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THE ULTIMATE BURGUNDY REFERENCE

115 Producers and 1537 Burgundies/Pinots Reviewed

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Statement of Principles

It is important that readers understand how I collect and evaluate the information that is reported in the pages of Burghound.com (the tasting notes and information are the sole responsibility of the author).

- I am personally responsible for all of my business expenses without exception. This includes airfare, hotels and effectively all of my meals. The purpose is as clear as it is simple: No conflicts of interest. I do not accept nor do I seek any subsidy, in any form, from anybody.
Sample bottles are accepted for evaluation and commentary, much as book reviewers accept advance copies of new releases. I insist, however, that these sample bottles represent the final wines to be sold under that particular label.
Finished, bottled wines are assigned scores as these wines are market-ready. Wines tasted from barrel, however, are scored within a range. This reflects the reality that a wine tasted from barrel is not a finished product.
Wines are evaluated within the context of their appellations. Simply put, that means I expect a grand cru Burgundy to reflect its exalted status.

While the concept of terroir remains a controversial issue in the opinion of many people, it is not controversial to the Burgundian mindset—or to me, either. I attempt to convey, where appropriate, how certain wines are particularly good, or particularly bad, at expressing their underlying terroir.

This is admittedly a difficult thing, rightly open to discussion among the Burgundians themselves, never mind an outside observer such as myself. Nevertheless, it is fundamental to great Burgundy. Mere "hedonism" is just that: empty pleasure-seeking. Burgundy can deliver so much more—if it is asked.

Burghound.com is published quarterly by Burghound.com Enterprises, the offices of which are located at 20160 Allentown Drive, Woodland Hills, California 91364. The annual rate for electronic delivery via the Internet (address: www.burghound.com) is \$125, or \$225 for two years. There is an additional charge for a printed copy, mailed second class, of \$65 domestically and \$80 internationally. Subscription orders can be paid via credit card, check or money order. Copyright 2007 by Burghound.com. All rights reserved and unauthorized reproduction, including by office copy machines, is strictly prohibited. The news media and wine trade sources may use limited portions of this material provided that Burghound.com is properly credited.

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# CÔTE DE NUITS – The 2005 and 2004 Vintages

## 2005 – Arguably the Best Vintage in a Generation

**True Genius or Inspired Marketing?** Let's cut directly to the chase while passing Go (be sure to collect your \$200 as you're going to need it) – **2005 is quite simply the best top to bottom vintage that I have ever seen, period, full stop.** Yes, I understand perfectly well that is a bold and heavy duty statement but there it is in all its unequivocal nakedness. 2005 is a brilliant vintage with virtually nothing to dislike (except perhaps the prices) and here is *the* key point, **it's also great from top to bottom.** Moreover, in terms of regional and *villages* wines, 2005 is so good that it blows the next closest recent contender, 1999, right out of the water. Among the 1ers and *grands crus*, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1999, 2001 and 2002 all produced some wines that are wonderfully impressive and certainly great, indeed in certain cases a full-on match for their 2005 counterparts. But in terms of the sheer number of great wines, 2005 surpasses all of them in my view. I can also report that many domaines made the best wines that I have ever seen from them. And I'm not talking about some second or third tier domaines enjoying a recent resurgence, I'm talking about the cream of Burgundy in most cases. In short, mortgage your house, sell your dog, hock your spouse (but don't forget where, you'll eventually need someone to enjoy these wines with!) or do whatever you have to do but don't miss the best wines of the vintage or you will I believe live to regret it. Finally, just to be sure that I have your attention, the 2005s are the best wines since the magnificent 1978s and the best news of all? Unlike 1978, there are a LOT more great '05s to be had.

All of that said, I have to confess that it was with a certain skepticism that I approached my trip to taste the Côte de Nuits '05s. This skepticism is born of almost 30 years of visiting Burgundy and having heard one too many times that another vintage is the greatest vintage since however long. At this point, probably because I'm getting older now, I largely ignore the hype as so much trade organization cheerleading. Sure, sometimes the hype is justified but more often than not, it isn't. Worse, often times the cheerleading is seriously misguided to the detriment of certain vintages that really deserve it. For eloquent proof of this silliness all one need do is consider the much maligned 1993s and 2001s (before people caught on) that couldn't be given away until committed burg lovers began to taste them and realized not only were the wines impressive, the best examples were stunning. While it's true that making excuses for inconsistent vintages sounds like so much sales talk, it's often true that the very best vintages on paper do not always make the best wines.

So it was with considerable caution that I began my tasting routine and I further must confess that after the first couple of days of tasting I was certainly impressed by the wines but not dazzled. Sure the wines were concentrated, dramatic, velvety and possessed buckets of dry extract. But the stuff of legends? I was not thusly persuaded. So why the change of heart? All it took was a change in the weather. When I first arrived the weather was still fairly warm by the standards of the middle of October. But after three days the temperatures fell like a stone and the cellars began to cool along with them. Within one week the in-cellar temperatures were 2 to 3 degrees cooler and that's all it took for the wines to "wake up", become more vibrant and to have the one critical aspect that they were initially missing, which is mid-palate precision. The wines initially just didn't have that all important focus and detail yet the cold snap restored this aspect and when I mentioned it to various growers, most of them were in full agreement that the cold really did help to add clarity and transparency.

What about the wines? Well, as you might expect given my unambiguous endorsement of them, they're pretty spectacular and what's more, they have it all, which is to say that they're complete wines in every sense of the term. For starters, the wines are quite ripe without falling over the edge into *surmaturité* or even where the fruit begins to lose its distinctive site specific character. The aromas are also exceptionally clean and the only off notes that I encountered were a direct result of wine making flaws, not from rot, hail-taint or other maladies. The flavors are also clean, bright, precise and balanced and are generally wrapped in velvety finishes that coat the mouth on the vibrant finishes. The acid/fruit/tannin balance is consistently high on perfect as the tannins are ripe and while the acid levels are solid, they're less prominent than what one typically sees in the '02s but a bit more pronounced than in the '99s. My favorite aspect of the '05s though is the gorgeous mouth feel because there is a wonderfully tactile quality to them, which comes from having real mid-palate densities or real *sève*. To make the distinction clear, *sève* or sap is the concentration that comes only from the vineyard when yields are low. For example, the best 03's have ripe tannins and are dense as well but there is something mildly brutish about them whereas the '05s are sophisticated and refined. They are also built to age and some of the top wines will see their 50<sup>th</sup> birthdays without breathing hard. Even *villages* wines should enjoy a good run over at least a decade and 15 years is not out of the question for the more structured versions.

The only nit, and I suppose that it's in my nature as a critic to find something, is that the transparency of the '05s is not at present crystalline, at least not yet. I would not call the vintage gifted with respect to its ability to transmit clearly the underlying *terroir* though it's important to note that neither is the voice of the land muted either. Moreover, my instincts are such that I believe that this aspect will come to the forefront much more as the wines age, which they will be capable of doing brilliantly as again, they have it all. In short, I am not worried but full disclosure compels me to point out that there is a small niggle that will bother some purists.

Depending on who you spoke to, yields ranged between low to generous with the significant delta between the two being more a question of early season hail in certain sectors, particularly the northern corner of Vosne, Echézeaux, Vougeot and the southern sector of Chambolle, particularly Musigny. As long-time readers know, I am a big advocate of making a distinction between reported yields and effective yields, the difference between what is either thrown out on the sorting room floor or not picked in the first place. For the first time in many, many years there is almost no difference between the reported yields and the effective yields because there was uniform ripeness with no rot and thus almost everything was picked. And because the bunches and maturity levels were so uniform, most growers reported throwing out less than 5% and in many cases, virtually none at all. Thus a reported yield of 30 hl/ha really is just that, not 36 hl/ha because of 20% sorting losses.

There is even more to it than this however because of the very thick skins that the dry weather caused the bunches to develop. Not only were yields moderate but the solid to juice ratios tended to be very high, which again gives wines that wonderful sense of “inner” concentration, as distinct from extraction, that only low yields can bring. It is what you will see referred to in the tasting notes as dry extract and that is always a positive sign of top quality. Moreover, the moderate yields and perfect weather meant that phenolic maturity was high, which is winemaker lingo for ripeness of the structural and physiological elements of the grapes, such as anthocyanins (essentially pigmentation) and tannins. Acids were ripe too and there was a far greater proportion of tartaric than the more aggressive malic, which is generally a positive sign as well. And for those domaines who typically vinify with some proportion of the stems, they used more without fear as the stems had completely lignified. By contrast, I should note that a few growers actually told me that they lowered the percentage in 2005 not because the stems weren’t ripe enough so much as with the thick skins, they did not want to extract too much tannin and thus risk imbalancing the wines. Sugars were also excellent but not excessive and while obviously variable, a potential degree of 12.5 to 13% is a rough average of what growers reported to me, which also meant that there was minimal if any chaptalization.

There is one other critical aspect to the vintage and that is quite simply almost everyone made at least good wine. This isn’t to say that everyone succeeded as well as their neighbors did but as grower after grower pointed out, the single most critical decision that is made each and every year, e.g. when to pick, was for once less critical. Indeed some growers went so far as to say that one could have picked on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September or the first of October and it wouldn’t have made any difference. And the good news is that the average grower in the Côte de Nuits that I visit is a sufficiently good *vinificateur* (winemaker in the limited sense of vinifying the musts) that given high quality raw materials (by far the more difficult of the two sides of the equation to achieve), a minimum of good to very good wine was almost always the result. In fact, several growers were a good deal more blunt than that saying that anyone who did not make at least very good wine in 2005 should find another job!

## **The Weather and Harvest:**

The early winter was essentially normal in terms of precipitation and temperatures though December was colder than usual. January and February, as your faithful correspondent can attest, were substantially colder than normal and the average temperature was below zero. March was much cooler than usual but things returned to normal in April with clement weather that resulted in budbreak being recorded on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. The late winter and early spring were quite wet which was to play a critical role later in the season because 2005 was one of the drier years on record. Early May saw the hail I referenced above, hitting the north part of Vosne, Vougeot and the southern end of Chambolle and the latter half saw temperatures begin to rise well above normal. June was dry and hot with temperatures well above normal and there were heard the first concerns about another 2003-style heat wave. The warm weather enabled the vines to fully recapture the time lost due to the cold and wet spring and the flowering occurred relatively uniformly around the 10<sup>th</sup> of June. There was an abundant fruit set and some growers would elect to do a green harvest in very early August as *véraison* occurred around August 4<sup>th</sup>.

Despite the June heat, the first half of July was quite cool though temperatures rose again and were typical of a Burgundian summer. The critical aspect of these temperature swings though was the excellent luminosity, which was to play an important role. And despite the borderline draught-like conditions, there was just enough rain at various points to prevent undue hydric stress. Quite a few growers however reported being concerned at the beginning of September because August was so dry. Thankfully, around the 15<sup>th</sup> of September there were a series of small storms that did not drop a lot of water but it was enough to jump start the vines toward their final stage or ripening. And serendipitously, the rainfall was not so much that the vines would have pumped it to the grapes because if they had, with the thick skins it could have split many berries causing true havoc. One other critical aspect was that even during the hottest periods, the nights remained relatively cool which was significant in terms of the retention of acidity. When it did rain in September there was a consistent if gentle *vent du nord* (north wind) which dried things off immediately.

Overall most growers, with the exception of those who had parcels struck by hail, described the growing season as “ideal”. There was no rot or other maladies such as infestations and as Michel Gros put it “even those who did not treat had perfect grapes”. The *ban de vendange* (officially mandated harvest date) was declared on September 12<sup>th</sup> in the Côte de Beaune and on September 15 for the Côte de Nuits, which is a week to ten days later than in 2004. In both Côtes the harvest began under ideal conditions of moderate day time temperatures and cool dry evenings. The cool and dry weather lasted until the end of October and many growers said that they essentially could have begun picking at any time. The import of this was that growers had the considerable luxury of picking each parcel at its optimum ripeness level, or in vineyards where maturities varied significantly due to an extreme mix of vine ages, to make multiple passes over several days in the same parcel.

Virtually everyone was ecstatic about the quality of the grapes with adjectives such as superb, perfect, ideal, postcard material etc. Indeed many growers joked that the workers whose job it normally is to sort were essentially on holiday as there was nothing for them to do except watch the grapes whiz by at near auto-route speeds! More than one grower told me that after a day or two of watching the sorters stand there doing next to nothing that they cut those teams by two-thirds. As I mentioned above, the bunches were small with small berries that possessed thick skins, which meant that there were high solid to liquid ratios. Indeed more than one grower said that there was relatively little juice and that crushing had to be done very gently and slowly because there was so much pulp.

Notwithstanding the fact that many growers reported lower than normal yields, INAO (Institut National des Appellations d'Origine Contrôlée) authorized yields that in the *grands crus* ranged from a low of 35 hl/ha for Romanée-Conti and La Tâche to as high as 45 hl/ha for the Chambertin "satellites", which means not including Chambertin or Clos de Bèze; the average *grand cru* was right at 40 hl/ha. The 1ers in the Côte de Nuits ranged from a low of 42 hl/ha in Vosne to 48 hl/ha for certain other villages, most notably Morey and Gevrey. Note that just because a specified level was authorized does not necessarily mean that any given grower produced that amount, only that he had the legal right to do so.

The vinifications went smoothly and about the only real decision that growers had to make was how aggressively they elected to extract. Because of the thick skins, most growers punched down gently or worked exclusively with pump overs. In a variation on a theme, some elected to do normal punch downs for the first few days and then work more with pump overs. The dry extract levels though are so high and the tannins so ripe that in very few cases did I see grossly imbalanced wines.

Interestingly, despite the fact that there were lower than normal levels of malic acid, the resulting malolactic fermentations were quite extended in most caves. This is usually an excellent sign of quality as it keeps the wines filled with gas, which helps protect them and because the lees were so clean, most growers elected to avoid racking, preferring to leave the wines on their fine lees until the preparations for bottling would begin. This made my job more difficult as many wines displayed some elements of reduction but overall, the wines were nourished for months on their fine lees.

### The Wines:

As I observed at the very beginning, the best 2005s are simply sublime burgundies that will be capable of being exceptionally long-lived. It seems that each level of the Burgundian hierarchy transcends its usual quality category and ascends to the one directly above, which is to say that regional wines perform like *villages* wines, *villages* wines like good if not absolute top 1ers, good 1ers are like solid *grands crus* and the best *grands crus* are well, simply unbelievable.

The average wine is firmly structured but not at all aggressive and for several reasons. First, there is abundant mid-palate concentration to buffer the structure; two, the structural elements are all quite ripe, which takes away any sense of aggressiveness from the tannins and three, the acid levels are in keeping with the ripeness of the tannins, which means that the acidity does not have the tendency to accentuate the perception of astringency; for example, less successful '04s seem more tannic than they are in actuality because of the firm acidity.

As I mentioned, the aspect that I admire the most about the '05s is the textural impact that they have in the mouth. There is a real sense of volume and punch but at the same time, no sense of undue heaviness. Indeed I would go so far as to say that the most successful '05s epitomize the intrinsic genius of a great burgundy's ability to deliver power without weight, something that is hard to do in today's "let's amp up the volume" mentality when it comes to so-called trophy wines. Stated differently, the better '05s are gorgeously balanced wines with a real sense of underlying harmony as there is everything they need to age gracefully for years.

Another aspect that I appreciated greatly with the '05s is that they are sufficiently dense that even growers who like to use heavy oak will probably not have unduly compromised the balance of their wines. This is not to suggest that the '05s are "bullet proof", or to put it another way, "bad grower proof" but it's comforting to know that there is an additional margin for error, either with the oak treatment or during the *élevage* in general.

Overall, the best wines are truly transcendental and should provide for magical drinking experiences over a period of several decades and the best wines will easily see 50 years in fine shape. What's harder to predict is how they will react after they have been in bottle for a few years. One school of thought is that they will shut down for a long snooze and another school is that they have do much depth of material that they will always be accessible if not necessarily always at their optimum. While I do not intend to lobby from this pulpit as to how people should enjoy their burgundies, it does seem rather a shame that wines with this much potential would be drunk too early in life but in the end, wine is meant to be enjoyed and if the moment is right as the saying goes, then the moment is right.

As to what other vintages the 2005s might resemble, as usual I received a lot of different answers to that question. However, the best comparison, and one that I agree with personally, is a hypothetical blend of 1999 and 2002, as the best '05s combine the ripeness and power of the former with the elegance, purity and acid backbone of the latter. And it is this acid support that I believe will enable the wines to eventually put their underlying *terroirs* on parade, something that they are doing now but now as well as say the 2001s did at the same stage.

## **What to Buy in 2005:**

As my example of the compression of the quality hierarchy suggests, there really are no obvious and clear cut strategies for buying the best wines in a vintage like 2005. Rather it will more than likely be driven by each individual's ability to pay for those wines that he/or she can actually find. Demand for the top wines was already building in the summer of 2006 and will very likely continue. The Bordelais with their pricing strategies have made the average burgundy look almost cheap and some growers have profited by raising their prices more than the usual 10% or so in a much heralded vintage.

My advice is to buy up and down the food chain and do NOT avoid purchasing regional and *villages* level wines. This approach makes sense to me because it will enable your available funds to buy more wine and it will also enable you to purchase "protection" as it were for the top '05s because you will have something else to try while you wait for your gems to fully mature. I will personally be buying ample amounts of *villages* level wines and the less well-known 1ers for the very same reason, e.g I will be acquiring top quality wines that will have earlier drinking windows than the more limited number of bottles of the very finest 1ers and *grands crus* that my budget, and indulgent partner, will permit.

In terms of where to focus, quality is frankly excellent up and down the Côte de Nuits though if I had to pick one commune above all the others, it would again be Gevrey. The grower community there was gone from the worst in the Côte de Nuits to arguably the best, all in the space of 15 years. Top quality wines though can be found in all of the communes and this includes Nuits and Clos de Vougeot. Despite the hail, I found dream wines in Musigny and Bonnes Mares, while a completely different expression, also did exceedingly well. There are also several examples of mind-blowing Chambertin and Clos de Bèze. And while it will hardly be a newsflash, La Tâche and Romanée-Conti are among the superstars of the vintage as well.

Be sure to check out the commentary and reviews on your favorite growers as some wines that you might not normally consider are almost certainly better than usual. Another reason to do so is that while there were relatively few flawed wines, there are a few imbalanced efforts that you'll want to avoid. Lastly, there is no reason to pay ridiculous prices because as good as the '05s are, remember: there is always another vintage and the quality standard in Burgundy has never been higher. The first tranche pricing that I have seen is up 10 to 20% over 2004, which given the superior quality is reasonable. Second and later tranche pricing though is likely to get ugly so whenever possible, buy early or just pass on a given wine and see if you can find it later. There is of course no guarantee that you'll find it later but if you're diligent, most wines will turn up sooner or later. I know through the grapevine that speculator activity is fueling some price increases and you don't want to compete with stupid money. Thus, buy judiciously and carefully because even great wine that you paid too much for is not a bargain.

## **2004 – Almost Exactly as Originally Previewed with a few Cautionary Words:**

My in-bottle tastings of the 2004s have served to reinforce my original belief that the vintage is quite candidly a mixed bag. While most wines resemble relatively closely what I originally saw from cask, some have not tolerated the bottling well. Among those that resemble less well what was seen from cask have taken on an herbal component or even sometimes a vegetal character that some will find attractive but most will not. I, for example, do not find this aspect to be appealing even though it is by no means unpleasant. Moreover, when this herbal character is combined with under ripe phenolics and very firm acidity, the wines can seem unduly austere. As a consequence, when I have encountered a wine displaying these characteristics, I have deliberately shortened the suggested drinking window so as to better enjoy the wine for its fruit rather than taking the risk that it will possibly dry out with extended time in bottle. Thus, for certain wines that appear to have shorter than usual drinking windows, this is why. Moreover, remember that at the lower levels, many growers understood the limited potential of their raw materials and thus deliberately fashioned the wines to be accessible young. To this end you will find many Bourgogne and villages wines that will be drinking well in 2008 and 2009.

On the more promising side, when the 2004s are good they are truly excellent though let's be honest, they're not as good as the 2005, the 2002 or the 2001s among recent vintages. And it would be fair to say that even if one wished to argue the qualitative merits of 2004 versus 2003, the vintages are so different as to make comparing the intrinsic quality almost pointless. While the fundamental character of the 2004s is different from the 2001s, this is the most recent vintage that the '04s most closely resemble and if you liked the '01s, then there is a decent chance that you will find the better '04s to your liking as well. But again, I underscore and emphasize that you must be exacting in your choices. Read the tasting notes and descriptions carefully.

What this means as a gross generalization is that there are relatively few regional and villages level wines that are extraordinary; yes, they exist but they're in the minority. I would strongly advise sticking mostly with the better 1ers and *grands crus* as your batting average will be much higher. As careful readers will remember, there was also a lot of localized hail damage in 2004 which also means that you can't simply buy your favorite growers either. In short, I will simply say that it's important to do your homework, taste as broadly as you can and use the 2004 in-bottle reviews to your advantage.

Lastly, I will summarize what I said at this time last year as I believe it's still a good buying strategy: ".because there is unlikely to be media influenced demand-based pressure for price increases and ultimately, I would expect to see no shortage of 2004s to be sold on

close-out. I would take a deep breath and let the market come to you. We saw this phenomenon with the average 2001 (but by no means the best wines as they were snapped up instantly by those who understood their inherent greatness) and I believe that we will see it again in 2004. In short, buy what you must and what you want and then sit back, keep your powder dry and cherry pick from the sales that will come your way 12 months from now." And given the almost rabid interest in the 2005s, I believe that there will be many, many 2004s available on close out as the trade tries to rapidly move them through the distribution pipelines to finance their stocks of the 2005s. Moral of the story? Be particular because both supply and timing are on your side.

### **A Brief Summary of the 2006 Vintage:**

After all the hyperbole and gushing praise of the 2005s from every corner, the talk was a good deal more subdued about 2006, with most growers comparing it to some variant of 2004. Not everyone was down at the mouth about it but it's clear that no one had any pretensions of their 2006s rivaling the 2005s. About the best that anyone could say is that they had excellent sugars, in the same way though that 2004 had good sugars but less impressive levels of phenolic ripeness. However, I tend to take the majority of pre-malo comments, indeed really even pre-élevage comments as nothing more than early, if informed, speculation. Many recent vintages were largely pooh-poohed, either in favor of the one to be sold or because they started life as ugly ducklings only to become swans later. One is reminded of 1993, 1998 and 2001 among others. In short, as always, stay tuned. As to the whites, growers were much more upbeat and based on the few samples that I tasted just to have an idea, I was favorably impressed. The most effective strategy is to remember that the best and most conscientious growers will have made wines of quality and I'll bring you what you need to know to focus on the best and avoid the rest, and at all levels.

### **An Important Word about the Tasting Notes:**

95% of the following notes are based on tastings conducted in October and November, 2006; the 5% not tasted in November were tasted from bottle at my offices in the last 2 months. Please note: Finished, bottled wines are assigned scores, as these wines are market-ready. Wines tasted from barrel are scored within a range, which simply reflects the reality that they are not finished, market-ready wines. The wines in the boxes are listed alphabetically while the wines in the tasting notes that follow are presented in the order the winemaker chose to present the wines; this often is an indication as to the esteem in which the winemaker regards each wine. Regional, *villages* or *premiers crus* receiving a } symbol are particularly outstanding for their respective *appellations* and especially merit your attention; *grands crus* stand on their own merits.

### **Burghound.com 2005 Vintage Selections:**

The Top Value wines are those that are generally available in the market place at a price point of no more than approximately \$45 US; prices do of course vary from one country to another and even within those countries, they can vary widely, especially now with the fluctuation of many currencies, particularly the dollar, against the euro. "Sweet Spot Wines" address the wide gulf between the under \$45 Top Value wines and the over \$100 Don't Miss wines; note that I have tried to layer these selections to portray a representative range between the two price points. The "Don't Miss" wines are chosen based on sheer quality alone with price or availability having no effect on their selection. The reviews for each of these selections can be found in the corresponding producer section.

**Sample review:** Regional, *villages* or *premiers crus* receiving a } symbol are particularly outstanding for their respective *appellations* and especially merit your attention; *grands crus* stand on their own merits.

**Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier (Chambolle-Musigny)**

2005	Bonnes-Mares Grand Cru	red	(92-95)
2005	{ Chambolle-Musigny	red	(89-91)
2005	{ Chambolle-Musigny “Les Amoureuses” 1er	red	(93-95)
2005	{ Chambolle-Musigny “Les Fuées” 1er	red	(90-92)
2005	Musigny Grand Cru	red	(96-99)
2005	{ Nuits St. Georges “Clos de la Maréchale” 1er	red	(89-92)
2004	Bonnes-Mares Grand Cru	red	90
2004	Chambolle-Musigny	red	88
2004	{ Chambolle-Musigny “Les Amoureuses” 1er	red	92
2004	{ Chambolle-Musigny “Les Fuées” 1er	red	90
2004	Musigny Grand Cru	red	93
2004	Nuits St. Georges – Clos des Fourches	red	88
2004	Nuits St. Georges “Clos de la Maréchale” 1er	red	89

Frédéric Mugnier, who now has his new *cuvée* up and running, told me that 2005 was blessed with a “great growing season. It was very regular and consistent with no excesses. We began picking on September 18<sup>th</sup> and except for 2003, the 18<sup>th</sup> is the earliest date that we have ever picked and coincidentally, we also began picking on the 18<sup>th</sup> in 2006. It’s interesting to consider that what was once the record for the earliest harvest dates are fast becoming the norm. Where this will take us going forward is anyone’s guess but it’s something that concerns me greatly. The crop was extremely clean and there was very little sorting required. Sugars were strong at between 12.5 and 13.8% and there was no chaptalization with good if not high yields coming in a range of 35 to 40 hl/ha. For me 2005 offers the aromas of a fresh vintage but the richness and maturity of a ripe one.” Mugnier has consistently said that the biggest benefit from adding the huge 9.5 ha vineyard of Clos de la Maréchale is that is enabled him to add additional vineyard personnel. As he explained it to me he had “1 vineyard worker for 4 ha and now I have 9 for 14 ha, 6 of which are permanent. Thus, when something has to be done immediately, I have people available to address the problem whereas before, there were sometimes scheduling delays.” The benefit of this attention to detail cannot be overestimated as the increase in quality, which was already exceptionally high, has been immediately obvious. Indeed, as good as the Mugnier ‘04s are, the ‘05s have ascended to a new level of quality even while adjusting for the superior quality of 2005 versus 2004. Indeed, both the Musigny and Amoureuses are flat out incredible and the ‘05 Bonnes Mares is potentially the best vintage I have ever seen for this wine. Note that there is also a Nuits *villages* made from young vines Clos de la Maréchale called Clos des Fourches that was produced in 2004 but Mugnier found the quality so high in 2005 that he put all of the production into the Clos de la Maréchale. Mugnier was careful to note however that this is his view at present and it’s possible that he may declassify a portion of Clos de la Maréchale as he did in 2004. Lastly, the Nuits white that Mugnier will make going forward was so reduced that he was reluctant to present it. (A Becky Wasserman/Le Serbet Selection – [sbw@wanadoo.fr](mailto:sbw@wanadoo.fr); Martin-Scott Wines, Lake Success, NY; Vinalia, Los Angeles, CA; Morris & Verdin, Howard Ripley and Hanson & Clark, all UK).

**2005 Chambolle-Musigny:** (from two different parcels of vines, one located in the *premier cru* Les Plantes, which was planted in 1968 and the second from the *villages*-level portion of La Combe d’Orveau, 60% of which is young vines and the remainder is 40+ year old vines). An elegant and seductive nose of red, blue and violet aromas that are pure and very fresh lead to refined, rich and again, ultra pure flavors that are delicious and offer excellent volume at this level. A terrific *villages* of 1er quality and worth a close look. (89-91)/2011+

**2005 Chambolle-Musigny “Les Fuées”:** (from 50 year old vines – this is Mugnier’s favorite vineyard in terms of its fruit quality). Here the aromas are slightly riper than those of the *villages* with an equally elegant dark berry fruit and violet-infused nose that complements the seductive yet notably powerful plum and mineral-inflected medium full flavors that are firmly structured yet velvety with excellent depth of material on the driving and complex finish. The mid-palate sap completely buffers the dusty tannins and this should be capable of at least a decade of improvement. (90-92)/2013+

**2005 Nuits St. Georges “Clos de la Maréchale”:** A completely different aromatic profile presents itself with more deeply pitched and quite ripe blue and violet aromas combining with pungent earth and game hints that continue onto the sweet, rich and sappy flavors wrapped around a firm tannic spine. This is impressive as it is clearly Nuits in character yet with refined and sophisticated structural elements. Also recommended. (89-92)/2013+

**2005 Bonnes-Mares:** (50% of the vines in this .35 ha parcel were planted in 1980 and 1988, with the remainder planted in the '50s; the vines are planted in both *terres rouges* and *terres blanches* but there is a slight majority in the latter). The concentration and intensity has slowly but noticeably been increasing over the last few vintages as the vines begin to achieve a higher average age and it's particularly evident in 2005. Here the nose is unusually expressive rather than its usual brooding character with pretty, even elegant aromas of spicy red pinot fruit and warm earth notes that can also be found on the powerful but detailed, indeed almost nervous flavors that possess excellent precision and a very attractive underlying tension on the explosive finish. 2005 is the best vintage for this wine that I've seen since Mugnier took over. (92-95)/2015+

