Jean Luc Joillot Bourgogne Côte d'Or 2022

Variety: Pinot Noir

Appellation: Côte d'Or

Wine Notes: This wine tastes bigger than its classification. That's because all the grapes are grown in the town of Pommard. These declassified grapes produce such a full-bodied, entry-level wine that people call it a "steak lover's Pinot". Youthful tannins and crisp acidity underlie the bing cherry/berry fruit. Zesty and fruity.

My Thoughts: Let's talk "Bourgogne" and what it really means. It means they can source from multiple villages and create a great wine. Often they can source from a smaller area but classify it with the broader terminology. Entry level is an odd term simply because entry level in Burgundy could be top tier elsewhere in the world!

My Notes:

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Wine #7: Domaine Tortochot Morey-St-Denis 2022

Variety: Pinot Noir

Appellation: Morey-St-Denis

Wine Notes: This is a particularly special cuvee of Morey St Denis for Chantal, returning to the domaine after 36 years on a leasehold her father set up with a neighbour in Morey St Denis, so in her eyes, it is reborn! Brilliant red brick colour, striking raspberry and freshly picked strawberry aroma. A free flowing and graceful wine, with a ripe generous volume and sweet fruit finish.

My Thoughts: Finishing with more of a “front roads” of Burgundy, it just felt right to pour something absolutely fantastic. In my opinion, it still qualifies as a backroads selection because M-S-D isn’t as recognized as places like Gevrey-Chambertain, DRC, Pommard, etc.

My Notes:
