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THE ULTIMATE BURGUNDY REFERENCE

182 Producers and 1693 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.

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## A Brief Word About Scores:

Numerical scores are endlessly debated among wine lovers. Inevitably, critics tend to emphasize certain characteristics at the expense of others. What follows is an explication of scores at **Burghound.com** and the underlying taste values they reflect.

Simply put, Burgundies that emphasize purity, elegance, overall balance and a clear expression of the underlying *terroir* are rated more highly than Burgundies that don't deliver these qualities. Other important characteristics include typicity, richness, balanced extraction, length and harmony. For example, a Volnay should taste like a Volnay and a *grand cru* should deliver a *grand cru* drinking experience.

The score is a summation of the taster's thoughts about a wine. It does not actually express those thoughts. Clearly, a mere number cannot fully represent the nuanced, detailed impression conveyed by a tasting note.

**Please note:** Wines are scored based on their expected quality at peak drinkability. Many *grands crus* that will, I believe, "be" a 92 may not necessarily taste like a 92-point wine when young, thanks to the tannins or general inaccessibility.

Wines rated 90 points or above are worth a special effort to find and cellar. Wines rated 85 or above are recommended, **especially among regional and villages level wines**. There will be relatively few 90+ point wines, simply because there are relatively few outstanding and superlative wines. Finished, bottled wines are assigned specific scores as these wines are market-ready. Wines tasted from barrel are scored within a range. This reflects the reality that a wine tasted from barrel is not a finished, market-ready product.

<b>95 – 100:</b>	<b>Truly incomparable and emotionally thrilling.</b> A wine so rated is as good as Burgundy gets. By definition, it is reference standard for its <i>appellation</i> .
<b>90 – 94:</b>	<b>Outstanding.</b> Worth a special effort to purchase and cellar and will provide memorable drinking experiences.
<b>85 – 89:</b>	<b>Good to High quality.</b> Burgundies that offer solid quality in every respect and generally very good typicity. "Good Value" wines will often fall into this category. Worth your attention.
<b>80 – 84:</b>	<b>Average to Good quality.</b> The wine is "correct", displays no noticeable flaws and will provide pleasing, if straightforward, drinking.
<b>76 – 79:</b>	<b>Barely Acceptable quality.</b> The wine is not worth your attention nor is it a good value.
<b>75 and Below:</b>	<b>Don't Bother.</b> A wine with noticeable, irremediable flaws.

## Estimated Maturities:

Estimating a window of when any given burgundy will be at its peak is an extremely difficult thing to do with precision. The time frames that you see after the score is my best estimate as to when any given wine will likely be at its best. This is of course simply an educated guess about how the wine will evolve and assumes that the wine will have been responsibly shipped and stored, which as long-time collectors know is not always the case. Just as importantly, the time suggested windows are based on how I personally prefer my burgundies. This effectively means that for reds, there is still obvious freshness and vibrancy remaining to both the fruit and the flavors and while the tannic structure will be largely resolved, it by no means suggests that a completely smooth palate will exist devoid of any firmness. Especially tannic and or concentrated wines will necessarily have wider windows for obvious reasons. For whites, the windows are designed to indicate that point at which youthful fruit has passed into secondary nuances with more fully developed complexity as well as when the textures have rounded out and the sometimes pointed acidity has mellowed. Important note: what the estimated maturities do NOT suggest is how long a wine will remain structurally sound and still capable of providing some enjoyment as many burgundies are capable of remarkably long periods of graceful decline; however, beyond a certain point they will have passed their peaks and should be drunk, no matter how intellectually interesting they may be. As with anything this subjective, there is no substitute for your own experience and I offer these estimated maturities as a general guideline, not gospel and as the saying goes, your mileage may vary.

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## CÔTE DE NUITS – The 2008 and 2007 Vintages

### 2008 Summary – A Classic but Highly Variable Vintage that Ranges from Mediocre to Excellent

The Burgundians call the north wind “La Bise” (the kiss) as well as “L’ami du vigneron” (the friend of the vigneron) and it proved its inestimable value yet again as it quite literally, as it does so often, saved the harvest. Already this decade the vintages of 2001, 2002, 2004, 2007 and 2008 have all been snatched from the jaws of certain disaster by the salubrious effects of La Bise. It’s a good thing too because without it, the 2008 red burgundy vintage was set to go down as perhaps the worst since 1984, or the inglorious trio of 1977, 1975 and 1974, which those who have been collecting for a while will not remember with any particular fondness.

Perhaps the poor growing season can be explained by the fact that 2008 was the second year in a row with 13 new moons (tradition holds that any year with 13 moons will be difficult)? Or perhaps it was because the weekend of Rameaux (Palm Sunday) the wind (called the *vent de Rameaux*) came from the west, which common lore holds is a sure indication of a difficult year. This is because the belief is that the direction of the wind Rameaux will be the dominant wind of the vintage. In Burgundy, when the wind is from the west, it typically always brings large amounts of rain. Whatever the reason, it is fair to say that 2008 was difficult yet lovely wines were made anyway.

First, the good news: At their best, the ‘08s Côte de Nuits reds are excellent wines with vibrant acidities that speak clearly and eloquently of their underlying *terroirs*. They are refreshing, energetic, balanced, fresh, intense, pure and racy middle weight wines that generally carry low alcoholic levels and display ample amounts of those ineffable qualities of tension and presence. In short, they’re classic burgundies of delicacy, finesse and grace. Moreover, they should prove to be worthy cellar candidates for aging over the medium-term.

While it is not always the case when considering any particular domaine, 2008 is generally more interesting than 2007 but also more variable. This statement should serve to underscore how variable 2008 is because 2007 is notably variable itself (see Issue 33 for my detailed 2007 vintage analysis in the Côte de Nuits). Otherwise stated, the highs are higher in 2008 but the lows are also lower. Those readers who are, like me, fans of the 2001 vintage, will find much to like in 2008 though if I haven’t already convinced you, understand clearly that selectivity has rarely been at such a premium.

Now for the bad news that I am not going to sugar coat: There are a lot of disappointing and even just downright mediocre 2008s. When the wines are bad, they’re some combination of tough, thin, green, under ripe, over-chaptalized, screechy and rot-suffused with dry tannins and no appreciable chance at ameliorating any of these qualities through bottle aging. In short, there are plenty of wines that are just plain old difficult to like. These wines will be best drunk young for their fruit, or, perhaps not at all. The only vintage that younger collectors will probably have seen where there are comparable disappointments, structurally speaking, are the 1994s as the poorer examples displayed a similar toughness in their youth that they never lost. By contrast, the best ‘08s are easily much more interesting than are the best ‘94s plus there are many more of them.

As to value, the British importers and merchants with whom I have spoken have told me that the *en primeur* sales campaign that occurred in mid-January went reasonably well. However, the demand was uneven with much of it going to the highly allocated top wines and much less interest being expressed for the lower levels of the classification hierarchy. Not surprisingly, interest was highest for the very top domaines but after that, there is still plenty of wine available. How much of this reticence was driven by the feeble pound-euro exchange rate is difficult to say but it’s clearly a complicating variable.

Interestingly, a few speculated that some of the buyer interest was driven simply by the desire to keep their places in line for allocations of the highly anticipated 2009s; I have no doubt that this was and is a motivating factor. I say this because growers were already complaining about the demand for pricing information and tasting appointments for the 2009s which, at the time of my October and November visit, had scarcely been racked out of the fermenters! As such, I believe it is fair to say that 2008 is already laboring to be recognized under the imposing shadow of the 2009s, much the way 2000 and 2006 suffered by comparison to 1999 and 2005.

**Important Note:** Honesty, and my unflinching commitment to serving your needs in the best way that I possibly can, compel me to mention one other thing. I have been tasting burgundies in barrel since 1978 and even in the best and most consistent of vintages, assessing the quality, character and future development potential of them is not easy or obvious. Further, assessing the quality of any given wine within this context is even harder, if for no other reason than burgundies rarely tolerate the manipulations of being prepared for bottling well; it seems that each of them, just like students preparing for college entrance exams, tolerate the inherent stress differently.

It is not an exaggeration to state that 2008 is the most difficult vintage that I have ever tried to assess from barrel. As will be discussed in greater detail below, the malos were extremely late and as a consequence, many wines were partially, or even

completely, reduced, usually full of gas, had not had their sulfur levels adjusted, had not been racked and were generally much more primary and backward than is typical 14 months after the harvest. The significance of this is that there was much less homogeneity from one cellar to another, indeed this was often the case in the same cellar from one wine to another. Thus it was quite difficult even to assess comparative quality, let alone absolute quality.

To underscore the difficulty, it may surprise you to hear that the 2009s were already easier to assess than were the 2008s. This is not hard to explain because in many cases, the 2009 malolactic fermentations finished before those of their 2008 counterparts! I believe that one grower with whom I discussed this problem captured perfectly the essence of the challenge: "The malolactic fermentation and burgundy is a bit like chicken pox and your children. They all contract it and ultimately it's a good thing as it protects them in the future but while they're sick is not exactly the ideal moment to present them to friends, neighbors and visitors."

The point is that the tasting reviews that follow should be viewed more as general impressions to be supplemented in future Issues by in-bottle reviews that can provide much more precise, and reliable, information. I do appreciate fully that this partially impairs your ability to buy on a futures basis with the same confidence as usual, which is of course regrettable. However, I cannot in good conscience impart this information to you knowing that I do not believe that it was possible for me, or anyone for that matter, to assess potential wine quality with the same degree of confidence as usual. Accordingly, I would much prefer to follow my long-standing policy of full disclosure to you, the reader, so that you can fully understand the strengths, and limitations, of the information in order that you may use it to best advantage.

### **The Weather, Harvest, Winemaking and the Critical Importance of Élevage in 2008:**

If there is one word to describe the collective grower reaction to the quality of the grapes harvested in 2008, it was "relief", which speaks volumes about how poor the growing season really was. Let's begin our analysis with the 2007 post-harvest period, which is important because it determines how well, and for how long, the vines enter their dormancy phase. October and November were sunny and dry with relatively mild temperatures, which prevailed until the middle of December when a serious cold snap set it and ushered the vines into dormancy.

The mild weather returned in January of 2008 with brilliant sunshine and temperatures that averaged more than 2°C higher than normal; rainfall was normal. February continued this clement weather pattern though rainfall decreased to well below season averages. March was rainy and slightly cooler than normal but overall, the October to March period was marked by good weather, and save for the December cold snap, milder than normal temperatures and lower precipitation than usual.

The relatively balmy weather was not to last however as there was snow at the end of March and again in early April. The snow turned to rain and overall, April was exceptionally wet with 81% more rain than is typical and not surprisingly given the cloud cover necessary for rain, a serious deficit of sunshine; readers who follow vintage weather patterns carefully may remember that this was the exact opposite of the incredibly hot temperatures seen in April 2007. Matters improved moderately in May with notably warmer temperatures, in fact May 2008 was the warmest May since 1989 with heat levels of 25°C routine in the first half of the month.

The key import of this weather pattern is that the vegetative cycle did not get off to an ideal start. Budburst was only a few days later than usual and occurred around the 25<sup>th</sup> of April. This was followed by the flowering in and around the 15<sup>th</sup> of May. Many growers told me though that the flowering was extended, occurring over a three week period, which would have consequences later on in terms of heterogeneous ripening. An extended flowering is not good but there was at least a silver lining. The difficult flowering caused a large quantity of shot berries to develop, which add concentration and high sugar levels to the musts.

This irregular pattern would continue with cool and rainy periods throughout much of June, July and August. Sunshine was limited, in fact June had the lowest level of sunshine since June 1997. July was somewhat better but the lack of sun was especially poor in August, and the rainstorms were often heavy and sometimes even violent. *Véraison* was noted about the 11<sup>th</sup> of August but I encountered plenty of growers telling me that they still had green grapes on the first of September. To provide a bit of comparative perspective, the 2009 vintage had the same ripeness levels on August 10<sup>th</sup> that the 2008 vintage had in the middle of September.

This cool and rainy pattern persisted through the 12<sup>th</sup> of September with even heavier rainfall and seasonably frigid temperatures. Strong rot pressure was building and everyone was anxiously watching the skies. One grower told me that he attended a dinner with a number of colleagues on the 12<sup>th</sup> during a driving rainstorm, noting that it was a very somber affair as everyone feared the worst and wondered if there would ever be anything ripe to pick; it was to rain the entire night. And this pessimism was well founded as sugar readings taken around the 1<sup>st</sup> of September were in the 8 to 9% range! In the Hautes Côte it was even lower at 6.5 to 7.5%. In short, things didn't look good.

Then, as if by divine intervention, there was bright sunshine the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup> and La Bise began to blow. Temperatures were still cool but the wind was steady and firm. As the wind blew day after day without cessation, it took with it all of the excess moisture, stopping the rot in its tracks and evaporating as much as 30% of the excess water in the grapes. Growers told me that bunch weights were down a similar amount.

The cool, bright and windy weather held for 3 consecutive weeks and amazingly, grape maturities climbed rapidly. Some growers theorized that the vines had been stockpiling energy all summer long and when the good weather finally arrived, there were reserves that were unleashed to galvanize the ripening process. More importantly though, it wasn't just sugar ripeness but phenolic ripeness as well. This was clearly to the good but remember the extended *floraison* I mentioned previously? This meant that maturities were very uneven, which would serve to devilishly complicate the picking orders as one parcel could be as much as 10 days ahead of, or behind, another.

The harvest took place under cool and dry conditions. The majority of domaines that I visited began picking around the 25<sup>th</sup> of September though some intrepid souls waited until the beginning of October. Almost everyone spoke of the crop requiring assiduous sorting work, both for rot and for unripe grapes. Not surprisingly, the growers that had managed their crop loads and promoted good aeration in the vines had both less rot and less unripe fruit.

While there are plenty of exceptions due to crop loads and the terroirs in questions, as a general proposition those who picked later fared better than did those who harvested early. Picking late wasn't free however as those who picked late typically admitted that they higher levels of rot. One especially candid grower captured the essence of the problem as follows: "If you waited to pick then you had the ripeness. The trick then was to have the unwavering discipline to get rid of everything that isn't clean, which is of course possible to do. On the other hand, no matter how clean your crop is, you can't make it riper once you've picked it. Those who rolled the dice and picked late in 2008 won."

Sugar levels were average and while a few growers reported levels into the 13% range, the more typical level was between 12 and 12.5%. Total acidities were high to very high and pre-malo pHs were quite low, in fact the lowest since 1996. However, because there was a high level of malic acidity present, the malos had a big effect on the pHs, indeed so large that the post-malo levels are not especially low. Many growers report levels in the 3.5 to 3.6 area, which is solid but not really low.

The fermentations were very slow to start and those who elected to allow them to commence naturally had extended cool maceration periods lasting as long as a week. This is because the night time and morning temperatures during the harvest were very cool, often as low as 5°C. This of course meant that the natural yeasts that most growers use were slow to become active. As a consequence, the colors of the '08s are often surprisingly deep.

Once they got rolling, 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 desire to avoid extracting seed tannins however, 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 rationale is two fold: first, there is the notion that aqueous extraction is gentler than extraction which takes place in the presence of alcohol and two, the seeds are still largely encased in their berry cocoons, which allows for slightly more aggressive punching down without breaking the seeds and extracting their bitter tannins.

Phenolic ripeness levels were generally considered as good to very good but rarely excellent, which explains why you will read so many growers reporting that they elected to utilize a softer vinification to avoid unbalancing the wines with too much tannin, particularly seed tannins (more on this below). And most growers succeeded with this approach as skins were generally thick due to the influence of the wind and thus there was relatively high extractability. As to growers that typically use a high percentage of stems, many elected to use their normal amount, figuring that they could better control the amount of structure in their wines. Some though elected to reduce the percentage because botrytis can cling to the stems and be very difficult to spot as well as fear of imparting green tannins if there was not proper lignification.

As was the case with 2007, it's worth asking the question that if very warm temperatures are thought to be necessary to achieve high levels of phenolic ripeness, then how did 2007 and 2008 achieve satisfactory levels? The answer is thought to be two-fold: one is that there was reasonable luminosity during the summer even though it was wet and cloudy for much of the time; two is that rather than the usual 100 days from the date of the flowering before the harvest, many domaines had 110 and some as much as 120. In other words, the 2007 and 2008 hang times were anywhere from 10 to as much as 20% longer than normal, which compensated to a very large extent for the cooler temperatures.

Both the late fall and early winter occurring at the end of 2008 were quite cool and cellar temperatures plummeted. This coupled with the fact that in many cases, the now vinified '08s were not racked into cask until the last week of October, a full month later than the '07s. The falling temperatures, low pre-malo pHs and high levels of malic acid combined to delay the onset of the malolactic fermentations, which typically did not begin until the late spring. As I discussed in the introduction

above, this was to considerably postpone an appreciation of the character of the '08s as many growers admitted that they had no idea how the '08s were going to turn out. Indeed more than a few told me that their pre-malo '08s were "ugly ducklings."

There is however another, less obvious, reason the malos were so slow to start in many cellars. Those growers who did not have unshakeable confidence that their sorting work was 100% effective, and thus might have made wine from at least some rot-tainted berries, tended to do an extended *débourbage* (lees settling) and to dose their new wines with very high amounts of SO<sub>2</sub> to prevent bacteriological problems. Sulfur of course is not only an anti-oxidant but it also protects wine against bacteria. In this case however, a high SO<sub>2</sub> dosage is a two-edged sword because helpful bacteria, such as those that initiate the malolactic fermentation, are also inhibited. Thus, in many cellars the malos were necessarily more extended than usual.

This raises an additional set of concerns. I visited a few cellars where the malos had not even begun. This is a potentially delicate situation because one, the wines risk drying out in barrel and two, they have to be protected from spoilage. This is not a great risk while the ambient temperatures are low. But as the wines begin to warm up, they have to be dosed with sulfur to protect. But at the same time, wines that have not completed their malos but have to be protected may not finish their malos. How many wines will be caught in this catch-22 position is hard to say but it will be some appreciable percentage.

If we distill all of the above down to one factor, the main key to success in both 2007 and 2008 clearly favored those who are great growers, not just great winemakers because if you weren't in your vineyards constantly, you simply didn't have top raw materials to work with in the first place.

### **The 2008 Côte de Nuits Reds:**

As I observed at the very beginning, the most successful 2008s are wonderfully fresh, ethereal, pure, transparent and sublimely elegant and refined burgundies that will be capable of amply rewarding short-to-mid-term cellaring out to 15 years or so. Moreover, the wines adhere quite closely to the *appellation* hierarchy though at the same time, few wines actually transcend their respective levels. The other aspect of the better '08s is how fine the tannins are and in this respect mind me substantially of their 2001 counterparts. Stated differently, when the more rustic *appellations* such as Fixin, Marsannay, Côte de Nuits-Villages and certain sectors of Gevrey and Nuits are good, they tend to be more refined than usual. That said, the lower level appellations are precisely those most likely to have drying tannins because they are not as well situated as the 1ers and *grands crus*.

Like the better 2007s, the better 2008s are firmly but not at all aggressively structured and for several important reasons. First, there is adequate mid-palate concentration to buffer the structure; two, the structural elements are all adequately ripe, which takes away any sense of undue assertiveness 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, just like with the less successful '07s, the less successful seem more tannic than they are in actuality because of the firm acidity and/or presence of under ripe seed tannins. More important still is that when the '08s are under ripe, you really have the sensation of drying tannins.

The best '08s are utterly transparent to their underlying *terroirs*. In this sense, they are even more gifted than the 2007s and on a par with the finest 2001s. Heightened transparency of course cuts both ways. When everything is as it should be, the brilliance and nuances of Burgundy's incredibly varied *terroirs* can much more easily be discerned. But the other side of that balancing act is that flaws are immediately apparent. Dry tannins, excess acidity, rot, too much alcohol or whatever the flaw might be, it's on a ticker tape parade down the middle of the wine. It's a hard truth that with highly transparent wines there is no place to hide if you make a mistake and unlike in some wine regions, you can't blend your mistakes away either.

In the Côte de Nuits, for the first time in a long time, despite how variable the quality level was in 2008, the performance across communes was actually quite consistent. Usually there is one commune that outperforms or lags based on weather or hail or simply good fortune. In 2008, the quality was relatively consistent from Nuits to Gevrey.

As to what to buy, given the looming shadow of the 2009 vintage, do not be surprised to see some importers and retailers bundling the 2008s with the 2009s, at least at the upper levels. Be sure to check out the Don't Miss, Sweet Spot and Top Value recommendations below. They are like a cheat sheet for the 200+ pages that follow! Lastly, don't over reach. Buy what you need for your cellars and then let it go. As lovely as the top '08s are, there are very few masterpieces in the making and for my own cellar, I will buy selectively as the wines are too good not to have at least some representation of them but not so good that I going to stretch too far to own them.

If I had to choose just one word to describe the best 2008s, it would be 'classic'.



## **2007 – Slightly less Interesting than Originally Previewed:**

My in-bottle tastings of the 2007 vintage has served to confirm that it is a very good to sometimes excellent but highly variable vintage. As was described in considerable detail in Issue 33, a lot of things had to go right for the best wines to be made and some growers were either good enough, or lucky enough, to do just that. Most wines scored within their predicted ranges and while there were a few surprises, and in both directions, the average 2007 will make for pleasant near-to-medium-term drinking.

In contrast to the modification that I made in 2006 to lengthen by a year or two my predicted drinking windows, in 2007 they were, with few exceptions, unchanged. When there were adjustments, three out of four were to shorten them by one to two years. In the one out of four that was lengthened, it was also slight, which is to say one to two years.

Otherwise, there are no dramatic changes. The best '07s are fresh, intense, bright, vibrant and very terroir. As I noted earlier, on the whole, it is less interesting as a vintage than the '08s and roughly on the same level as the '06s. And like I cautioned last year at this time, except in rare cases, they are not worth paying up for. They are quality wines but they are definitely not in the "gotta have" category.

## **A Brief Summary of the Highly Anticipated 2009 Vintage – the Luck of Nine Continues:**

It appears that yet another vintage ending with "9" could potentially be great. In the 20<sup>th</sup> C, there were only two laggards, 1909 and 1939. By contrast, 1919, 1929, 1949, 1959 and 1999 were among the very best that the century had to offer. The harvest occurred without a hitch under clear and sunny conditions and once again accompanied by the north wind. Almost everyone that I spoke to said that the grapes required almost no sorting and were among the best that they had ever seen, certainly on a par with if not superior to those of 2005. Even better, quantities were relatively generous, coming in between the super abundant 1999 vintage and the moderately short 2005 vintage.

I asked almost every grower that I visited where they would place the quality of the 2009 vintage compared to 2005 at this very early stage. While I did not carefully count noses, the rough breakout of the votes was right down the middle, with half saying that it was better and the other half saying that it was certainly excellent but that it wouldn't have the same staying power as the '05s. I tasted quite broadly and it seems quite clear that there is superb material with ripe phenolics, low acidity and highly seductive textures. In many cases, the malos were almost finished, which reminded me of the 2003 vintage though I stress that 2009, while ripe, is not another 2003.

At this point, it's really much too early to be making any grandiose pronouncements other than to say that 2009 appears to be most promising. I do have two potential concerns, the first of which is that some wines struck me as relatively low acid and while not flabby, they were not necessarily detailed and precise though this could very well be a phase as the wines had only been racked into barrel a few weeks before I tasted them; two is that few wines seemed to be especially transparent with respect to the underlying terroir – again though, this could easily change as I had the same impression of the '05s at the same stage of their evolution as well. I believe that we're in for some very special wines with the '09 vintage. The question of course is how special. As Olivier Leriche of Domaine l'Arlet admirably expressed the conundrum, "We will find out if the finest grapes produce the finest wines."

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

95% of the following notes are based on tastings conducted in October and November, 2009; the other 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 2008 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 \$50 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. "Sweet Spot Wines" address the wide gulf between the under \$50 Top Value wines and the over \$125 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 and will also be available via the searchable database.

Each issue includes Allen's "Top Value Wines", "Sweet Spot Wines" and "Don't Miss Wines." The Top Value wines are those that are generally available in the market place at a price point of no more than ~\$50 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. "Sweet Spot Wines" address the wide gulf between the under \$50 Top Value wines and the over \$125 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 and will also be available via the searchable database. **Here are small portions of each chart from issue 37:**

### 25 Top Value Wines from the 2008 Vintage in this Issue

2008	Bourgogne	Arnoux, Robert	86
2008	Bourgogne	Clerget, Christian	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne	Dupont-Tisserandot	86
2008	Bourgogne	Guillon, Jean-Michel	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne	Mugneret-Gibourg	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne – Aries	Ambroise, Bertrand	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne "Les Bons Bâtons"	Barthod-Noëllat	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne "Les Bons Bâtons"	Leclerc, Philippe	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne – Jeunesse	JJ Confuron	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne "Pince Vin"	Burquet, Alain	(85-88)
2008	Bourgogne "Au Pelson"	Clark, David	(85-87)
2008	Bourgogne – Cuvée Pinson	Ponsot	(85-88)
2008	Bourgogne – Passe Tout Grains	Groffier, Robert	(84-86)
2008	Bourgogne – Hautes Côtes de Nuits	Gros Frère et Soeur	(85-87)
2008	Gevrey-Chambertin	Bocquenet	(89-91)

### Burghound.com's 97 "Sweet Spot" Wines from the 2008 Vintage

2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Amoureuses" 1er	Bertheau, François	(91-93)
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Amoureuses" 1er	Bichot	(89-92)
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Les Baudes" 1er	Geantet-Pansiot	91
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Les Charmes" 1er	Barthod-Noëllat	(90-92)
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Les Charmes" 1er	Bertheau, François	(90-92)
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Les Charmes" 1er	Hudlot-Noëllat	(89-92)
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "La Combe d'Orveau" 1er	Clavelier, Bruno	(90-93)
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "La Combe d'Orveau" 1er	Faiveley, Joseph	91
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Les Cras" 1er	Barthod-Noëllat	(91-93)
2008	Chambolle-Musigny "Feusselottes" 1er	Mugneret-Gibourg	(90-92)

### Burghound.com's 90 "Don't Miss" Wines from the 2008 Vintage

2008	Bonnes Mares Grand Cru	Bernstein, Olivier	(92-94)
2008	Bonnes Mares Grand Cru	Clair, Bruno	(92-94)
2008	Bonnes Mares Grand Cru	Drouhin-Laroze	(91-94)
2008	Bonnes Mares Grand Cru	Dujac	(93-95)
2008	Bonnes Mares Grand Cru	Roumier, Georges	(92-95)
2008	Bonnes Mares Grand Cru	Comte de Vogüé	(92-94)
2008	Bonnes Mares Grand Cru	Vougeraie	(91-94)
2008	Chambertin Grand Cru	Damoy, Pierre	(92-94)
2008	Chambertin Grand Cru	Dugat-Py	(94-96)
2008	Chambertin Grand Cru	Dujac	(93-95)
2008	Chambertin Grand Cru	Perrot-Minot	(92-95)
2008	Chambertin Grand Cru	Ponsot	(92-94)
2008	Chambertin Grand Cru	Rousseau, Armand	(93-95)
2008	Chambertin-Clos de Bèze Grand Cru	Clair, Bruno	(92-94)

**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 Pierre Amiot et Fils (Morey St.-Denis)**

2008	Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru	red	(87-89)
2008	Clos de la Roche Grand Cru	red	(89-92)
2008	Clos St.-Denis Grand Cru	red	(88-91)
2008	Gevrey-Chambertin "Aux Combottes" 1er	red	(87-90)
2008	Morey St.-Denis	red	(84-87)
2008	Morey St.-Denis "Aux Charmes" 1er	red	(86-88)
2008	Morey St.-Denis "Les Millandes" 1er	red	(87-90)
2008	Morey St.-Denis "Les Ruchots" 1er	red	(88-91)
2007	Charmes-Chambertin Grand Cru	red	88
2007	Clos de la Roche Grand Cru	red	89
2007	Clos St. Denis Grand Cru	red	90
2007	Gevrey-Chambertin "Aux Combottes" 1er	red	88
2007	Morey St.-Denis	red	87
2007	Morey St.-Denis "Aux Charmes" 1er	red	88
2007	Morey St.-Denis "Les Millandes" 1er	red	89
2007	Morey St.-Denis "Les Ruchots" 1er	red	88

Jean-Louis Amiot said that "we were very pleasantly surprised by 2008 because we certainly didn't expect to have the high quality of wines given the mediocre summer. As is often the case lately, the north wind saved the harvest and we had pretty ripeness levels even though it was a matter of ripeness by evaporation rather than by heat. There was a price to pay though for the loss of volume because between that and the sorting losses, yields were very low. We began picking on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September and brought in fruit ranging between 11.5 and 12.5% potential alcohols. We did a normal vinification as the phenolics seemed ripe so there was no reason to hold back. Interestingly, in 2009 we needed only 17.5 grams of sugar to produce one degree of alcohol whereas in 2008, we needed 18 but until we figured that out, it was harder to calibrate the chaptalization. Overall, 2008 gave very pretty wines that will please those who enjoy classically styled burgundies." Jean-Louis and his brother Didier have settled the division of the domaine with their brother-in-common who runs Domaine Amiot-Servelle (see below). As such, 2009 will be the last vintage for the Charmes-Chambertin and the Clos St. Denis. The in-bottle Amiot 2007s have turned out about as originally previewed, which is to say acceptable if not truly distinguished quality fashioned in a relatively early-drinking style. (No known American importer; La Reserve and Avery's Wine Merchants, [www.averys.com](http://www.averys.com), UK).

**2008 Morey St.-Denis:** A very fresh and pretty high-toned nose of red and blue berry fruit aromas leads to rich and supple light to middle weight flavors that possess good detail though the finish is on the skinny side and it's not clear that it will fill out in time. (84-87)/2012+

**2008 Morey St.-Denis "Aux Charmes":** (from a .45 ha parcel planted in 1959; Aux Charmes is rarely seen as there are only two domaines which produce it). This is also quite fresh but less open and expressive with a reserved nose of red pinot fruit and underbrush notes that are also picked up by the detailed and somewhat more finely structured flavors that also possess a bit better phenolic ripeness though the finish is rather short at present. (86-88)/2013+

**2008 Morey St.-Denis "Les Millandes":** Here too the nose is on the reserved side but there is a bit more aromatic complexity with earthy dark berry fruit and a hint of gaminess that also adds breadth to the textured, minerally and refined flavors that display good finishing minerality on the finely detailed finish. There is better overall depth relative to the prior wines. (87-90)/2013+

**2008 Morey St.-Denis "Les Ruchots":** (from vines planted in 1956 situated just below Clos du Tart). Moderate reduction renders the nose difficult to assess but the middle weight flavors are vibrant, detailed, clean, pure and precise with fine length and energy. A wine of finesse that should drink well after five years or so. (88-91)/2013+

**2008 Gevrey-Chambertin “Aux Combottes”:** (from 3 separate parcels totaling .61 ha with two almost touching Latricières-Chambertin and the other at the southern end of the vineyard by Clos de la Roche). A high-toned, cool and exceptionally fresh red pinot fruit nose suffused with obvious minerality that continues onto the supple, detailed and lacy medium-bodied flavors that are delicious but come across as ever-so-slightly dry though it's possible that this dryness is the effect of the noticeable gas. Benefit of the doubt offered. (87-90)/2012+

**2008 Charmes-Chambertin:** (from a .3 ha parcel in Mazoyères). Relatively strong reduction impairs the nose at present though the supple and round flavors are vibrant and fresh if a bit light, particularly for a *grand cru* and the finish is on the short side as well. As the description suggests, this is quite awkward today and there doesn't appear to be sufficient underlying material to ever become truly interesting. Disappointing. (87-89)/2013+

**2008 Clos St.-Denis:** (from a .17 ha parcel of 25+ year old vines – *élevage* in 50% new wood). A more complex and more refined nose offers up notes of plum, earth and dark blue fruit aromas that are in keeping with the rich, round and more concentrated middle weight flavors that possess better mid-palate depth though there is less persistence and presence than is typical for this *appellation*, at least on this day. (88-91)/2014+

**2008 Clos de la Roche:** (from a 1.2 ha parcel). Here the nose is discreet to the point of being almost mute and even concerted swirling only coaxes a bit of red and blue pinot fruit from the glass. The supple, round, delicious and surprisingly forward medium-bodied flavors possess better complexity and better finishing depth and length as well plus the supporting structural elements are riper too. (89-92)/2015+

**2007 Morey St.-Denis:** Medium ruby hue. A reserved *sauvage* and distinctly earthy red berry fruit nose introduces supple and relatively light weight flavors that are pleasant, round and offer reasonably good detail if less depth and length than a top flight example would have. This should drink well early. 87/2011+

**2007 Morey St.-Denis “Aux Charmes”:** (from a .45 ha parcel planted in 1959; Aux Charmes is rarely seen as there are only two domaines which produce it). Fresh and bright red pinot also displays a light herbal note that is in keeping with the nicely forward, round and lightly textured barely middle weight flavors that possess good energy and persistence. This is delicious if not especially complex but it possesses good cut without being unduly acid dominated. A good candidate for an everyday house wine. 88/2011+

**2007 Morey St.-Denis “Les Millandes”:** A highly expressive nose of red berry fruit is cut with notes of earth and beef jerky that merge into supple, round and forward lighter weight flavors that possess a textured and silky palate impression while offering an intriguing touch of minerality on the dusty and sneaky long finish. Again, this is on the light side but there is better flavor authority. 89/2012+

**2007 Morey St.-Denis “Les Ruchots”:** (from vines planted in 1956 situated just below Clos du Tart). An expressive and nicely layered nose of red and blue pinot fruit that also displays a subtle herbal hint precedes supple, forward and very round, indeed even easy light to barely middle weight flavors that are fresh, balanced and focused if lacking in real depth. This is less interesting than it usually is. 88/2011+

**2007 Gevrey-Chambertin “Aux Combottes”:** (from 3 separate parcels totaling .61 ha with two almost touching Latricières-Chambertin and the other at the southern end of the vineyard by Clos de la Roche). An elegant blend of earthy and wild red and blue berry fruit aromas that are airy and almost wispy at this early stage do a fine job of complementing the delicious, sappy and mouth coating flavors that are not particularly concentrated but the detail and focus help to compensate. I like the seductive texture though the finish presently displays a slight acid tang as well as a crushed leaf component. This is also somewhat less interesting than it typically is. 88/2011+

**2007 Charmes-Chambertin:** (from a .3 ha parcel in Mazoyères). A moderately vegetal if extremely fresh and expressive red pinot fruit nose nuanced by warm earth hints introduces detailed, delicious, round and supple middle weight flavors that culminate in a moderately firm finish of moderate length. Like its '08 counterpart, this is disappointing for its level. 88/2013+

**2007 Clos St.-Denis:** (from a .17 ha parcel of 25 year old vines – *élevage* in 50% new wood). A subtle touch of wood spice does not intrude on the fresh, bright and pure earthy red berry fruit nose that slides gracefully into round, rich and relatively full if not particularly dense barely middle weight flavors that are attractively textured and slightly firmer than those of the Combottes, all wrapped in a delicious, classy and long finish that possesses fine balance. 90/2013+

**2007 Clos de la Roche:** (from a 1.2 ha parcel). A similar if mildly vegetal nose gives way to earthy, supple and distinctly easy flavors that are delicious if notably light by the standards of what is generally one of the more robust *grands crus*. The tangy finish is clean and crisp and this should drink well young. 89/2013+