**2005 Chambolle-Musigny "Les Amoureuses":** (from old vines of an indeterminate age). An exuberantly spicy, pure and strikingly elegant nose that is at once airy and complex complements to perfection the layered, sweet and rich mouth coating flavors that are as stylish and pure as the nose is, all wrapped in a textured, refined and beautifully balanced finish that offers huge length. This is a serene and complete effort and again, as good as any vintage that I can remember. In short, this classy effort is pure silk and lace. (93-95)/2013+

**2005 Musigny:** Candor forces me to admit that mere words won't begin to do a wine like this justice so I will simply state that the Mugnier Musigny is a compelling candidate for wine of the vintage honors, which is saying something significant in such a gifted vintage like 2005. An incredibly complex and kaleidoscopic nose features a dazzling array of aromas, particularly violet and rose petal nuanced with anise, clove and cinnamon that merges seamlessly into sweet, pure and ultra refined full-bodied flavors that are harmonious and deep, with a driving tension that forces everything into striking relief yet the palate impression is pure velvet on the immensely long finish. In short, this is flat out brilliant and is a wine that you will definitely want in your cellar. And it's a wine that I will be putting in mine as well. (96-99)/2017+

**2004 Chambolle-Musigny:** (from two different parcels of vines, one located in the *premier cru* Les Plantes, which was planted in 1968 and the second from the *villages*-level portion of La Combe d'Orveau, 60% of which is young vines and the remainder is 40+ year old vines). A nose of ultra fine and pure red pinot fruit aromas combines with fresh, sweet and beautifully detailed flavors that are textured and long on the nervous finish. This is really an exceptionally pretty wine and classic Chambolle in both style and character. 88/2009+

**2004 Nuits St. Georges – Clos des Fourches:** (Clos des Fourches was the original name of the Clos de la Maréchale; from young vines that represented approximately one-quarter of the total production). A completely different nose with fresh dark berry fruit aromas nuanced by undertones of earth and herbs that complement the round, intense and pure flavors that display almost no rusticity and a finely grained minerality, culminating in a nicely powerful, firm and persistent finish. As Nuits *villages* examples go, this is really quite an elegant wine. 88/2011+

**2004 Nuits St. Georges "Clos de la Maréchale":** This is more elegant and complex aromatically and slightly finer with detailed, expressive and pure aromas of earth, black fruit and plum that dissolve into beautifully complex, refined and balanced flavors that also display ample finishing minerality and better overall phenolic ripeness. A really lovely effort that should age effortlessly. 89/2012+

**2004 Chambolle-Musigny "Les Fuées":** (from 50 year old vines – this is Mugnier's favorite vineyard in terms of its fruit quality). This too is exceptionally elegant but slightly deeper with richer fruit nuances and hints of spice and earth that lead to briar and raspberry-infused flavors that are supple yet concentrated while remaining focused on the long finish that offers notes of violet and plum plus the classic Fuées minerality. Fine intensity here as well as impeccable balance. 90/2012+

**2004 Bonnes-Mares:** (50% of the vines were planted in 1980 and 1988, with the other 50% planted in the '50s). As one would expect, this is a bigger wine that offers a bit more aromatic complexity with attractive floral aromas of violets, earth and cassis that precede racy, edgy and powerful medium full flavors that are direct, indeed even rather linear on the borderline stern and presently austere finish. This is built to age and a wine that I doubt will be overly approachable young and thus moderate patience will be required. 90/2013+

**2004 Chambolle-Musigny "Les Amoureuses":** (from old vines of an indeterminate age). A strikingly seductive nose of spice, hoisin and anise that adds nuance to the largely black pinot fruit aromas and continue onto the sappy, rich and mouth coating middle weight flavors that possess a bit more mid-palate fat and an explosive, fresh and harmonious finish. I particularly like the transparency here and this is an exceptionally stylish effort that will age gracefully but could actually be approached now with pleasure. 92/2012+

**2004 Musigny:** A simply sublime mix of spicy, elegant, pure and sophisticated red and black fruit aromas that blend into supple, rich and again, extremely pure, indeed crystalline medium full flavors that are restrained and backward but not stern like those of the Bonnes Mares, all wrapped in a vibrant finish of exceptional intensity. This is superbly well focused and almost etches itself into the palate though the tannic spine is well buffered by plenty of mid-palate sap. A complete wine that will also demand a bit of patience. 93/2014+